**How Do We Take Our Thoughts Captive?**

*Taking your thoughts captive means choosing what you allow to take root in your mind. This looks like asking for God’s guidance, turning from sinful sources or behaviors, and maintaining a continual relationship with Scripture.*

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Choosing to live by faith can feel daunting this side of heaven, where spiritual forces abound and the enemy prowls around like a lion ([**1 Peter 5:8**](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=1+peter+5:8)). Often, we need to pick up our weapons ([**Ephesians 6:10-18**](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=ephesians+6%3a10-18)) and “demolish strongholds” as [**2 Corinthians 10:4**](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=2+corinthians+10:4) instructs.

It’s true that just as Satan deceived Adam and Eve in Genesis, and Jesus in [**Matthew 4**](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=matthew+4), he continues to whisper lies today. Sometimes we hear these lies from others; other times we believe them within.

Either way, [**2 Corinthians 10:5**](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=2+corinthians+10:5) offers a way out. And it’s not to simply succumb to the reality of negative thoughts — but to overcome them.

Paul explains that though we “live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does” ([**2 Corinthians 10:3**](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=2+corinthians+10:3)). Rather, we fight lies and [**temptation**](https://www.christianity.com/wiki/christian-terms/what-is-temptation-in-christianity.html) by taking thoughts captive.

Paul is emboldening Christians here to run *every single thought* by what we know to be true and ask ourselves if it’s “against the knowledge of God.”

**What Does ‘Taking Thoughts Captive’ Mean?**

As a way of life, taking your thoughts captive means choosing what you allow to take root in your mind. This looks like asking for God’s guidance, turning from sinful sources or behaviors, and maintaining a continual relationship with Scripture.

Knowing his Word is how we discern if a thought is a pretense that is setting itself up against God. Taking your thoughts captive means speaking God’s authority over them, and believing what God desires for you.

God doesn’t desire you to condemn yourself. He calls you to his mercy. And if your thoughts are making you feel unworthy and unlovable, it’s time to tell Satan to get back!

Author Christina Patterson says, “Our thoughts lead to our beliefs, which lead to our actions, which lead to the quality of our lives. Our thoughts have too great of an impact for us not to guard them and keep our mind on God's will.”

**The Context of**[**2 Corinthians 10:5**](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=2+corinthians+10:5)

In Paul’s day, Corinth was a city characterized by immoral pleasure-seeking. It was a center for Greek culture and pagan ceremonies. Materialism and depravity persisted, so Paul pleads for Christians to not compromise themselves. He is calling for mental clarity and spiritual [**humility**](https://www.christianity.com/wiki/christian-terms/what-does-humility-mean-in-the-bible-why-should-we-be-humble.html).

Paul reminds those who place their faith in Christ to boast in the Lord, not to commend themselves. His perspective here is in response to attacks on his ministry by those who see his hard work and suffering as undesirable by worldly standards, which is why this letter reminds us that we do not “live by the standards of the world” ([**2 Corinthians 10:2**](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=2+corinthians+10:2)).

In [**2 Corinthians 10**](https://www.biblestudytools.com/2-corinthians/10.html), Paul is exemplifying that in the midst of trials, believers shake off critics and cling to Christ’s teachings.

Have you ever had your faith knocked off-kilter by external or internal voices? Let’s consider four ways to take your thoughts captive.

**4 Ways to Take Every Thought Captive**

**1. Rise up and activate your whole being:**“*...*let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us...” ([**Hebrews 12:1**](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=hebrews+12:1)).

The [**Book of Hebrews confirms**](https://insight.org/resources/bible/the-general-epistles/hebrews) that the authority of Jesus supersedes all other voices, idols, or temptations. The writer is encouraging us, even today, to persevere.

It’s saying that even when we’re down, we are still surrounded by a supernatural cloud of witnesses to God’s majesty that will make the enemy his footstool.

When Satan is messing with your mind, you might find it helps to activate your body. Get up, change your surroundings, go for a walk — or even better — run. Cleanse whatever is clogging up your thoughts with the oxygen of God’s creation.

We are whole beings, and when our minds threaten to paralyze our bodies, it may be time to get fresh air.

**2. Release your thoughts through journaling or confession:**“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” ([**1 Peter 5:7**](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=1+peter+5:7)).

If your thoughts start imprisoning you in doubt, fear, or worry, it can feel like a tidal wave or a brick wall is forming. Sometimes just the motion of pen to paper (or to knees to the floor) can actually release the hold your thoughts have over you and cast them into the hands of God.

He is not afraid of your sinful thoughts, your tendency to idolize, your struggle to believe. You belong to him, and you don’t have to keep thoughts pent up, away from Him. Write, shout, or cry it out...and ask God what he would have you believe instead.

**3. Memorize the truth:** “Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” ([**Ephesians 6:17**](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=ephesians+6:17)).

A great way to take every thought captive is by creating “truth cards” that keep the voice of God top of mind. As your emptying your negative thoughts, consider capturing them as a lie on one side of an index card. Then replace that lie with a truth from Scripture on the other side.

Over time, learn to say these truths out loud when that negative thought tries to sneak its way into your mind. Read these truth cards regularly and let them flourish in your Spirit.

This is how we “demolish arguments and every pretension” and make our thoughts “obedient to Christ.”

**4. Pray continually:** “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests..” ([**Ephesians 6:18**](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=ephesians+6:18)).

You are not alone in the battle with your thoughts. At any time in any of the previous three steps, you can pray to God for guidance. While you’re exercising, journaling, searching for scriptural truths to replace lies that taunt you.

Prayer doesn’t have to be planned or perfect — that’s just another thought you can take captive. Prayer is offering your thoughts to God and asking for Him to shape them. It admits that He is the voice you seek.