Taking Thoughts Captive

2 Corinthians 10:5 states, "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". This verse highlights the importance of actively controlling thoughts rather than letting them control us.

What it means to take thoughts captive:

It's about actively examining thoughts, identifying those that are not in line with God's truth, and then choosing to reject them. It involves replacing negative or destructive thoughts with thoughts that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy, like Philippians 4:8 reads.

So, where are these thoughts coming from if they're not of God? They come from the enemy (Satan) or our flesh. With each thought we should ask ourselves, "where is this coming from and does it glorify God?" If the answer is no, we need to replace the lie (either from Satan or our flesh) with the truth (from God). And how do we replace with the truth? By reading God's word, memorizing and familiarizing ourselves with scripture and talking with Jesus daily; having a relationship with Him.

How to take thoughts captive:

-Recognizing: Being aware of the thoughts passing through your mind.
-Evaluating: Assessing whether those thoughts align with God's truth.
-Replacing: Actively choosing to replace negative or unhelpful thoughts with positive, God based ones.
-Seeking Support: Asking for the Holy Spirit's help in this process and potentially seeking guidance from our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Why it's important:

Taking thoughts captive is crucial for spiritual growth and transformation. It's a spiritual discipline with psychological benefits that gives you control over your mind and prevents destructive thought patterns from taking root. Thoughts influence actions. What you dwell on has a direct impact on your feelings, beliefs, and behavior. Allowing negative or harmful thoughts to run unchecked can lead to destructive outcomes. As Proverbs 23:7 states,

'as a person thinks in his heart, so is he". And Proverbs 4:23 says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

It helps in:

-**Demolishing Strongholds:** Breaking free from negative thought patterns that can hinder spiritual progress

  The phrase "demolishing strongholds" originates from 2 Corinthians 10:4, where Paul describes the spiritual warfare believers engage in. It refers to destroying barriers or obstacles that oppose God's truth, such as false teachings, pride, or unbelief. The strongholds can manifest as mental, emotional, or spiritual fortresses that hinder spiritual growth and obedience to Christ. Paul emphasizes that these battles are not fought with human strength but through divine power and the weapons of God, which include truth, righteousness, and prayer.

-**Transforming Thinking:**
Allowing God to reshape the way you think and process the world, or undergo a fundamental change from a worldly view to one that aligns with God's truth.

Romans 12:2- "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." This verse is a divine instruction to not conform to the world's patterns but to be transformed by the renewing of the mind.

-**Living a life aligned with God's will:** Living a life aligned with God's will involves surrendering our desires, plans, and thoughts to His perfect purposes, so that His ways become our ways. The Bible repeatedly emphasizes the importance of aligning our hearts, minds, and actions with God's divine plan. By reflecting on these truths and applying them to our daily lives, we can experience spiritual growth, peace, and purpose.

Practical Application:
Some practical ways to apply this concept include:
-Prioritizing time with God's word and prayer before engaging with other influences(like social media). When you wake up in the morning, before

your feet hit the floor or you roll over and scroll, talk to Dad. Pretty much talk to Him all day long!

-Using scripture to counter negative thoughts and reinforce positive ones. Use a bible memory app or if it helps to write, write down verses or make battle cards. I LOVE battle cards, and it's also a fun activity you can do with the kids as well. Carry them with you. Pull them out, use them! That could be a whole other lesson:-)

-Becoming more mindful of the influences you allow into your mind(media, conversations, etc). Bad company corrupts good morals, or evil company corrupts good habits, whichever version you prefer. I know for me, for a very long time I felt like I had an "inner voice" or "inner dialogue" and it was like it was my voice repeating things I had heard. This is a huge reason, other than the obvious of not wanting to hear people take My Lord's name in vain, but because I felt like things I would hear, would replay in my head, if that makes any sense. And I definitely didn't want GD going through my head. I absolutely hated it, Never really brought it up to anyone or asked about it until recently. I was talking to a very dear sister in Christ who said that can be a form of oppression. Now let me tell you, in the last few years, after my prodigal season, and The Lord brought me back, and I've gotten closer to Him and have grown, I can honestly say I barely ever even notice it. Like maybe here and there, if the enemy is really trying to get at me, but otherwise, it's almost like a calm, like it's quieter, very odd and amazing and hard to describe. But anywhoo. Lol.

6 Ways to take thoughts captive

1. **Accept responsibility for your thoughts.** You have the ability to exercise control over your thoughts. God warned Cain to focus his mind on the right things, but Cain chose to think about the wrong things-anger and jealousy-which led to his murderous actions. I can defitinitely tell you, I have practiced this and its true. My mom used to always tell me, think positive, if you think negatively, you'll more than likely have a negative outcome. There have been times where I may be feeling frustrated at work and if I let the enemy in and win, I'm gonna be angry and then I'm gonna feel bad and convicted because of the way I acted or

felt. **If I really just focus on talking to Jesus and laying it at His feet and giving it over to Him, there is such a peace and calm that comes over me and then I'm not frustrated!**

2. **Your mind, not just your behavior, must change.** God calls us to change sinful behavior that does not honor Him. Now I know, He changes our hearts but we still sometimes need to be mindful because we all fall short. Instead of focusing on your outward behavior, work on discipling your mind, from which the behaviors stem. "Allow God to transform you by the renewing of your mind." (Romans 12:2)

3. **Think through your problems rather than just react to them.** When you experience difficult challenges, you can react to them and think yourself into despair every time. Or you can look forward to the next opportunity and ask yourself what you learned from this failure. Is your first thought, "I'll never do anything right?" You don't have to get trapped by disabling thoughts. You are capable of getting out of your shame, despair, hopelessness, and anger by taking control of what your mind focuses on; taking your thoughts captive. This reminds me of one of my favorite verses, James 1:19 which says, "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger." Don't just respond with a quickness, sit, talk to God, give it to Him, and listen for a response. And if you don't get a response right away, that is a good time to practice patience and "slow to speak". Or Psalm 46:10:" Be still and know that I am God.' I used to be a people pleaser and would always try to be quick with an answer for someone, but The Lord has helped me to realize, they don't always need an answer right away, and I shouldn't feel uncomfortable or pressured to give one. I don't answer to anyone but God.

4. **Take your disabling thoughts captive through confession-** Paul urges us to "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (Romans 12:21). Confront your disabling thoughts. Turn them over to God and become who He sees you can be. It will take work to take your thoughts captive each time they pop into

your mind. But it's possible with the help of The Holy Spirit. It is a process and it will take time, discipline, and obedience.

5. **Choose to focus your thoughts on the right things.** We are to think about those things that are, "true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable". (Philippians 4:8) When we think about those things, God promises to give us His peace. What a contrast of thoughts that is to the thoughts of millions of people today. Don't look to a movie, TV show, or how-to formula to accomplish this for you. It takes personal discipline and commitment. One of the easiest ways to take your thoughts captive is to fill your mind with the things of Christ.

6. **Believe it is possible to take your thoughts captive.** It is not easy to retrain your thoughts or to respond in new Christ-like ways. Take heart; as God empowers you to focus your mind on the right things, it will become easier. You can develop a new frame of reference, based on what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy like Philippians 4:8 says.

Benefits of taking thoughts captive:
-Renewed Mind: By aligning our thinking with God's truth, we can experience a renewal of our minds.
-Spiritual Growth: This practice leads to spiritual growth and maturity as we become more like Christ.
-Greater Peace and Joy: When we are able to control our thoughts, we experience greater peace and joy. When you're constantly having an "inner dialogue" in your head of things you don't want to have, it can get very frustrating and exhausting. Like I said previously, I used to deal with that but God has helped me break free. Some things that help are to listen to Christian podcasts or music and not to have the "worldly noise" in my ears. Which is yet another reason it is imperative to guard your ear gates and be aware of what you're letting in. Even if you just have something on as "background noise" and don't think you're paying attention, its still seeping in.
-Positive impact: Taking thoughts captive can have a positive impact on our emotions, behavior, and overall well-being.

If you're struggling with feelings of inadequacy, you can take those thoughts captive by remembering God's truth about your worth and value in His eyes. You can replace negative self-talk with positive affirmations based on Scripture, such as,

"I am fearfully and wonderfully made". (Psalm 139:14)

" I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13)

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17)

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace". (Ephesians 1:7)

"He has saved us and called us to a holy life- not because of anything we have done but because of His own purpose and grace. The grace was given us in Christ Jesus, before the beginning of time. (2 Timothy 1:10)

"Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God." (2 Corinthians 3:5)