

# GROWING — IN — GODLY THINKING

TEN STEPS FOR DEVELOPING A GOD-HONORING THOUGHT LIFE

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# HOW THE REDEEMED THINK

King Solomon was known for his wisdom. Thousands of years ago he wrote, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7). From this proverb springs the idea that you become what you continually think about.

Many self-help books have been written about how we think and how our thinking molds us. Some may be available in the business section of bookshops or at newsstands. Norman Vincent Peale is known for his best-selling book *The Power of Positive Thinking*. Other similar titles are Robert H. Schuller’s *Move Ahead with Possibility Thinking*, Napoleon Hill’s *Think and Grow Rich*, David Stoop’s *You Are What*

*You Think*, and John C. Maxwell's *How Successful People Think*.

While these books contain some nuggets of truth, one thing becomes clear: we become what we continually think about.

Solomon indicated that what our heart pursues, we eventually become. While Solomon introduced the point, Jesus further addressed the issue. "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within and defile the man" (Mark 7:21-23).

Jesus declares that evil thoughts in the heart will defile the man. He explains that evil thoughts come from what is in the heart. Whatever helpful tips a reader may receive from self-help books, the followers of Jesus are called to a higher level of thinking.

Believers in Jesus think thoughts that nurture and fill the heart to fulfill the command to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37). These are

thoughts that move the believer toward putting on the mind of Christ. The Bible says, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).

The Bible calls believers to “the renewing of your mind.” “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1, 2). These verses remind us that believers are to be transformed by a renewed mind.

Have you ever been shocked at your thoughts? How embarrassing it would be to have all your thoughts from the past twenty-four hours displayed on a computer screen for public viewing! Have you ever felt like giving up on overcoming evil thoughts, especially in light of what Jesus taught?

Jesus taught that the attitude of hatred is equal to murder, and that lusting after a woman is equal to adultery. I recall a quotation my bishop gave when I was in my youth. “Sow a thought, reap an action.

Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny.” Hatred and lust begin with evil thoughts.

God wants you to have the mind of Christ. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” With the mind of Christ, we are enabled to live with Christlike actions. But Satan wants you to think otherwise. He wants your mind to start feeding on wrong thoughts that lead you to sinful actions and behaviors.

Someone has wronged you. You think of ways to get even. Then you think of getting back in revenge. Then it hits you: That’s wrong thinking! It is inconsistent with what Jesus taught.

You have confessed with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and you believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead. The Bible says, “Thou shalt be saved” (Romans 10:9). By the grace of God, you are living “soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:12). But a nagging shadow of doubt keeps coming to your mind.

A young husband is waiting in the car for his wife to come out of the grocery store. He is getting a little

upset at how long he has been waiting. He twitches his fingers on the steering wheel and glances at his watch. Just then a young woman struts in front of his car, smiling with a wink as she goes.

Has that young husband ever been you? Ideas go through your mind. You sit up, turn your head, and your eyes follow her. Then you think, *I wish my wife were that slim*. The thoughts drift on. Your wife comes out of the store and gets into the car. With a disgusted grunt, you start the car and head home. The thoughts persist! You know they are wrong. But what can you do?

You can hate yourself for such terrible thoughts. You can criticize and say, *I'll not go there again! I'll read an extra chapter in the Bible and pray for God to help me*. But it only gets worse—stronger and more vivid than ever.

The Bible speaks of evil thoughts. “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). Jesus said, “But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile