

LESSON 11 - YOUR GATE

Guard and Control Your Thoughts, They're the Gate to Your Mind and Soul

By Brian S. Holmes

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What thoughts enter your mind during the day? Does your mind run on autopilot, or are you watching and judging the thoughts that enter? Your thoughts are the gate to your mind and soul. In a previous lesson we looked at how our thoughts are the entry point which then grow into beliefs, feelings, behavior, and finally identity. If we don't critically examine our thoughts and control them, harmful thoughts can enter, progress, and seriously hinder our faith and walk with Jesus.

Examine the Four Places Thoughts Come From. The following diagram comes from *Driveway Discipleship* by Pastor Brian S. Holmes. Thoughts come from one of four sources. We'll examine each in a minute. But first picture a square divided into four separate, equal-sized squares, two on the top and two on the bottom. The *top* two squares are sources of good, helpful, beneficial thoughts. The *bottom* two squares are sources of bad, detrimental, harmful thoughts. The two squares on the left are sources of thoughts that are *supernatural, external* influences, that come from *outside* of us. These thoughts come into our mind from another's mind. They're not our thoughts, they don't originate within us. The two squares on the right are sources of *natural, internal* thoughts that do come from within us.

The **top left square** is God/Holy Spirit. These are thoughts that come from God to the born again Christian by the Holy Spirit now living within. These thoughts teach, lead, and guide us into all truth, mature our faith/relationship, and develop our godliness. God reveals His will for us to trust and obey. These thoughts will always be in accord with His already revealed and inspired Word (the Bible). These will always glorify God and be God/Christ/Gospel-centered. The **bottom left square** is Satan and all his demonic forces. These thoughts come from our enemy and teach lies, provoke rebellion to God, try to destroy our faith, provide sinful temptations, and cause or influence further brokenness and suffering. Their objective is to mislead humanity, build their satanic kingdom, and destroy the Church. The **top right square** is our Flesh, the natural, neutral, or sometimes good aspects of our human nature and free will being led by the human conscience. These thoughts come from within ourselves and will be related to our physical body and soul (mind, will, emotions). These are thoughts of non-sinful desires, goals, behaviors, and identities that are still nonetheless worldly, temporary, and human-centered. The **bottom right square** is our Flesh, the broken aspects of our fallen human nature led by sinful desires, goals, behaviors, and identities, and those of the World, which are all corrupted by sin and demonic influence.

Guard Your Thoughts. The first step in learning how to control your thoughts is to guard them in the first place. Whenever a thought pops in your mind, examine it! Study, prepare, and discipline yourself beforehand, so you can know, recognize, and reject 100% of those thoughts that come from Satan/demons. These are outside attacks. They're not *your* thoughts so you *don't* need to repent for them or ask God for forgiveness. Just rebuke them and the source of where they come from and declare the biblical truths about God, the Gospel, your new identity in Christ, etc. Jesus demonstrates how to do this in Matthew 4 during His own temptation by Satan in the wilderness. Next, there are those thoughts that are embraced by the sinful world and those that come from the broken and sinful desires of your own heart, mind, and body. These *are* a part of your own sin nature so they *will* be coming from within you (cf. Matthew 15:19). You can repent and ask for forgiveness for these thoughts if part of you desires and enjoys them. But more importantly you need to do the following three things. First, seek to immediately recognize them as sinful and intentionally reject them, and cast them out of your mind as soon as they enter. Second, in those moments quickly give them to the Holy Spirit and ask Him to remove them and to replace them with thoughts that glorify God and empower you to become more like Jesus. Third, let the prayer of your heart be that He sanctifies and brings healing to that part of your sin nature, taking away your desire and enjoyment of sin, and to replace it with godly values and desires. Lastly, there are those thoughts that come from the natural and neutral parts of your flesh. These may include things like health, family, food, shelter, career, finances, life goals, hobbies, etc. These are not *bad*, but they aren't *best*. These thoughts are still human-centered, temporary, and passing away. In Matthew 16:23 Jesus said to Peter, who at the moment was being led by Satan, "*you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.*" You need to *limit* your focus on these man-centered things because even though they're not sinful, they're still worldly and can quickly become selfish and contrary to the will of God.

Submit and Direct Your Thoughts. As Philippians 4 teaches, you need to intentionally deny all anxiety, and commit to have a continuous posture of gratitude towards God. An ongoing lifestyle of prayer, supplication, thanksgiving, and practice of godliness will ensure that the God of peace is always with you. Then, as Philippians 4:7 says, "*the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*" If we guard our thoughts, then *God* will guard our hearts and minds. So, allow only flesh thoughts that are good and beneficial, but foremost desire those thoughts coming from the Holy Spirit. Focus your mind and heart on those thoughts that produce the fruit of the Spirit and force your flesh to be in submission to, and led by, the Spirit. As verse 8 says, "*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*" As 2 Corinthians 10:5 says, we need to "*take every thought captive to obey Christ.*"

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, as it says in Romans 12:2, help me not to be conformed to this world, or my own flesh nature, but to transformed by the renewing of my mind, so that I can walk in your good and perfect will. Help me, as Proverbs 4:23 says, to guard my heart with all diligence, for from it flow springs of life. Sanctify my heart wholly. Guide and empower my thought life. In Jesus' name. Amen.

IDENTIFY WHERE YOUR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS COME FROM

	External / Supernatural	Internal / Natural
Good Helpful Beneficial	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>GOD</u> <u>(Holy Spirit)</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. From God's Spirit 2. Seeks to Glorify God 3. Eternal Life-Minded 4. God/Gospel-Centered 5. Godly/Christlike Behavior 6. God's Will 7. Godly Identity & Goals 8. Fruit of the Spirit 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>FLESH</u> <u>(Neutral)</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. From Pure Body & Soul 2. Seeks to Better Life 3. Earthly Life-Minded 4. God's-Design Influenced 5. Non-Sinful Behavior 6. Good Exercise of Free Will 7. Human Identity & Goals 8. Fruit of the Conscience
Bad Harmful Detrimental	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>SATAN</u> <u>(Demons)</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. From Demonic spirits 2. Seeks to Elevate Them 3. Satanic Kingdom-Minded 4. Antichrist/Anti-Gospel 5. Wicked/Toxic Behavior 6. Satan/Demonic Will 7. Demonic Identity & Goals 8. Fruit of Ungodly Rebellion 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>FLESH</u> <u>(Sinful)</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. From Impure Body & Soul 2. Seeks to Increase Sin 3. Earthly Life-Minded 4. Self, Pleasure, Idolatry 5. Sinful Behavior 6. Sinful Exercise of Free Will 7. Sinful Identity & Goals 8. Fruit of the Fallen Nature