

Chapter02

How To Eliminate Unwanted Thoughts

“For the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Corinthians;10:4~5)

"Don't Think About A Pink Elephant!"

Have you ever played that silly game? Someone says, "Don't think about a pink elephant". And what happens?

No matter how hard you try, you just can't stop thinking about pink elephants!

Clearly, then, trying harder doesn't work. (You probably already knew that, right?)

Actually, that "try-harder" thing is one of Satan's favorite schemes to make us dance to his tune. It goes something like this:Try harder....

Try harder...

Get it right...

Do it better..

Be perfect...

Fail!!

Start over

Try harder..

Get it right...

... and so forth until you wear yourself out and give up.

The devil loves this! He knows that eventually you will fail.

You will plunge into despair, doubt, fear, etc., as the unwanted thoughts resume their parade through the "video and audio" pathways of your mind. The unwanted thoughts bind you, and you become their prisoner once again.

None of that has to happen!

Here is an actual comment from someone who read this article:

“This is a blessing for me. I have been having horrible thoughts for a month now. I have offended the Lord and treated Him horribly. But I always say sorry then have the same recurring horrible thoughts. And I "try harder" to stop these thoughts instead of arming myself with the Word of God. Thank you for this article truly is a blessing. I pray that God will forgive me for all I have done and that these horrible thoughts will go away permanently. God bless you/”

My goal: to show you four things:

Here's what works: The permanent solution: replace unwanted thoughts with God's thoughts.

What God Promises: What His Word says you can do about unwanted thoughts.

Why this is important: Why and how are these unwanted thoughts tormenting you?

How to get relief: how you can take hold of the relief God has promised!

#1) Here's what works:

This true anecdote illustrates the concept: replace negative thoughts with positive thoughts.

I know a man whose life is really messed up. He has fallen on very hard times. He has lost his job, lost his family, and lost his peace and joy. No surprise, then, that his mind is plagued with all kinds of unwanted thoughts.

His one activity that he enjoys is playing football. Although he is about 50 years old, he keeps himself in remarkably good physical condition, so he can participate in a semi-pro football league.

One day I asked him, "when you're in the middle of a game, and you're staring down an opponent as you wait for the ball to be snapped, where are those unwanted thoughts then?"

He looked at me with astonishment! "they're gone!", he exclaimed.

"You have", I replied, "just proven that it is possible to be free from the torment of unwanted thoughts!"

Here's why: as he concentrated on what he was about to do to his opponent, those football thoughts crowded out

all of his negative unwanted thoughts. For a little while at least, he was free!

Of course in his case, the freedom only lasted until the game was over. Then all that burden flooded right back into his mind.

Here's what I said to him next:

"You need a permanent solution. You need to have an arsenal of thoughts that you can instantly call to mind, thoughts that are so powerful they will easily and continually push out all the unwanted thoughts. This is the supernatural solution to your supernatural problem!"

Good news: such a solution exists. God has it, and He offers it to you.

#2) What God promises

Let me restate the main text from the top of this article, and then show you the details:

"For the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)

Here are the details

arguments--arguments take place in your mind.

every lofty opinion--opinions take place in your mind.

The knowledge of God-- takes place in your mind.

Take every thought captive--thoughts take place in your mind.

Wouldn't you agree: Paul is saying that the Word of God has divine power, and that this power built into the Word of God is our supernatural weapon against all the lies, accusations, and torments that Satan would otherwise be allowed to inflict upon us!

Paul also wrote: *"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure,*

whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” (Philippians 4:8)

“For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”
(Galatians 1:11-12)

By using the power God has put into His Word, you and I can take unwanted thoughts captive, rather than having the unwanted thoughts taking us captive!

Scriptures showing the power in the Word of God

“For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God “ (1 Corinthians 1:18)

The Word of God seems foolish to many. In reality, it contains the power of God!

“God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind”
(2 Timothy 1:7)

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever Amen”
(Ephesians 3:29-21 NKJV)

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16)

“For the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)

That's what God inspired Paul to write to us about taking unwanted thoughts captive.

Key Principle:

Our weapon against the devil is the Word of God.

When you choose to partner with God and begin to arm yourself against the devil by internalizing (memorizing) even just a few Bible verses, He extends His Divine "protective shield" around you.

The Holy Spirit becomes the gatekeeper of your mind!

That is what God has promised to those who choose to partner with Him.

#3) Why this is important:

Here is the main thing you need to know about unwanted thoughts:

Unwanted thoughts are almost always from the devil.

Unwanted thoughts that have come into your mind such as:

Unwanted thoughts of Lust

Negative emotions: (anger, rage, revenge, etc.)

Unwanted thoughts of despair: (worry, doubt, panic, fear, etc.)

Unwanted thoughts that have you putting yourself down: ("I'm such a loser"; "nobody cares about me"; "I can't do anything right" etc.)

Those unwanted thoughts and many others are all very likely put into your mind by a demon.

God allows this because we have a free will. God did not intend to create robotic worshipers that are hard-wired to say what He wants to hear. He wants genuine worshipers.

“But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.” (John 4:23)

Our free will includes the freedom to reject Him.

How is the devil able to get permission to torment us?

The following excerpts from chapters 1 and 2 of the Book of Job that illustrate how Satan is able somehow to get permission from God.

Job 1:6-22

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, also came among them. The Lord said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." And the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face." And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

Satan Takes Job's Property and Children

Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and there came a messenger to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you." While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The Chaldeans formed three groups and made a raid on the camels and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." While he was yet speaking, there came another and said "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and behold, a great wind came across the

wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. He said, “Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

Job 2:1-10

Satan Attacks Job's Health

Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the Lord. And the Lord said to Satan, “From where have you come?”

Satan answered the Lord and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.

And the Lord to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast to his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason.”

Then Satan answered the Lord and said, “Skin for skin!All that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face.” And the Lord said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life.”

So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes.

Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.” But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

In spite of all that, it is possible to be free from unwanted thoughts.

But how??

#4) How to get relief:

Here's how: by partnering with God and thus apply the power of His Word.

Here are a couple of clues. This is all about what comes into your mind:

...For as he thinks in his heart, so is he... (Proverbs 23:7a AMP)

I'll say it again: this is all about what comes into your mind. That's the battleground. God would love for you to partner with Him so that He can help rid your mind of unwanted thoughts.

"...be transformed by the renewing of your mind." (Romans 12:2b)

The process is not by "trying harder" to stop unwanted thoughts. Instead, challenge the source of the unwanted thoughts by filtering them through the "grid" of the Word of God.

Is it a thought that would draw you nearer to God? Or is it instead a thought from the pit of hell. When you know you are "hearing" unwanted thoughts from the devil, you can remove them -- or rather, allow God to remove them -- using the power of His Word.

Paul described the weapons of our warfare in the book of Ephesians. As you can see, Paul says nothing about "trying harder". Rather, he talks about using principles of the Word of God.

The whole armor of God:

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming

darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak". (Ephesians 6:10-20)

You and I have a part in the solution. Jesus Himself demonstrated for us how to do the part that He wants you (and me and all of His followers) to do. After fasting for forty days, Satan tried to tempt Jesus. But each time, Jesus deflected the temptation by quoting from Scripture. You can read the details of this encounter here:

The Temptation Of Jesus

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,

"He will command his angels concerning you,"

and

"On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone."

Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test'"

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and

worship me.”

Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written,

“‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’”

Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

I'm just thinking here...

If Jesus--who created the universe--chose to quote the Word of God in order to put the devil in his place...

What would make me think that I could overcome the devil all by myself without any help from God??

Satan and his legions of demons tempt us by putting thoughts into our minds. Their purpose is to deceive us into doing things that lead us away from God and ultimately to hell.

But it doesn't have to happen that way. With God's help, you can live free from the torment of unwanted thoughts that don't belong in your mind.

But... you can't stop these unwanted thoughts by your own strength for very long. You need help from God. And He has promised to help you as a Christian believer.

“For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)

The key passage should give you great hope.

First of all, we know that God inspired the apostle Paul to write that passage. That means God wanted you to know this.

Second: because it's in the Bible, it's possible! You can keep unwanted thoughts out... if you are a Bible believing Christian.

Third: it shows us that we need God's help to eliminate unwanted thoughts permanently!

Satan and his legions of demons come to us uninvited. God allows that because he has given us a free will. We must choose to believe in Him and follow Him. That's why He didn't make programmed robots that speak programmed words. But because we have a free will, we have to ask God for His help.

There is a part that you must do when you partner with God. When you do your part, God will do the part that only He can do.

Here are some things I have learned about controlling the thoughts that go into my mind. It's all biblical and very effective. I write them with the desire that they would be spread widely around and used by Christian believers everywhere. We need Him. This is so serious!

“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”

(Matthew 7:13-14)

Here's What To Do: Start by choosing to believe in God.

Trust Him that He will never ask you to do something that you cannot do. He will always make available to you the resources to accomplish what He has commanded. But he won't do the part that you can do.

Ultimately, He wants your permission to allow Him to accomplish His work here on this earth through you.

Don't hold back any longer. Give yourself to Him... and He'll do things through you that you cannot imagine.

I urge you to read, study, and begin to learn and apply the thoughts and Scriptures written here. Ask God to help you apply them into your life. If you'll do that, I can assure you on the authority of the Word of God, He will set you free from the torment of thoughts you know should not be in your mind.

Also: confess all known sin!

“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:8-9)

Satan is counting on us to ignore verse 9 and not confess our sins.

He knows that as long as we are out of fellowship with God the door is wide open for him to get permission to torment us.

Read the next Scripture and you'll see how that happens.

“And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God”. (Revelation 12:10)

This cycle of Temptation, Accusation; Torment goes on and on, day and night. While we are out of fellowship with God, we give Satan an opportunity to accuse us in the court of heaven and get permission to torment us.

It all comes down to knowing His Word. Jesus said: *“If you remain in My Word, you will truly be My disciples and you will know the Truth, and the Truth will set you free.”* (John 8:31b-32)

That implies that if we choose not to remain in His Word, we won't be set free! Instead, we will remain in bondage to the devil!

God is asking you to take a step of faith: first by reading this book, then by choosing to believe it and act as would a person who truly believes that these things could become a reality in their life. It may seem impossible to you, but that's where faith begins, right? If you could see all the dots connected, it wouldn't be faith. I believe God deliberately sets things up that way. He wants you to surrender to Him. It's time to do that. read this, then... do it!

Summary: Seven Things To Consider:

1) Good news: It truly is possible to live free from thoughts you do not want to have in your mind! You can be successful! You can!!

This includes lustful thoughts (which, if not captured and banished quickly, will soon lead to lustful actions.)

Especially for us men, it's critically important that we take hold of this. God's Word commands us to come up to a higher

level of holiness. At the gym where I work out, there are sometimes young, attractive women dressed very provocatively.

I can't begin to count the number of times I have whispered the following Scripture to myself:

"I have made a covenant with my eyes; Why then should I look upon a young woman?" (Job 31:1)

And is there anywhere a man who has not done what Jesus is speaking of in the next verse?

"But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:28)

But here's the "good news" part: God never commands us to do something without giving us the means to do it.

However, we have to do it His way. As is often true, there is a part that we have to do before God will do the part only He can do. It's that last part -- where God helps us after we've done our part -- that we need.

Which brings us to the next point:

2) But: You cannot do it on your own by "trying harder".

That "try-harder" thing is a main component of Satan's "gospel". It doesn't work for very long; eventually, it always fails. Then Satan uses your failure to condemn you; to make you feel like a loser. You try again, and the cycle repeats. You become discouraged and you ultimately quit. This is a very bad plan!

This may appear to contradict item 1, but it really doesn't. It just means you can't be victorious on your own.

You need supernatural help. so...

3) Really good news: God longs to partner with you to help you live a life of victory.

Because you have a free will, God will not force His help upon you. You have to ask Him.

In order to partner with you, God requires your obedience. It does no good to try to shut the devil out in one area of your life, while simultaneously opening doors for him in other areas.

4) But... you must submit to God's authority in all areas of life.

James wrote, *"Submit yourselves therefore to God; resist the devil and he will flee from you."* (James 4:7)

You have to put first things first: submit to God first, then with the power of His Spirit, you can easily resist the

devil.

5)more good news--(which doesn't look like good news at first): there isn't a "quick-fix" for this. It's going to take time. You have to do the part that you can do before God will do the part only He can do.

This is spiritual warfare, and you have to learn some things first. You need to equip yourself with Bible principles. As you do so, you must make up your mind--set your mind--to choose to respond by using those "weapons" throughout every day.

Here's where many Christians lose the battle. They haven't adequately equipped themselves with *"The sword of the Spirit, the Word of God"* (Ephesians 6:17)

Simply Stated, Here's The "How-To":

This is what works: fill your mind so full of God's thoughts (that's what Bible verses are) that the devil cannot get a word in edgewise!

When you *"submit to God"* (James 4:7) and *"renew your mind"* (Romans 12:2), be prepared to be astonished! God will *"manifest Himself to you"* (John 14:21).

As you systematically feed on the Word of God (see Matthew 4:4), you will come alive spiritually. The power of God will begin to operate in you, because the Word of God is God!! (see John 1:1).

Acts 1:8 says, *"You will receive power..."*, which the Bible defines as *"...more and more grace power of the Holy Spirit to meet this evil tendency..."* (James 4:6 AMP). Then you'll be able to *"Take every thought captive"* (2 Corinthians 10:5). The Holy Spirit becomes the gatekeeper of your mind!

6) Start small if you must--but start!!

If you've done little or no Scripture learning, start out with one or two short verses written on recipe cards; read them as little as once a day; takes just a minute or two. It may take days or even weeks. Let it take time.

Eventually, you will be able to recite them by heart.

A couple of supporting Scriptures for you: Psalm 119:11 says, *"I have hidden Your Word in my heart, that I*

might not sin against You."

Deuteronomy 6:6 says, *'These words which, I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart...'*

Anyone who can read can do this. If you find yourself thinking you don't have time for that, it's time to review your priorities.

According to 2 Timothy 1:7, God has given you *"...a sound mind"*

Indeed, 1 Corinthians 2:16 says you have *"... the mind of Christ"*

If you can remember your name, your address, your phone number, your Social Security number, the names and birthdays of your family members, etc., you can do this. If you're not doing this or something like this to learn Scripture, at least be honest before God and admit, "I won't!!"

When the devil is messing with your mind, fight back with these verses:

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you." (Isaiah 43:2)

The previous verse refers to how God is always with you, especially during difficult times. The metaphors of "water" and "fire" refer to our trials in life.

"Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." (1 John 4:4b)

In the previous verse, "He who is in you" of course refers to God. "he who is in the world" refers to the devil.

The idea is: God is more powerful than all the demons combined. After all He created them!

"When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid.

What can flesh do to me?" (Psalm 56:3-4)

"Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." (Psalm 73:25-26)

7)There is no neutral ground here!

Jesus said, *"Whoever is not with me is against me"* (Matthew 12:30, Luke 11:23)

The whole Kingdom of Heaven and the whole kingdom of hell are watching to see which choice you make.

God has given each of us a multiple-choice test.

But look: He's also given us the correct answer:

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore Choose life, that you and your offspring may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19)

You have a free will; you have a sound mind!! But you have to make the decision.

Make it a good one!!: