

Think
on these things

Philippians 4:6-9



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(6) Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

(7) And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

(8) Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

(9) Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

There is a saying, “change your thoughts, change your life” and the Bible supports this idea. To see what it has to say, let’s look at the phrase “be careful for nothing”. We will use *Blue Letter Bible* (BLB) which is available as a free app. Open it, and then find the book of Philippians in the New Testament, chapter 4.

Tap on verse 6 and a menu will open up, choose Interlinear. Scroll down until you see “be careful” and tap on the number beside it. This takes you to the Greek dictionary for this word. Read through the Outline of Biblical Usage and then scroll down to see where else this word is used. Take notes.

Do the same thing for the word “nothing”.

Then go back to Philippians 4 and tap on verse 6 and choose Text Commentaries. Scroll down to *Matthew Henry*, and choose “Commentary on Philippians 4”. Scroll down to roman numeral “V” and read that paragraph.

What have you discovered about this phrase? How do the cares of life distract us from trust in our Heavenly Father?

BUT - instead we are to pray about everything!

Let's take a look at the words "prayer" and "supplication". Open BLB and find Philippians 4. Tap on verse 6 and then scroll down to the word "prayer" and tap on the number beside it. What does it mean? Scroll down to see how it is used elsewhere. You may need to tap on the individual verses to open up the chapter so you can read the context. Do the same for "supplication". How are these words different? What is being prayed about? Take notes.

Using what you have found out and your own life circumstances, make a list of things you should pray about instead of worry about.

What do our minds and hearts do when difficult things happen? Think about the kind of difficulties the early church faced: hatred, persecution, prison, loss of everything... Fear, worry, doubt, sadness, anxiety are all possible reactions. But those who trust in the Lord can be safe from this. We can think of ourselves as inside a strong castle, protected and provided for. A good Psalm to read about this is 91.

Paul had experienced many dark moments which he speaks of in verses 11-13. He had been brought faithfully through all of his experiences and could lean on the knowledge that nothing could destroy him while he had Christ to strengthen him.

Reflect on the dark moments in your life and how you have been brought through them, and allow this to encourage you so that you can put aside any worries and anxieties about anything.

Before we look at the things to think about, let's look at the word "think". Why is it important how we think?

Every movement we intentionally make, starts out as a thought. The way that we think about something, affects how we feel about it, which in turn affects how we act.

Open up BLB and find Philippians 4, tap on verse 8 and open the Interlinear from the menu. Scroll down to the end of the verse to find the word " think". Tap on the number, and then find Thayer's Greek Lexicon. Open the full view and then scroll down to find the number 3 and read the definition there, as well as the further definition for " a". Write it down and then go back and find the KJV Translation count. How else is this word translated?

There are several Greek words for “thinking” that could have been used here such as one that means “to ponder”, one that means “ to have an opinion”, or one that means “to surmise”. How is the one that was chosen different?

There is thinking that comes naturally to us, but the thinking here is purposeful thinking, looking at the world through a particular point of view. A positive point of view - not pretending the bad doesn’t exist, but taking into account the good that does.

We are all probably pretty clear on the differences between true and false, so what do we need to change about our thinking to think about things that are true?

Open BLB and find Philippians 4, tap on verse 8, and then tap on “true”. First, notice what part of speech this word is. It is an adjective, a word that describes a noun or pronoun. It is also interesting to look at the “etymology” of this word. It is from two words... What do they mean? How does this help your understanding of what is true?

Now go back to the verse, open the menu again and choose Dictionaries. Scroll down to *Naves Topical Bible*, tap on it and then scroll down to “truth”. Open that and read through all the ways this concept is used in the Bible. Take notes.

How can you think about what is true... Not just ponder, or consider, or have an opinion about what is true, but count up, and reason through what is true?

One way of looking at this word is to count your blessings. Find the positive truths in your life and what is going on around you beginning with what you know is true from the Scriptures.

The King James Version uses the word “honest”, but this is slightly misleading. Open BLB and find Philippians 4. Tap on verse 8 and choose Interlinear. Choose “honest” and have a look at what this word means. Then go back to the menu and choose Translation Comparison. How is this word most often translated?

Those who are most worthy of our respect are, of course, God and His Son. God is not only the most powerful being in the universe but He has a character that is exemplary. And this character is manifested in Christ and is our example.

Go back to the verse and choose “honest” and scroll down to see where else it occurs in the New Testament. Who is it describing?

Do we think on what is “noble” in our fellow believers? Or do we see their faults? Do we allow ourselves to be constantly inspired by the character of our God and our Lord Jesus Christ? How can you change your thinking to think on what is honourable.

This next word is one we would probably all like there to be more of... But sometimes it can be confusing today as to what is actually just or right.

Let’s see if we can figure that out. Open Philippians 4, tap on verse 8, and find the word “just”. Read the [Outline of Biblical Usage](#). Tap on the “root word” and compare the two. What is different?

In the Old Testament, righteousness was often connected with being faithful to the one true God and having nothing to do with the gods of the nations. This is because we become like what we revere or worship.

To think on things that are just, start with daily reading and meditation on the Scriptures. The better you get to know God, the more His righteousness will have an effect on your thinking.

When you think of pure, what comes to mind? A white dress? Clean water? Gold? Jesus?

First, let's find out a little more about this word and how it is used. Open BLB, and find Philippians 4, tap on verse 8, and then tap on pure. Scroll down to Thayer's Lexicon and write down the definitions that are offered.

There are other words for this concept of purity... One means pure by purging, and one means genuine. This one, however comes from a root that means holy - a purity derived from holiness.

Now, scroll down to see where else this verse is used. This will help significantly in knowing how to think about things that are pure. Read each verse and note what it is that is pure or is purifying. I think the last verse is especially helpful, but you will need to tap on the verse and choose to open up the whole chapter so that you can read the context.

In all the words we have looked at so far, there is a sense of censorship of our thoughts to drown out the opposite, but it seems especially true for this word.

What can you do to help yourself to think about things that are pure?

The next word only occurs once in the Bible which makes it a little harder to figure out, but let's give it a try.

Open up BLB, find Philippians 4, tap on verse 8, and find the word "lovely". Check out the definition for it and then have a look at the root words.

There are four kinds of love in the Greek language of the first century. There is a word for the love of physical attraction,

the love that binds one to one's family, the love prompted by religion, and this one, a love of affection and friendship. This is the love that helps to make all the other kinds of love work. Go back to the verse and tap on it to open up the menu, and choose Dictionaries. Scroll down to *Vines Expository*, and then find the word Love. Read about what it has to say about different forms of love. Takes notes.

How can you change your thoughts so you are thinking about things that tend towards love and friendship with others?

This is another word that only occurs here in the Bible. Open up BLB, find Philippians 4, tap on verse 8 and then find “good report”. Go to the Interlinear and have a look at the Greek word. I think we can get a pretty good idea about this word just by looking at it in Greek... Looking at the root words helps a little.

What makes a person famous? Isn't it mostly what people think of them and what they do?

This isn't about pretending there is nothing bad to think about anyone or anything, but let's look for a moment at the results of thinking badly about others, since what we think eventually comes out of our mouths. Find 1 Corinthians 13:5 where it says "thinketh no evil". Tap on this verse and open the Dictionaries. Scroll down to the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, and then have a look through two entries: "evil speaking" and "speaking, evil". Take notes.

Thinking about what is good about people can also be extended to how we think about our faith - do we dwell on the love God has for us? Or do we dwell in the fact that we are weak and sinful?

How can we change our thinking to think about things that are the best rather than the worst?

With this word, Paul changes from adjectives (words that describe the things we should think about) to nouns... What might be the reason for this?

Open up BLB and find Philippians 4, tap on verse 8, and find “virtue”. It is interesting to once again look at the root word, and then look at the root word of that word... The English word also has a similar background - it comes from the Latin “vir” which means man, and so virtue originally meant manliness, strength, or valour.

Scroll down and go through the verses where this words also occurs and take notes. This is something we are called to, something we must add to our faith.

Go back to Philippians 4 and tap on the verse again and this time open Cross-references. Take a look at the verses under “virtue”. Who was/is virtuous?

Tap on Proverbs 31 and open the chapter in BLB and tap on verse 10. Open the Interlinear, and write down the meaning of this word.

A look at the root word may give us an indication that this word is not something that comes easily... It is hard work, a

bit like childbirth.

Paul's switch to nouns here may be telling us that before we can think this way, we have to find and develop strength of mind within us. We can casually think about what is true, but to hold ourselves there, to force our minds to stay there requires virtue.

Perhaps this takes our minds to verses like this one: 1 Corinthians 16:13 KJV - Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

This is another word that seems to be more about how we think about things, rather than what is thought about. Praise is something that is encouraging and hopeful, and a person who can find things to praise is a person who is healthy on the inside.

Open BLB and find Philippians 4 and tap on verse 8. Find the word "praise" and read its meaning and look at the root words it comes from. Look through the verses where the word occurs and note who or what is being praised.

Does it surprise you that many of these verses speak of believers being the praise?

Do you see yourself as worthy of praise? Do you see what is worthy of praise in others? Do you seek for the praise of God rather than the praise of men?

Go back to Philippians 4:8 and choose Dictionaries from the menu. Scroll down to the ISBE, and choose “praise”. Read through this short article. Take notes.

When we have an attitude of praise, it helps us to think more effectively about what is true, honest, just, lovely and of good report.

Paul has given us some things to think about, and some ways to think about them, but the Christian life doesn’t stop there. Now those things have to be put into action and Paul tells us to look at his life for an example (remembering that Paul was following the example of Christ).

Open up BLB and find 2 Corinthians 11:23-30 and read through a list of all that Paul went through to preach the Gospel. Take notes.

Now, let's just look at this word "do". Open up the BLB, find Philippians 4, tap on verse 9 and then the Interlinear and tap on the word "do". Have a look at the Strong's definition.

Now go back to the menu and choose Dictionaries, and then scroll down to *Vine's Dictionary*, and scroll down to "Do, Done". Have a read through this. How does this change the way you see this word?

Now go back to the Dictionaries menu and find "Thematic Subject Guide". Choose "Commandments in the Epistles" and you can choose whether to look through them all, or just concentrate for the moment on what Paul has to say in Philipians. Take notes.

This is one way that God's Spirit works in us - when we take in the words that were written by men of God by the Spirit, and let them guide our thoughts and actions.

Make a list of ways in which you can follow Paul in your life. For the Philippians, Paul was someone they knew and perhaps it sometimes makes it easier to follow someone you know. Are there people whose example you choose to follow because you know they are following Christ. Are you striving to be that example to those around you?

So we have a list of things to think about and ways to think about them, and we have an example to follow and things to do... It can be inspiring and purposeful, but there may be those who find it hard to get beyond the struggle and probable failure, and maybe even a bit of rebellion in wondering why it is so hard and why can't we just think and act in ways that come naturally and easily.

However we only have to look at the life of the Lord Jesus to see what happens when there are lies, disrespect, injustice, corruption, unfriendliness, slander, betrayal and condemnation... It led to the Jewish leaders destroying what was good and could have saved them.

Paul tells us that in this struggle to change our thoughts and actions, the God of peace is with us. We looked at the peace that comes from trusting in God, let's look at peace now with the idea of reconciliation.

Open BLB, find Philippians 4, and tap on verse 9. Choose Dictionaries and scroll down to *Vines Expository Dictionary*. Choose the entry for "peace, peaceable, peaceably". Read

