

Healthy Thinking sermon series C Thanksgiving Day	Healthy Thinking 5: Renewing Our Minds Philippians 4.8 Authored by Tim Isbell	Preached 11/1/2009
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Thesis: Healthy Thinking is not simply the product of our will to fix our thoughts on Philippians 4.8, it is also crucially dependent on the work of the Spirit of Jesus in the life of his fully-devoted followers.

(This sermon is part of the Healthy Thinking sermon series. This series is built on material from Mary Whelchel's book: What Would Jesus Think?.)

Philippians 4:8 (NLT) And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

This is our last time looking @ skating pond

Fix your thoughts on whatever is THRPLA. If we don't, we'll find ourselves in a snowbank. But I haven't shown you what it looks like in a snow bank.

(cycle through the Presentation slides for a light start to the sermon)

In case you think it's impossible to routinely think healthy...

The Bible says it's possible, AND that God expects it.

It doesn't say, "See if you can fix your thoughts on THRPLA " It says (YOU) fix your thoughts on what is THRPLA.

And God never instructs us to do something that is impossible for us to do; he always gives us the strength to do what he asks us to do.

1 Thess 5:24 (NLT) God will make this happen, for he who calls you is faithful.

In the case of our thought life, our part is to "set our will" to bring our thoughts into conformity with Phil 4.8.

When we do, here are some results. They're hard to believe; they sound too good to be true. But as we follow God, trust him – in area after area - then someday...

- We'll notice that the darkness in our heart has turned to light and we no longer hold regrets. Indeed, our mind routinely fills with healthy thoughts.
- A long-standing friend will notice this and say something like, "I see a purity in you that I don't have. When did this happen? How did this happen?"

- For a moment we'll be stuck for words, then we'll respond, "It was a process. I just actively trusted God with whatever came along and he somehow he changed my heart. It was a gift."

Rom 12:1-2 (NLT) And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies (and I'm sure this includes our minds) to God because of all he has done for you... Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.

Let's unpack a bit of theory

1 Corinthians 2:11-16 (NLT)

No one can know a person's thoughts except that person's own spirit, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. And we have received God's Spirit, so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us.

People who aren't spiritual can't receive these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can't understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means. Those who are spiritual can evaluate all things, but they themselves cannot be evaluated by others. For, "Who can know the Lord's thoughts? Who knows enough to teach him?" But we understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ.

I cannot know what another person thinks, because I don't have their spirit within me.

Sometimes we're so close to someone we think we know what they are thinking before they say it, or what that person will do before they do it.

Maybe we usually right. But our knowledge comes from experience with that person, not from an actual reading of their thoughts. I can only know their mind if their spirit is inside me.

This is impossible with another human. But...

When we become am a Christ-follower and actively trust everything to him day after day, he puts his Spirit in us and we come to know Spirit of Jesus thinks.

This is the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead.

This is the most miraculous gift God gives those who trust themselves wholly to Christ.

Romans 8:9-11 (NLT) You are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

But there's a dilemma: residing in each Christian are 2 spirits.

One is our own spirit (which is unfortunately contaminated by the world we live in), and the other is God's Spirit.

And these two spirits are at war with each other!

Romans 8:5-6 (NIV) ⁵ Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;

Notice that the battle takes place within our minds, between our spirit which is contaminated by sin and the new Spirit of Jesus within us.

In any battle, the stronger person wins. So in order to practice the truth of Phil 4.8 we must make sure our new nature is stronger than our old nature.

Ephesians 4:22-24 (NLT) throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.

How? By starving old nature, and feeding new one until it is strong and healthy.

Many people say, "I really want to starve the one and feed the other." But we stumble because we don't have any concrete steps in place to help them on the road to transformed thinking.

Here are some very practical strategies for starving/feeding:

1. Screen our thoughts like a secretary screens the calls for executive.

Hello, what's your name and the purpose of your call?

Are you an acceptable thought? Are you THRPLA?

Oh, so sorry, you are true but not lovely so I can't let this call go through. Goodbye.

Hello, are you a pure thought? No I don't think so. You are calling to try to get me to do something that is not pure and right. I cannot take this call. Goodbye.

2. Be careful what you

Read

Tally up your reading for the last month: newspapers, trade journals, magazines, world's literature, literature that strays from THRPLAm Christian literature, scripture.

If we're serious about starving our old spirit and feeding our new Spirit of Jesus, we may need to adjust the mix.

See

Be careful what you let your eyes take in, on TV in movies and many other places.

Hear

It may bother our friends who recommend a new song to listen for a few minutes when you turn to them and say, "Thanks, but that's a little too harsh/rough for me."

We can learn to say no thanks in ways that communicate our underlying reason w/o being overly offensive.

If we really are pursuing holiness, a pure hearts, people around us will notice and we'll have to explain it. That's a good thing.

3. Memorize scripture

Start with Phil 4.8.

4. Remember how messy the thought-clean-up process is

I can make a mess so much faster than I can clean it up! Same with my thoughts. When I let bad ones linger in my mind the cleanup process can be messy; I'll probably have to battle those thoughts over and over! So it's just not worth letting the mess in.

5. Replace unhealthy time-sinks with healthy time-sinks

Especially if you are the type to over-work, give yourself permission to do some enjoyable, healthy things with your time. Things like gardening, painting, learning a musical instrument, singing, cooking, home repair. Or things like camping, golfing, fishing, tennis, and so on. Deliberately build some fun stuff into your life.

Identify resentment and self-pity and replace it w/ thankfulness and praise ..., very deliberate choice.

Learning to think healthy is a process and it takes time.

Heb 12.2 teaches us to keep our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

Jesus' healthy thinking

My wife suggested that I point out how Jesus was very good at healthy thinking. For example:

Mat 4:1-3 (NLT) Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry. During that time the devil came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread."

Jesus responded with scriptures, quoted from memory.

Mk 10:32-34 (NLT) They were now on the way up to Jerusalem... Taking the twelve

disciples aside, Jesus once more began to describe everything that was about to happen to him. “Listen,” he said, “we’re going up to Jerusalem, where the [I] will be betrayed to the leading priests and the teachers of religious law. They will sentence [me] to die and hand [me] over to the Romans. They will mock [me], spit on [me], flog [me] with a whip, and kill [me], but after three days [I] will rise again.”

Even though this horror awaited Jesus, he spent his time over the next few days:

- Healing blind Bart
- Teaching crowds with parables
- Talking with a religious leader about the “most important commandments.”
- Receiving Mary’s anointing at Bethany
- Presiding at The Last Supper... where he said: Read 1 Cor 11.23-27 as a way of leading into communion.

Let’s share in communion this morning.

It’s the most meaningful way I know to end this series. We can use it as a marker of the day when we decided to get serious about healthy living.

Other resources:
Click on the link for the Google Slides for this sermon . (Similar to PowerPoint)
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