



Holy Spirit led. Grace filled. Life changing.

Process to 'take every thought captive to obey Christ'

I love this verse from St. Paul (2 Corinthians 10:5). He's telling us that we don't have to believe every thought we think! In fact, we aren't to believe or succumb to a thought, without first "taking it captive to obey Christ." Meaning, we must become aware of those thoughts we think that are not in alignment with the Truth of Christ. Let's just call them what they are, lies.

The steps that follow outline a process for discerning the lies we tell ourselves through the thoughts we think each day: Lies about ourselves, about others, or about our circumstances.

1. **Begin with prayer.** Oh Lord, through the words of St. Paul, You instruct us NOT to blindly believe every thought that pops into our minds, but to "take every thought captive to obey Christ." Please show me how to do this in my daily life. Which thought is it time for me to bring before You for evaluation? Which thought am I thinking that pulls me away from You and the plan You have for my day today? Please grant me the grace to see myself more clearly, as You see me, and not through the lens of my own self-perception. Please also grant me discernment to recognize the thoughts that You wish for me to now release and the courage to do so. I ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.
2. **Listen within and begin to capture the lies that show up in your inner dialogue.** Select at least two 10-minute timeslots each day, when you will sit with your notebook or journal. It is often helpful to allot this time within specific contexts (i.e.: on your lunch break, immediately after work, after an interaction with my husband/significant other/son/daughter, etc). During these timeslots, follow the steps below:
 - a. Sit still, close your eyes, and take a few slow, deep breaths. Call to mind the events of the past few hours; your interactions with others, your actions and reactions.
 - b. Recall the thoughts you are aware of thinking during your interactions. What have you been telling yourself? What do you tell yourself about YOU, about others, about the circumstances of your day? Capture your inner conversation in your journal or notebook.
3. **After 3 or 4 days of reflecting and recording snippets of your inner dialogue, read through what you've written.** What themes or patterns do you notice?

4. **Make 2 columns or sections on your journal page.** In one, list any self-critical or self-judgmental thoughts & messages. In the other, list any self-supportive or self-affirming thoughts & messages.

5. **Choose one thought...** Look at the list of self-critical or self-judgmental thoughts you wrote down in the last exercise. It is helpful to start by working with one thought at a time. Choose the one you'd like to work with and walk through the steps below. Write your responses in your journal or notebook:
 - a. In what way is this thought 'obedient to Christ?' In what way is it not obedient to Christ? For example, I noticed thoughts in my inner conversation that told me I didn't belong or fit in. And as a result I had a behavior pattern of keeping myself separate from others. This is not of Christ! He's called me to be in community. He also calls me to believe in His love for me and, therefore, to believe that I am beloved, that I DO belong.
 - b. How do I feel when I'm thinking this thought? What sensations or emotions do I notice in my body? (i.e.: heaviness in my chest, weight on my shoulders, butterflies in my stomach, sadness, disappointment, etc.)
 - c. How does thinking this thought impact my mood? My interactions with others? When I am believing this thought, what happens in my relationships?
 - d. Ask yourself, What's true about this thought? What's not true about it? For example, it may have been true that I did not completely fit in with the athletic crowd (athletics is not my gift!). But it is NOT true to generalize that thought and believe that I don't fit in *anywhere*, or with *anybody*. That is obviously not a true thought.
 - e. If I were to rewrite this thought, what would be a more truthful version? For example, if your thought is "You really messed up," perhaps it's also true that you successfully completed 3 other items, in addition to the mistakes you made. When I change my thought from "You really messed up!" to "Well, that didn't work out so well, let's try that again," or something similar, we grow in the necessary life skill of self-compassion and self-acceptance.

6. **Read through what you've written.** Read back through your evaluation of the thought you took captive in the steps above. What, if anything, stands out most for you about your evaluation?

Walk through the process above with your other self-critical or judgmental thoughts. This can be done over time; don't expect to do this all in one sitting. I pray the Lord's grace upon you as you do this important work of identifying the lies in your inner conversations, and rewriting them to be self-compassionate and in alignment with the Truth!