

God's Recipe for Good Thoughts

1. The Key to Spiritual Growth Is Found in Thought/Attitude

- A. Many think only in terms of *action*: Being a good Christian means *doing* the right things.
1. This is true but doesn't go far enough. Proper motivation must underlie behavior - 1 Cor 13:1-3.
 2. It is difficult, if not impossible, to adequately change one's behavior without first changing one's thinking. This is why diets, exercise programs, New Year's resolutions last for a while and then fade.
- B. Two statements by Jesus on thought/behavior:
1. Mt 15:16-20 - Social scientists today try to blame such activity upon external forces which remove individual responsibility. But Jesus says they come "*out of the heart*," and man controls the condition of his own heart.
 2. Lk 6:43-45 - This does not mean that a bad person can do no good and a good person can do no bad. But the inner character of a person can be measured by the fruits of his life: his speech, his actions, his treatment of others.
 3. Our speech/action often betrays what we *really* think. When we blurt out something which embarrasses us, we try to defuse it by saying, "I didn't mean that." But we often **did** mean it; we just didn't mean to **say** it.
- C. We must, therefore, wage our spiritual warfare on the battleground of thought and attitude. The aim of the Christian is to bring "*every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*" (2 Cor 10:5).

2. Destructive Thought Patterns

- A. Worry/anxiety - Phil 4:6-7. Remember, Paul writes this *from prison*!
1. "*Sufficient for the day is its own trouble*" (Mt 6:34). We worry about paying bills, house/auto/appliance repairs, childrens' education/future, health problems, job insecurities, etc. Worldly entanglements will give us plenty to worry about.
 2. We worry when think we are left to our own to fight these battles. But we are rich, smart, lucky enough to prevent these problems. These things will not go

away! They are part of earthly life with which all must contend.

3. The **key**: trust in God's care and help "*will guard your hearts and minds.*"

B. Grudges/bitterness/lingering offense over mistreatment.

1. Forgiving those who hurt us is not an option but a **command**. See Jesus' sample prayer and comment: Mt 6:9-15. Other corrective steps are to be taken as well but the bottom line is that we must learn to forgive!
2. One of the main hurdles of forgiveness is **passive** self-pity. Some replay over and over again the wrong done to them. They constantly reinforce the thoughts of hurt, disappointment and agitation instead of taking steps to recover the friendship or turn their attention to helping/serving others.
3. Before we let our ego rule and fail to forgive those who dared hurt us, we must remember that **we** have failed and disappointed God many times over. His forgiveness of us is the pattern we must follow: Eph 4:32; Mt 18:21-35.

C. Friendship with the world.

1. "*Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God*" (Jas 4:4).
2. Some Christians spend all their time and energy gaining material things because they worship materialism. Some Christians are unfaithful to their mates because they indulge fleshly lusts. Some Christians create disturbances in the church because of their desire for prominence and domination.
3. But the biggest problem among Christians today, in my opinion, is lack of knowledge, half-hearted worship, and general immaturity - *spiritual dullness* - due to a preoccupation with worldly distractions.