

## ***Jesus Wept: The Bible and Human Emotions***

### ***Good Thinking***

Lesson #6 for February 5, 2011

Scriptures: Mark 7:21-23; Luke 6:45; Acts 14:2; 15:24; Galatians 3:1; Psalm 19:14; Colossians 3:1-17.

1. How do we teach ourselves to think only good thoughts? What is the relationship between human emotions and good thinking? Can we actually control our thoughts? With all of the media using every means they know to get our attention, can we focus only on what is good? If so, how? Could we possibly prevent temptation? Was Jesus able to prevent temptation? Is it true—as some have suggested—that sin cannot be stamped out; it can only be crowded out?
2. One effective way of dealing with many mental problems is called cognitive-behavioral therapy. It is “based on the assumption that most psychological problems are improved by identifying and changing inaccurate and dysfunctional perceptions, thoughts, and behaviors.” (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, January 29, 2011)
3. What is the relationship between our personal thought patterns and the conscience? Does our everyday thinking contribute in any way to our conscience? Is conscience made up of our life’s experience of what is good and what is bad?
4. It is a well-known fact that people who are depressed see almost every situation in a negative way. People who are anxious view every circumstance with apprehension. And people with low self-esteem always judge others as having better luck or being more successful than they are. These are called biases. Should Christians have biases? Is it foolish to accept Genesis 1-11 as an accurate record of real events? Some “scientists” firmly believe that those chapters are nothing but “myth.” People tend to focus on the “evidence” that favors their own life view—their paradigm.
5. Christians often suggest that the solution to those problems is to allow God, the Holy Spirit, or Christ to control our thoughts. To what extent is that possible? Is it God’s goal to control our thoughts? Why is self-control the last—and possibly the most important—portion of the fruit of the Spirit noted in Galatians 5:22,23? Does God want us to be robots? Or, does He want us to learn the right kind of thought patterns so that we can exercise righteous, holy, and healthy self-control? Can the Holy Spirit control our behavior without controlling our thoughts?
6. None of us need to be convinced that thoughts lead to actions. We know that certain thoughts trigger a chain of thinking which produces certain behaviors. If that is the case, is it not true that if we can avoid the triggers, we would be able to prevent the sinful desire or the sinful act? Remember that the Devil would love to control our thoughts!
7. James, the older brother of Jesus, talked about where temptation comes from. (James 1:13-15) What does that suggest about controlling our thoughts? Read Romans 8:5-8. Are these verses in contradiction to Galatians 5:22,23 which was written just a short time earlier by Paul?
8. Some people have a very strong “constitution” like a “stubborn Dutchman from South Dakota,” and they can apparently control their behaviors despite what is going on in their minds. Is that what God asks for? How does that relate to Paul’s discussion of the struggle with sin? (Romans 7:14-25) Did Paul lose his “self-control”? Are we bound to be controlled by either the Holy Spirit or the Devil? Do we have a choice between those two? Daily?
9. The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. **This will lead us to do right because it is right**—because right doing is pleasing to God. *Christ’s Object*

How can we develop the habit of doing right because it is right? Does this require a higher level of maturity?

10. We need a constant sense of the ennobling power of pure thoughts. The only security for any soul is right thinking. As a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he." Proverbs 23:7. The power of self-restraint strengthens by exercise. That which at first seems difficult, by constant repetition grows easy, until right thoughts and actions become habitual. If we will we may turn away from all that is cheap and inferior, and rise to a high standard; we may be respected by men and beloved of God.—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, August 23, 1905; *MH* 491.3; Compare *Lt* 123, 1904; *IHP* 164; *1MCP* 235.4.

We are changed daily by what we put into our minds. "By beholding we are changed." (GC 555) Can we avoid all of the evil media that is around us? How do we reach out to people whose whole thinking is full of what they see/hear through the media? How did Jesus reach people?

11. What would you do if one day you were required to spell out before a group of friends everything you had thought the previous day? Would it be embarrassing? What would you say? But isn't God privy to all our thoughts?
12. Read Philippians 4:8. How do we fill our minds with all these wonderful things? Does a good Christian life filled with Bible study, prayer, and witnessing help us to control our thoughts?
13. Psychologists tell us about "self talk." What is that? What do we tell ourselves—either in the form of rationalization or encouragement—that impacts our behavior and the rest of our thoughts?
14. Where do our feelings come from? Are they independent from our thoughts? Do thoughts produce feelings? Or, do feelings produce thoughts? Or, both? If we allow the Spirit to come into our thoughts and as far as possible guide our thoughts, does that help? How does that actually work in practical experience? What impact does what we see on television, what we hear on the radio, and what we see on the internet have on our thoughts?
15. Virtually all of us would be ready to admit that God can deal with any problem that we might face. So, why is it that we have so much trouble? Does it seem like we have to deal with temptations by ourselves? When temptations come, what is the best way to call for the Spirit's help?
16. Thoughts can be very powerful. There are documented cases where people have died because they believed they were cursed or because they believed it was time for them to die.
17. Read Acts 14:2; 15:24; Galatians 3:12. Clearly, these verses indicate that evil people were pretending to be church members and were upsetting other church members by what they were saying. Should such people be thrown out of the church? How should we relate to people in our own churches who seem to be determined to tear things apart?
18. To what extent should we allow circumstances to control our thoughts and feelings?

If you do not feel lighthearted and joyous, do not talk of your feelings. Cast no shadow upon the lives of others. A cold, sunless religion never draws souls to Christ. It drives them away from Him into the nets that Satan has spread for the feet of the straying.—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, page 488.1 (1905); *2MCP* 758.2; *HDL* 29.2.

Smile, parents; smile, teachers. If your heart is sad, let not your face reveal the fact. Let the sunshine from a loving, grateful heart light up the countenance. Unbend from your iron dignity, adapt yourselves to the children's needs, and make them love you. You must win their affection, if you would impress religious truth upon their heart.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, March 21, 1882, par. 13; *FE* 68.3; *CG* 148.1; *AH* 432.2.

That God loves you is a fact! That is not changed by your emotions.

19. Can you remember a time when someone's words severely impacted you negatively? What happened? Why did those words impact you so badly?
20. Most of us remember the story of Jim Jones and the 909 men, women, and children who died in a mass suicide/murder which occurred on November 18, 1978 in Guyana. Why do you think Jim Jones had so much evil influence over those people?
21. Think of others who have had massive impact on large populations such as Hitler. Hitler was an excellent manipulator of crowds.
22. How often do we allow circumstances to negatively impact our thinking? Dr. Richard Nies, a clinical and experimental psychologist known to many of us here at Loma Linda, explained that if we allow our minds to be controlled by circumstances, then when the time comes, the Devil will control us through manipulation of those circumstances. **In effect, that will be demon possession.** Even while hanging on the cross, Jesus was thinking good thoughts!
23. How often do we take time to memorize, to think about, to meditate on, and to analyze the words of Scripture? When things happen in our daily lives, is it easy for us to think of a biblical response to our circumstances? Do biblical ideas come readily to mind? Or, do we sooner think of movies, current news, or personal experience?
24. In our day, the Devil is using every means in his power to eliminate the influence of Scripture. Through television, through the Internet, and through the teachings of evolution as science, our young people are being influenced to set aside God and His way of thinking.
25. How can we learn to practice the presence of God? Do we pray frequently during the day even while we are busy doing other things? Is it easy to be tempted while you are praying? If we practice the presence of God and are constantly thinking toward God in an attitude of prayer, is that a safeguard against wrong thinking?
26. The Bible repeatedly states that good trees produce good fruit, but an evil heart will produce evil deeds, etc. (Luke 6:43-45; Mark 7:21-23) "Love can no more exist without revealing itself in outward acts than fire can be kept alive without fuel."—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 625.
27. Many people in our day like to live the party life. Even those who claim to be Christians think of God very seldom except perhaps while they are in church. What are the chances that an attitude like that and a lifestyle like that will adequately prepare us for heaven? Is thinking about heaven really only a "pie-in-the-sky bye-and-bye" kind of thinking?
28. Some of us have accepted what we call the larger-view, trust, healing model of the plan of salvation. This leads to a life-transforming perspective altering our understanding of the Scriptures. Does that approach help us to live lives that are more Christ-like?
29. The Bible often talks about the thoughts of the heart. (1 Kings 8:39; Psalm 19:14; 1 Chronicles 28:9; 1 Samuel 16:7) What are the thoughts of the heart? Does the heart do any thinking at all? In both the Old Testament and New Testament, the word *heart* is used to mean our inmost thoughts and emotions, activities which actually occur in the brain.
30. Do we have any questions about the fact that God can read our minds? (Psalm 139) Can Satan read our thoughts?

Satan cannot read our thoughts, but he can see our actions, hear our words; and from his long knowledge of the human family, he can shape his temptations to take advantage of our weak points of character. And how often do we let him into the secret of how he may obtain the victory over us. Oh, that we might control our words and actions!—Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*, May 19, 1891; *FLB* 327.7; *2MCP* 494.2; *OFC* 85.9; *TMK* 279.5.

31. How good are we at reading the thoughts of others? How often do we misread their motives?
32. There is a modern expression connected to our computer generation called "garbage in,

garbage out.” Does that apply to our thinking as well?

33. Read Colossians 3:16. How do we allow the message of Christ and the faith of Christ to live in our hearts?
34. Read *Acts the Apostles*, p. 518. How do we “guard the avenues of our minds”?
35. In recent times, the mass media—especially in movies and television—have developed incredible abilities to deceive the human eyes and mind. Through manipulating media, they are able to make it appear like humans can fly, jump over buildings, live through terrible accidents, etc. How is that impacting the thinking of our young people? Are our children beginning to live in a make-believe world?
36. Try an experiment someday. Take a page from a newspaper or magazine. As you scan over it, ask yourself what the author is trying to get you to think even though it is not actually printed on the page. How many subtle influences of this nature do we come in contact with every day? Ask yourself questions like:

What are you trying to get me to believe? What assumptions, values, and worldview underlie the messages you’re giving me? Are these acceptable to my worldview? Do they line up with my values and the “eternal perspective” given to me by Christ? *Adult Teacher’s Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, p. 73

37. Read Colossians 3:1-17. This is a wonderful passage talking about how to live peaceful, compassionate, kind, gentle, patient lives. How do we do that? Is it always easy to forgive one another? Is it easy to add love to our lives? Can we do everything in the name of Jesus? We live in a time when temptations and implied evils are around us on every side. When we find ourselves in that kind of situation, it might be necessary to just move to a different setting!
38. Video games are being invented to suggest every kind of sin you can possibly imagine. How do we convince our young people to stay away from those things?
39. Satan was able to succeed in convincing one third of the angels to give up their lives of loving, peaceful coexistence in exchange for taking the selfish approach. This far from the tree of life and the Garden of Eden, what chance do we have to fight back those influences? The great controversy is very real. Only through a constant, ever-growing relationship with Jesus Christ can we hope to succeed in beating back the influences of the Devil.

Every impure thought defiles the soul, impairs the moral sense, and tends to obliterate the impressions of the Holy Spirit. It dims the spiritual vision, so that men can not behold God. The Lord may and does forgive the repenting sinner; but tho forgiven, the soul is marred. All impurity of speech and thought must be shunned by him who would have clear discernment of spiritual truth.

Evil thoughts destroy the soul. The converting power of God changes the heart, refining and purifying the thoughts. Unless a determined effort is made to keep the thoughts centered on Christ, grace cannot reveal itself in the life. The mind must engage in the spiritual warfare. Every thought must be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. All the habits must be brought under God’s control.—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, August 23, 1905 par. 4; compare *Desire of Ages* 302.2

40. The war is on. We are in the middle of it. The final battles are just before us. Are we fighting on the right side? Do we understand what the war is really about?

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