

defensive when someone challenges a thought that has been allowed to live beneath the surface too long, you may need to repent and be willing to let God realign your thoughts with His.

Let's do an exercise in taking a thought captive.

- **Thought-** *I need to have a good income to be secure and so I am going to work longer and harder to get ahead to provide a good life for myself and my family.*
- **Jesus' Lens-** *5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." - Hebrews 13:5 NIV*

What other truths from scripture can you apply to counter the argument that we need a bigger bank account to enjoy a good life?

It is so much easier to embrace popular opinions than it is to hold them up to the light of God's word. But rather than allowing such thoughts to take root and undermine our faith, we need to bravely examine any ideologies, thoughts or systems that resist Christ's kingdom, and bring them under to authority of our true king.

WRAP-UP

In this study we see how the thoughts we allow to fester below the surface can be damaging to our faith and our relationship with Jesus. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul urges believers to confront and dismantle these harmful thoughts, which oppose God's truth, using divine weapons empowered by God rather than worldly methods. Paul calls for spiritual warfare against strongholds—misguided beliefs that distort our understanding of God—and emphasizes the need to take every thought captive, aligning it with Christ's authority. This process involves humility, love, and the courage to challenge popular ideologies by comparing them to God's Word, so that our minds and lives are transformed to reflect Christ's truth.

MEMORY VERSE

12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. - Ephesians 6:12 NIV

Challenge – Take an inventory of the thoughts you've acquired from secular sources. Can you objectively examine them through the lens of Jesus, looking for places they don't line up?

Take Your Thoughts Captive Beneath the Surface - Week 5

INTRODUCTION

We've found that what lies beneath the surface in our lives is often unresolved emotions like anger, grief and anxiety. But perhaps your greatest battles and regrets began as a thought you gave permission to dwell below the surface for too long. In his letter to the church at Corinth, Paul challenges us to wage war against those damaging thoughts that are counter to God and His Word. But we fight differently from the way the world fights. Our weapons are stronger because they are God-empowered.

Ice Breaker

What is one song that gets stuck in your head when you hear it?

Key Passages

3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. - 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Don't Believe Everything You Think

Never before have people been tasked with sorting, processing and digesting the volume of inputs and opinions that we face in 2025. All of what we read or hear has the potential to shape our thinking, and much of it is contrary to God and His word. In fact, the enemy of our soul is only too happy to take advantage of our vulnerabilities by

planting suggestions or outright lies that lodge below the surface and take root in our minds.

10 By the humility and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you—I, Paul, who am “timid” when face to face with you, but “bold” toward you when away! 2 I beg you that when I come I may not have to be as bold as I expect to be toward some people who think that we live by the standards of this world.

2 Corinthians 10:1-2 (NIV)

Paul is concerned about some who think that he was conducting his life by the same standards as everyone else. How does Paul’s first statement in verse 1 lead us to believe that he is bound by a different standard? What underlying thoughts may have led these people to judge Paul wrongly (e.g. jealousy, fear...)?

3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. - 2 Corinthians 10:3-4a NIV

12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. - Ephesians 6:12 NIV

Admittedly Paul, along with the rest of us, lives in a body of flesh and blood. But Paul sees himself as a soldier in God’s army, and the way he conducts warfare is not in a natural sense.

Who does Paul view as the enemy against whom he battles? What is the contrary, culturally popular opinion of a spiritual enemy? Do you find it easier to embrace the world’s viewpoint that Satan doesn’t exist?

Paul admonishes the church from a place of gentleness which reflects the character of Christ. His power and authority are based on the truth of God’s word, not conjecture or popular opinion. The world tells us the people who disagree with us are our enemies. But the bible tells us that spiritual forces of evil are the enemy and those people that have been deceived are the prisoners of war. Don’t shoot the prisoners, set them free and recognize who your real enemy is.

2. Battlefield and Weapons

Our war is waged against the strongholds of the enemy. A stronghold was a castle or fortress that was relied on to protect what was inside.

In verse 5 Paul explains that every thought, reasoning, judgment, speculation or argument that sets itself up against our understanding and knowledge of God are strongholds. These strongholds are not only found in the minds of the unsaved, but they also lie beneath the surface in the minds of believers. Paul is working to destroy and tear down those thoughts in the church.

4b ...On the contrary, they (our weapons) have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, ... - 2 Corinthians 10:4-5a NIV

13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. - Ephesians 6:13 NIV

Ephesians 6:14-17 lists our spiritual tools of warfare. How could each of these be used to tear down the enemy stronghold: belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, gospel of peace, shield of faith, helmet of salvation, the word of God?

3. Take Every Thought Captive

We are NOT just trying to win arguments but rather we are bringing all things under the Lordship of Christ. We apply this to our own thoughts first and to those in the church next. And we do this in the character of Christ which is in humility and love. Because we care about our brothers and sisters in Christ, we want them set free from harmful influences.

5b ... and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 6 And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete. - 2 Corinthians 10:5b-6 NIV

We want every thought to be obedient to Christ. The words for obedient and disobedient are from the root akouō which means to hear and respond. Who in your life has permission to challenge your thinking? Do you remember when someone you respect challenged an idea you embraced? Did you “hear and respond” by examining that belief through the lens of Jesus? How should you go about discerning what is against the knowledge of Christ?

We would rather have someone affirm ideas we carry beneath the surface rather than listen to someone who loves us enough to call it out of us and lead us towards surrender. If you find yourself being