

ALL !N WITH JORDAN EASLEY

Why Are You Thinking Evil Things in Your Heart?

Questions Jesus Asked | Part 5 | Matthew 9:1-8

INTRODUCTION

We're the first generation in history that truly understands the importance of a good profile picture. Over 250 million Americans are on social media, and none of us posts the worst photo of ourselves — we scroll for the best angle and the right lighting, then we smooth the skin, brighten the colors, and add a filter or two, so that when people see us online they see the best version of who we are. But here's the truth: that's not just how we behave on the internet, it's how many of us live spiritually. We've learned to edit what people see — we filter our words, polish our appearance, and manage our reputation. We've mastered the art of the spiritual highlight reel. But the real picture, the unfiltered one, is what Jesus sees.

In Matthew 9, Jesus looks at a group of religious men who appeared holy on the outside but were hiding corruption on the inside, and He asks them a question that is also the question for us today: "Why are you thinking evil things in your hearts?" (v. 4). Jesus isn't fooled by filters. He doesn't stop at the surface; He looks into the depths of the soul. And sometimes the most gracious thing He can do is to expose what we try so hard to hide — not to wound us, but to heal us. As we walk through this scene, watch how Jesus moves from what He *sees*, to the honesty He *invites*, to the cleansing He *gives*, to the transformation He *brings*.

KEY POINTS

1. Jesus Sees What We Hide

When Jesus came home to Capernaum, the house filled up so fast that four men couldn't get their paralyzed friend through the crowd, so they tore open

the roof and lowered him right in front of Jesus. Everyone expected a healing, but "seeing their faith, Jesus told the paralytic, 'Have courage, son; your sins are forgiven'" (v. 2) — because this man's greatest need wasn't his legs, it was forgiveness. Not everyone celebrated. The scribes started thinking to themselves, "This man is blaspheming" (v. 3) — silently, privately, inwardly. But Jesus knew: "Perceiving their thoughts, Jesus said, 'Why are you thinking evil things in your hearts?'" (v. 4). He didn't just read their faces; He read their hearts. The same authority that could forgive sins could also see straight into what was really happening inside. And the same Jesus who saw what they were hiding still sees what we hide today — when our faith turns into routine, when our worship becomes just words, when our prayers sound sincere but our hearts are somewhere else.

Where do those evil thoughts even come from? The Greek word for "evil" here, *ponēros*, means something diseased, spoiled, or decaying — Jesus was diagnosing an infection. The scribes' thoughts hadn't started out evil; they had become contaminated over time. What began as conviction slowly curdled into criticism; what began as devotion quietly decayed into self-deception. That's how sin usually works — it doesn't storm in, it seeps in. Anger often starts as hurt, bitterness starts as disappointment, lust starts as curiosity, pride starts as insecurity. And when we keep those thoughts hidden instead of bringing them to God, they take root and harden, changing how we see ourselves, others, and even God — until we start defending what we should be confessing. That's why Proverbs 4:23 says, "Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life." The scribes didn't guard their hearts; they guarded their image. Every time Jesus reveals what's growing in the dark, He's not trying to shame you — He's trying to set you free, because evil thoughts don't start evil, but if you never surrender them, that's where they end.

2. Transformation Begins When We Get Honest

Jesus' question wasn't an attack; it was an invitation. "Why are you thinking evil things in your hearts?" was a divine invitation to honesty — a chance to bring their hidden thoughts into the light. That moment could have changed everything. They could have said, "You're right, Lord. My heart isn't clean," and confessed their pride and jealousy on the spot. But they stayed silent, and that's the tragedy: Jesus gave them a chance to be healed, and they refused to admit they were sick. Confession has always been the doorway to

transformation. Proverbs 28:13 says, "The one who conceals his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them will find mercy." They had built their identity around appearing righteous, so confessing sin felt like admitting weakness — and for a religious leader, that was unthinkable. They thought silence protected them, but silence only preserved their sin.

If we're honest, we often do the same thing. We sit in church, we hear the Word, we feel conviction — but instead of confessing, we cover up; we clean up our language and raise our hands and sing our songs, while deep down we know something isn't right. Every believer wrestles with hidden thoughts — jealousy, anger, lust, insecurity, resentment — but the difference between bondage and breakthrough is one thing: honesty. David learned this. After trying to hide his sin, he wrote that his silence left him groaning and drained, "then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not conceal my iniquity... and you forgave the guilt of my sin" (Psalm 32:5). The bridge to his healing wasn't perfection; it was confession. He stopped pretending and started repenting. Pride will always keep you from repentance, and repentance is the only path to transformation — so what thoughts have you been hiding, what sin have you been excusing, what secret is costing you your peace? Jesus already knows, and He's still inviting you to honesty, not to shame you but to set you free.

3. Jesus Cleanses What We Confess

After confronting the scribes, Jesus turned back to the paralyzed man — the one who couldn't move, couldn't earn, couldn't fix himself — and asked, "Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" — then He said, "Get up, take your mat, and go home" (vv. 5-6). Right there in front of the skeptical crowd, the man stood up, picked up the mat that had carried him for years, and walked out completely whole. Notice the order: forgiveness came before freedom. Sin is a deeper paralysis than any physical condition, and until the heart is healed, nothing else truly is. Jesus' power to heal the visible proved His authority to forgive the invisible — the man's body became a walking sermon of the forgiveness he had already received.

And what Jesus did for that man physically, He does for us spiritually. When we finally confess our sin — when we bring what's hidden into the light — He doesn't turn us away or hold it against us. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful

and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). That word "cleanse" means to purify thoroughly, to scrub clean until there's no trace of the stain left. There is no sin too deep for His forgiveness and no thought too dark for His mercy. The scribes missed the miracle happening in front of them because they refused to deal with the sin happening within them; they left the room unforgiven, not because Jesus withheld forgiveness, but because they never admitted they needed it. Don't make the same mistake — bring Him what you've been hiding, and let Him wash it clean.

4. Jesus Transforms Those Who Come Clean

"When the crowds saw this, they were awestruck and gave glory to God, who had given such authority to men" (v. 8). The man came broken and left restored; he came burdened and left free; he came in on a mat and walked out as a messenger. From that moment on, every step he took preached a silent sermon: "Jesus forgave me, and I'm not the same anymore." That's transformation — and it's still what transformation looks like today. When Jesus cleanses your sin, He doesn't just erase your past; He writes you a brand-new future: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). The man didn't go back to the mat — he went forward in a new direction, carrying a new story instead of the same shame.

Maybe you've been lying on your own "mat" for a long time — not a physical one, but guilt, shame, pride, or a sin you've carried quietly for years. Jesus is still asking, "Why are you thinking evil things in your hearts?" — not because He wants to condemn you, but because He wants to cleanse you; not because He's angry, but because He's ready to make you new. He's not scrolling through your highlight reel or looking at your filtered image; He's looking straight into your heart and saying, "Let Me heal that." "There is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1) — when you belong to Jesus, your sin no longer defines you; His grace does. So come clean before Him, because when Jesus forgives you, you don't just get up — you walk out different, praying with David, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10).

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Jesus sees past the "spiritual highlight reel" straight into the heart. Where have you been editing the image you present — to others or even to yourself — while something different is going on inside?
2. The scribes were given a chance to get honest and stayed silent. What hidden thought, resentment, or sin have you been covering up instead of confessing, and what would it look like to bring it into the light this week?
3. Evil thoughts "don't start evil" — anger starts as hurt, bitterness as disappointment, pride as insecurity. What is one thought you need to surrender to Jesus now, before it takes root and hardens?
