

The Philippians 4:4 Plan for Controlling Satan's Sneak Attacks on Your Mind

It starts with a flitting thought. So quick, by the time I realize what it is, it's gone. But when it returns, it lingers a bit. And I dwell on it a few moments longer. Then I find myself rationalizing as to why *The Thought* is not so bad.

In the deep recesses of my spirit, I know exactly what happened. Sin I've neither spoken nor acted upon has invaded my thought life yet again. And I'm guessing I'm not alone.

A little fib won't hurt anyone.

No one will notice if you cut corners.

They're only pictures.

It's OK. Nobody expects you to forgive her.

It's a small thing. God's busy with bigger issues.

How can we battle these sneak attacks? Will we ever experience victory over our thoughts?

The Bible tells us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2). But God doesn't just give us the command. He also tells us *how* to control our thought life.

The Battle Plan

Philippians 4:4-9 gives us the battle plan for conquering our thoughts:

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let everyone come to know your gentleness. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and

supplication with gratitude, make your requests known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will protect your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers, whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue, and if there is any praise, think on these things. Do those things which you have both learned and received, and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Step 1: Rejoice

“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! ... The Lord is at hand” (Phil. 4:1, 2b).

Rejoice, even in the middle of the spiritual battle for your thoughts. Why? Because “the Lord is at hand.” He promised never to leave us, and He keeps His promises.

Step 2: Release

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with gratitude, make your requests known to God” (Phil. 4:6).

This verse tells us to release both our anxieties and our requests. Not in a whiny way, but with thanksgiving. To be any less than thankful in all things is to say, in effect, that I could do better than God if I were in charge. Thank God for His patience: He keeps teaching us until we finally get it.

Step 3: Receive

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will protect your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7).

Trading anxiety for peace sounds like a pretty good deal. Our heavenly Father promises His peace in return for giving up our anxiety through prayerful thanksgiving. A peace applied to our hearts and minds.

He promises to use this peace to guard our minds. The Greek word for “guard,” *phroureo*, has a military connotation: the provision of protection against the enemy. And that’s a peace backed by the very power of God Himself through His Son.

Step 4: Replace

“Finally, brothers, whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue, and if there is any praise, think on these things” (Phil. 4:8).

I love a clean house, but I don’t enjoy the effort needed to achieve the result. Cleaning house in our spiritual lives is also hard work. However, it’s not enough to stop there. It’s time to replace the anxieties and requests we’ve released with things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy. Of course, the next question is: how?

Do you know of anything truer than God’s Word? Memorize Scripture.

Is anything purer than God Himself? Invest time in getting to know the Father’s character and His ways. Spend time with Him in prayer.

Who is more worthy of praise than the Creator and sustainer of all that is seen and unseen? Play praise music. Learn hymns and praise choruses. List God’s attributes using the alphabet as a memory jogger. For example:

A – Almighty

B – Beautiful

C – Compassionate

Step 5: Repeat

“Do those things which you have both learned and received, and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you” (Phil. 4:9).

The apostle Paul closes this passage by telling us to follow his example. Do it whether you succeed or fail. Do it when you feel like it and when you don't. And do it even when it's difficult—especially when it's difficult.

Of course, we can't possibly succeed in our own strength. It's God who strengthens us (Phil. 4:13), and each day, we are being transformed into the image of the glory of the Lord by His Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18). You and I are a work in progress. And the Holy Spirit is the one doing the work and accomplishing His desired result.

The battleground for this transformation is our mind. And a measure of our progress is the development of habits to conquer our thoughts.

God's Word is sure, and His ways are proven. It's up to us to implement what He says as we depend on His Holy Spirit.

In the battleground of the mind, thoughts can either conquer or be conquered.

Are you ready to engage in the battle for control of your thought life? {eoa}

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