

What Are You Thinking?

A Godly Response to a Pandemic – Part 7

Series Overview

Proverbs 27:1 says, “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.” The COVID-19 outbreak certainly shows that this is true. When 2020 began, we had no idea we would face this new kind of challenge. Though it caught us by surprise, we know God was not surprised. He knew this would happen and will guide us through this challenging time.

This study guide is the second in a new Faith Baptist Bible study series called “A Godly Response to a Pandemic.” Each lesson will provide biblical teaching that enables us to think, feel, and live in a Christlike way throughout this pandemic experience.

Together, we’ll tackle topics like fear, anxiety, and loneliness. We’ll also examine our behavior as a church. Most importantly, we’ll learn about our loving, sovereign God who is all-knowing, almighty, always present, and trustworthy in every way.

Series Guidelines

This series will continue throughout our period of “social isolation” in New York City. To participate, please take the following approach.

1. A new study guide will be provided each Saturday at Shepherd Thoughts. You can follow the guide online or download and print it as a PDF.
2. Use each guide for an in-home Bible study from 9:30-10:30 a.m. on Sunday.
3. If you live with a Christian family, you can study together. If not, try studying together with another believer from Faith by phone or internet using a service like Facebook Video Chat, Google Hangouts, Skype, or Zoom.
4. For each study: (1) begin with prayer, (2) read the Scripture passage, (3) work through the study guide, then (4) end with prayer.
5. Then tune in early to the Faith Baptist Livestream on Facebook at 10:45 a.m. to post questions, feedback, and comments about the lesson. Pastor Overmiller will respond to your feedback before the 11:00 a.m. service begins.
6. You can also leave comments on the blogsite at the end of the study guide page and Pastor Overmiller will respond by sometime Sunday.
7. As a bonus, memorize a verse or more from the passage and think about it throughout the week ahead.

Lesson Introduction

Our minds are an especially important place. What happens there affects the outcomes of our lives. Though our thoughts don’t determine what happens to us directly, they do determine how we respond to the information, people, and circumstances we encounter, which leads to certain responses, results, and consequences, whether good or bad.

As we wait out the shelter-in-place guidelines given for this COVID19 pandemic, we may be aware of our inner thoughts now more than ever. So, let's pause to consider what we're thinking about these days.

We may be allowing ourselves to think about the wrong things, with so little change of scenery and so much opportunity to be idle. As the saying goes, "An idle mind is the devil's workshop – or playground." Fake news, wrong conclusions, bad images, sinful temptations, selfish motives, juicy gossip, conspiracy theories, irrational plans, depressing introspection, and baseless fears can overrun the airwaves of our minds.

So, let's do something special. Let's take inventory of our thoughts right now. Then, let's "step up to the plate" and make more regular, deliberate choices to get the right kind of thoughts into our minds during the week ahead. Let's make our self-isolation this springtime a time when godly thoughts blossom in our minds.

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

Study Guide

Consider the Background

Paul wrote the book of Philippians as a letter to the church in the city of Philippi (Phil 1:1). They were worried about Paul's imprisonment in Rome and perhaps a bit distracted by it (Phil 1:29-30). They were struggling with self-centered thoughts rather than focusing on one another (Phil 2:4), and some of them were even engaged in a public feud (Phil 4:2).

Paul wrote this letter to help the church to get their thoughts back on track as they faced some trials. If you want, you can skim through the book for yourself to see how many times words like *mind*, *think*, *consider*, *count*, and *meditate* occur. (It's a lot!) If you're struggling with your thoughts, the book of Philippians is a good place to turn.

Examine the Scripture

There's a sense in which Phil 4:8 is an overview of Paul's purpose for this entire letter.

- What is the main command in this verse?
- How do other English translations translate this command?

The word *meditate* or *think* is a translation of the Greek word *logizomai*, from which we get our mathematical word *logarithm*. Paul is teaching us to give the same kind of deliberate, thoughtful contemplation of the virtues he mentions as we might give to working out a difficult mathematical problem.

This word is also given in the present tense, which indicates that the “thinking” Paul is talking about here should happen repeatedly in our minds as our normal thought process, not just on rare occasions.

Examine the Scripture

- “True” thoughts refer to what is accurate, real, and genuine as opposed to what is inaccurate, unsubstantiated, and fake. There’s a lot of information floating around, a high percentage of which is totally false or partially false and is therefore useless.
- “Noble” thoughts refer to lofty, majestic, and awesome things that lift the mind above the world’s pettiness, dirt, and scandal. Whatever is morally excellent, dignified, and worthy of honor.

Ask Yourself Some Questions

- What are some inaccurate or unsubstantiated things that can occupy our minds right now? How can we replace them with true thoughts?
- Name some “noble” things that would be worth thinking about this week?

Examine the Scripture

- “Just” thoughts refer to that which is right and fair to all parties, fulfills all obligations, and satisfies outstanding debts. Thinking “right” thoughts steers us away from controversies and arguments by thinking about the needs and rights of other people.
- “Pure” thoughts refer to what is morally appropriate and clean. It describes a mind with a single focus, one that doesn’t commit “adultery” or “fornication” physically, mentally, or spiritually. It’s thoughts that are free from the world’s dirt, scandal, and hypocrisy.

Ask Yourself Some Questions

- Rather than focusing on ourselves, how can we give thought to “just” things that help meet the needs of other people?
- How can we avoid “impure” thoughts and have a “pure” mind instead?

Examine the Scripture

- “Lovely” thoughts refer to things that attract, please, and cause people to admire God. This includes moral and aesthetic/artistic beauty, all that is beautiful in creation – from a sunset to a symphony, “all things bright and beautiful” as [this song reminds us](#). (Go ahead and click the link to listen to this song and think about its lyrics. If you do, it’s just one of many ways to do what Paul is teaching in this verse!)
- Thoughts of “good report” are commendable things, things that are worthy of praise, things that others will admire rather than argue about. Things that cause others to nod their head and say, “Now *that’s good!* I *like* that! Well done, well said!”
- “Virtuous” thoughts refer to morally excellent things.
- “Praiseworthy” thoughts refer to things that inspire us to praise God.

Ask Yourself Some Questions

- Describe some “lovely” things that are worth thinking about this week and what can you do to expand your awareness to these things?
- How can you feed your mind with good thoughts this week? What resources can help you do this?
- Is there anything else that’s morally excellent and inspires praise to God that you could think about this week in a thoughtful, deliberate way?

Conclusion

In the week ahead, let’s pay better attention to our thoughts. Let’s weed out wrong and unhelpful things from our minds and spend more time and attention concentrating on the kind of things that Paul teaches in this verse. Most of all, let’s think more about Christ and the truth of God’s Word. By improving what happens in our minds in reliance upon God, we’ll be able to rise above our current struggles and rejoice in any circumstance.

Share Your Feedback

Now that you’ve finished this study, don’t forget to tune in early to the Faith Baptist Livestream on Facebook at 10:45 a.m. to post questions, feedback, and comments about the lesson! Pastor Overmiller will respond to your feedback before the 11:00 a.m. service begins.