

So Will I...

The Obedience of the Heart

A new year is upon us and the opportunities to experience and grow nearer to God have never been greater or more necessary. Following God requires faith. In faith, we follow God through "obedience"...but, what does that mean, how can I practically follow Him today, and how what difference will it make? Join us as we explore the obedience of love, faith, stewardship, holiness, and our minds.

We have seen throughout this discussion that God is calling us to a deeper relationship with Him. He is inviting us to experience peace and life that is far greater than we could ever imagine. To receive that we must first believe and then, we must follow with our obedience. Obedience can be demonstrated through our love, faith, stewardship, holiness...and today, we will see that all of these hinge on our purity of thought.

Thoughts are more powerful than we give credit to. "You've heard it said..."

- Anger = Murder → Leave your gift and be reconciled FIRST
- Lust = Adultery → Cut off whatever causes you to sin
- Retaliation = Eye for an Eye → Turn your cheek, walk 2 miles, be generous
- Neighbor = Enemy → Love them all

To do this, we must take our thoughts "captive". For us Christians, "taking thoughts captive" is a military metaphor. It implies that the mind is a battlefield where ideas, anxieties, and temptations attempt to set up strongholds. To take a thought captive is to arrest it, interrogate it, and see if it aligns with the truth of God.

The Strategy

5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, 2 Corinthians 10:5

This is Spiritual Warfare

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 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. 13 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. 14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. 16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; 17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, Ephesians 6:10-17

We must monitor our thoughts asking, "is it true", "does it align with God says"?

If no = Arrest it, take it captive, and replace it with a Biblical truth.

The Power

7 for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. 2 Timothy 1:7

When anxiety, doubt, lust, anger, hate, pride, or whatever else strikes...instead of spiraling, present those specific thoughts to God, essentially "handing over" the prisoner you've captured.

The Action

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James 4:7

Jesus – Tempted by satan – He immediately countered every temptation with Scripture. Matthew 4:1-11

Nehemiah – Faced emotional warfare from enemies – He refused to let fear stop his work declaring his confidence in God. Nehemiah 6:8-9

The Psalmist – Felt bitterness and envy creeping in his heart toward the wealthy and wicked – He caught his spiraling thoughts and chose enter the “sanctuary” ...changing his perspective. Psalm 73:16-17

Life is filled with millions of micro decisions that have material impact on our minds, behavior, and position before God. Holiness finds its standard in God, its source in our minds, and its proof in our actions. But, how?!?!?

- Intercept -- Notice the emotion (anger, fear, lust) and what caused it.
- Interrogate – Compare that thought to the "Philippians 4:8" filter. Is it true? Is it noble?
- Instruction –If it's a lie, reject it. If it's a worry, turn it into a prayer. But, act on it...

The Second Mile: *Going Beyond Sunday*

Let's dig deeper together to see how God is calling and equipping each of us to reach the lost.

Monday – Our thoughts have the power to hold us captive and away from God and each other. When have you seen your thoughts exert this power in your own life? What was that emotion and why?

Tuesday – God instructs to monitor our hearts. It is from the heart where temptation, self and sin begin. It is also where healing, hope, and faith exist. How can you feel this battle occurring today?

Wednesday – To take a thought “captive” we must identify it, exert control over it, and lead it away. God instructs to bring them to Him. Have you ever used this technique for doubt, fear, anger, or other emotions in the past. How can you apply it to temptation in the same way?

Thursday – We don't have the strength or clear vision to do this on our own. So, God gifts us His Spirit to help us. When do you lean on the Holy Spirit? Where should you rely on Him more?

Friday – This is a long game. We must practice these techniques: Intercept, Interrogate, Instruct. What part of your life/relationships would most benefit from this discipline?