# **Taking Thoughts Captive**

While listening in prayer, it’s critical to realize that not all of our thoughts come from ourselves. Our thoughts can come from three main places: ourselves, God, and the enemy. (Enemy here refers to any demonic entity opposed to God’s and His Kingdom’s purposes.) Consider the following passages.

Romans 12:2

*“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

2 Corinthians 10:5

*“[We are] destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and [we are] taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,”*

Notice that in our mind renewal process, we need to “prove” what God’s will is (Rom 12:2). Also, notice that we need to “destroy speculations” or anything that comes against the knowledge of God. We do this by “taking our thoughts captive” and “making them obedient.” Contrary to popular belief, not every thought you have comes from you. It is easy to experience this as you listen in prayer because God will answer questions you don’t know how to answer. Likewise, we see this when we are tempted. A thought passes through our mind, and depending on how vulgar or off-base the thought is, we immediately refute it and say, “No!”

To take a thought captive, we must become cognizant of it. Remember, in week four, we talked about the event sequence. Part of the value of that lesson is to slow you down and help you connect with what is going on in your head and heart. If you aren’t aware of your thoughts, you’re likely to go along with whatever crosses your mind.

**Discussion**: Have you ever had a thought that seemed so far-fetched that you weren’t sure where it came from? What did you do with that thought?

Don’t go down the rabbit hole! When the enemy whispers, reject that thought immediately. Don’t contemplate it. You don’t want to play “patty-cakes” with the enemy! 2 Cor 10:5 calls these thoughts “speculations” and “lofty things raised up against the knowledge of God.” Thoughts contradictory to scripture must be “taken captive” and “destroyed.”

Proverbs 23:7

*“7 For as he thinks within himself, so he is. …”*

**Discussion**: If you are what you think and not all thoughts come from you, how important is it that you take your thoughts captive?

Romans 7:14-25 talks about this thing in us called “sin.” According to this passage, sin is an internal motivator that causes us to do what we don’t want to do. (Notice the word is sin and not sins plural). Each person’s flesh is empowered by sin. We don’t need a devil sitting on our shoulder telling us to do bad things because we have a worldly mindset that defaults to self-sufficiency. When meeting or praying with someone, many people have said, “I hate doing this, but I can’t stop thinking about it.” We must realize that not everything is the flesh. Likewise, not everything comes from the devil. One way to tell the difference is if the person perpetually feels compelled to do something they find detestable but feel like they can’t stop. Often, there is a spiritual (demonic) root behind such thoughts.

In summary. To take our thoughts captive, we need to:

1. Recognize our thoughts
2. Identify their source
3. Compare our thoughts against the Word of God and what the Holy Spirit is telling us
4. Destroy, throw out, and cast down any thought contrary to God’s ways.
   1. If these thoughts are repetitive, this may be a good place for listening prayer to help identify why someone is continually struggling with these thoughts.
5. Lastly, testing our thoughts in a community provides an extra layer of validity.

1 Corinthians 10:13

*“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”*