



DEADLY THOUGHTS

meditations

intro

The core of the idea of 'deadly thoughts' comes from Jesus' words in Mark 7:20-23. This booklet is not intended to be a topical study of sin; it is also not intended to be an exhaustive list of the sins you can commit. There are sins and thoughts that can destroy that are not included. It is meant as a guide, a starting point.

What this booklet is

It is a meditative journey. It is meant to be a companion to the weekend teaching series "Seven Deadly Thoughts" which is being presented in our church during June and July of 2009.

The teaching messages give us a foundational knowledge of each deadly thought and then the daily meditations help us to see where these thoughts have taken root in our minds, separating us from God and his people.

How to use this booklet

Reading the passages of Scripture and the meditations should only take a few minutes every weekday. It is really up to you how much time you invest in the meditation, but prayerfully you will open yourself up to the deep questions God will ask of you through His Word.

Use the meditations as a launching point. You might want to keep a journal of your thoughts and maybe even share some of the insights God has given you with the church during the worship gatherings.

lust

Definition

LUST – a love of your own gratification that renders love and devotion to God and others secondary. It is a self-indulgent extravagance, a worship of personal wants.

Monday

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7

The *passion of lust* will make you lose control. You will find yourself looking back and trying to remember what it meant to feel true love, to know compassion. When lust burns inside us, our only recourse is to find Christ and set our focus on his work in us.

Jesus, you are my first love. I want all my other loves in life to flow from my relationship with you. Help me not to be blinded by the passions of lust and instead be open to your Spirit's warning and direction.

Tuesday

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

At its very root, *lust* is more powerful than anything else inside of you. It drives you, literally carrying you away with it.

LUST

But there is a greater force – the grace of Jesus Christ. He has every intention of transitioning you from lust to life. He is working on you and crafting you into something beautiful.

Thank you, Jesus, that you are greater than the worst of me. Your light shines in my darkness and opens my eyes to reality. I see that you are doing something with me that I could not do for myself – would not do myself. You forgive; and I live.

Wednesday

Read 2 Peter 2:9-11

Lust will turn you against God. Peter says that *lusts of defiling passions* will lead you into judgment. When lust controls you, it turns you into an animal with no respect for God's will. You became a creature of desires – consumed with personal wants.

I ask you to consume me, Jesus. Burn up that which burns inside of me – the longing for what is not mine that drives me to do things against your holy name. Consume these desires and refine me to be your child. Make me a creature of compassion and not selfish lust.

Thursday

Read Galatians 5:16-26

How shall we respond to lust? We must defeat it before it begins. We respond to lust by *walking* in the Spirit, allowing his fruit [vv 22-23] to become manifest in us. We answer our selfish lusts with these virtues, believing that God has *supernaturally* instilled us with them.

I believe in your Spirit, Jesus. I believe that you have supernaturally planted the seed of the fruit of the Spirit in me. I

WEEK 1

ask you to make it grow and flower in my mind, pushing out the lusts and desires of my flesh. Help me to remember these fruit and make them my own.

Friday

Read 1 John 2:15-17

As powerful as lust is, it is dying. We experience this in life all the time. When an animal knows death is coming, it fights its hardest to stay alive. It should not surprise us that lusts fight hard as we attempt to drive them out of our hearts. They don't want to die.

The lusts and desires of this world are *nothing* before the new life that Jesus gives us, but we must live that life to defeat our lusts.

Jesus, help me to live your new, overflowing life. Release my hold on the things of this world and transform me into your image. Help me love; help me give; help me to lead. May your desires – the hope of the world – be mine.

gluttony

Definition

GLUTTONY – literally “to gulp down” or “to swallow.” To withhold from others in need so you may be over filled.

Monday

Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-14

This passage is dealing with immorality, but it mentions a mantra that defines gluttony: *food for the stomach and the stomach for food*. Do not Consider whether you *can* consume something but consider whether you *should*. When we are continually over-filled and over-satisfied, we rob ourselves of the blessing of giving to others. This is not just about food but everything we consume.

God, what do I consume to excess? Open my mind to hear your voice and to know what I should set aside for others.

Tuesday

Read Philippians 3:17-21

Can you imagine calling yourself God’s enemy? Most of us would never say such a thing and yet the Apostle Paul seems to think that worshipping your appetites is on par with making such a statement.

WEEK 2

What is a god? It is something you worship, something you give your best to. Does your belly get the best while God's lost sheep get the dregs? For Jesus' thoughts on this, read Luke 16:19-31.

God, more often than not, I reserve the best for myself. I don't know if I think I deserve it or I just don't think about it. Anything I have comes from you, so help me to be wise in stewarding it.

Wednesday

Read Ephesians 4:28

Since gluttony is robbing yourself of the blessing of giving from the overflow, this verse is particularly applicable. Do we put as much effort into giving away as we do into accumulating? It is not enough to simply stop stealing, we must also actively pursue the right actions.

What do you want me to do with the substance I have consumed in excess? I will listen for your direction, God, and then I will do it with all I am.

Thursday

Read Colossian 3:14-17

The opposite of gluttony is not self-control or charity, although those things may result from rejecting gluttony. The opposite is contentment and peace. When peace rules our hearts, the power of gluttony is broken because we cannot be gluttons in the name of Jesus.

How do we know our hearts are at peace with God? It is not about our hearts being silent – stripped of all desires. This is not peace; it is death. Peace is found in harmony – singing God's song with

Gluttony

him. Gluttony and other deadly thoughts are out of phase with God's song, and they create chaos and discord in the song.

Jesus, in your name, I ask for your peace. I ask that my heart's voice may sing in harmony with your heart. Keep

Friday

Read Luke 21:29-36

Jesus warns us not to be weighed down with consuming. Instead, he calls to stay awake at all times. Have you ever notice that indulgence makes us less aware, less awake? Our responses become slightly delayed at first, but then without knowing it, we become lethargic. We slowly go through physical and spiritual atrophy.

Jesus, make me spiritually lean and hungry. Give me the passion for seeing your vision and pursuing it because I want to and not because I am obligated. Give me the energy, the intensity and the desire – make me willing to give up everything to see your vision fulfilled.

greed

Definition

GREED - The love of personal gain which results in violence, deceitfulness, manipulation and other sin toward others

Monday

Read Titus 1:7-9

Why is greed listed with violence and drunkenness? These are easily identified sins, but greed is so hard to nail down. When does it cease to be growth and become greed?

Greed is *not* about how much you have but about how much you desire. Greed is not about money. It is about the hole that exists in your soul that you are trying to fill. It is to money what lust is to sex and gluttony is to food.

Jesus, you were not controlled by your body's longings for more. You were consumed by your Father's mission. Help me not to be about getting so I can have but getting so I can give.

Tuesday

Read Acts 2:42-47

In selling all they had, the early church "received their food with glad and generous hearts." Do you think that sometimes we are weighed down by the extras we believe we must have? Are we truly any happier once we acquire the bigger and the better?

Greed

The greatest possession we can have is nothing because we have to fill that space in our being with true substance. This sounds paradoxical, but it is true. When we have nothing 'material', we can focus on the 'immaterial.'

Jesus, you came to earth as an itinerant Galilean. You had no home; you had little in the way of possessions. The only thing you ever called your own was your friends. Help me to know that joy in my life.

Wednesday

Read Acts 5:1-11

You know that greed has crept into your mind when you find yourself holding back unconsciously. Ananias and Sapphira brought only a part of what they made; but they had sold their land to help the church. Their sin was not how much they gave but how they did it. They withheld something that they had already promised to God. Greed makes us God-robbers.

God, I don't want to rob you – consciously or unconsciously. Greed digs me into a hole and then I use greed to try to get out. Save me from my own justifications and free me to give all I am supposed to.

Thursday

Read Ephesians 4:25-30

We have seen this passage before and will return to it a couple more times in coming weeks. Greed is a lie. All of these sins are lies we tell ourselves. The first step to overcoming greed is to become the opposite – frugal and charitable. Give away the idols of your greed. Jesus calls us to this radical righteousness. (Read Mark 10:17-22 for his instructions.)

WEEK 3

What am I without you, Jesus? I don't do it all the time, but sometimes I lie to myself, convincing myself that my greed is good. I don't really want to give things up, so if I'm going to do it, it will be your power. Help me.

Friday

Read 1 Corinthians 9:1-12

All this talk about greed might lead you to an extreme reaction. Jesus is not opposed to us making a living or even being prosperous. We plant; we expect a harvest. Keep a balance, remembering that God wants you to prosper and be blessed; but we are also called to give the overflow to others.

Jesus, give me a sense of balance in financial things. Help me to be a good steward, to provide for my family, to invest in the ministry of your Good News and to help others. Help me to ask you for wisdom and to do what you say.

sloth

Definition

SLOTH - a failure to fulfill your place, to maximize what God has given you.

Monday

Read Matthew 25:14-30

Never let lack of resources be an excuse for not doing what God wants you to do. We cannot use what we do not have, but God will not give us anything we cannot use.

What 'talents' has he placed in your stewardship that are 'buried' rather than invested?

God gives you things so you can work to improve or multiply them. He does not give us money or jobs or children or relationships so we can sit back and enjoy them. He gives to us so we can make something more out of the raw materials.

Jesus, what do I have that I am not using? What gifts, what talents, what resources are sitting in reserve while work goes undone?

I am tired of sitting on the bench, tired of waiting for opportunities. I want to be used and use what you have given me.

Tuesday

Read Romans 13:8-14

Love is work? Paul seems to think so. When we sit around waiting for love to happen or to grow on its own, we are being slothful. We are letting our potential waste away.

How can we ever know the full potential of love if we do not work at it? How can we know what it feels like to truly not wrong others unless we are constantly correcting our unloving behavior?

God, there is work you have for me to do – to not only show love but to be love. I know that this will not happen without my effort and your Spirit's power. Give me the strength to act.

Wednesday

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12

There are many people living on spiritual welfare in the church, waiting for others to 'feed' them, hoping for good teachers and clear, modernist outlines rather than seeking to know our true Teacher – Jesus Christ. Paul says to stay away from people like this. While he is speaking about physical sloth, the same is true of spiritual sloth.

I realize that I do not always seek out the means of my spiritual growth. Sometimes I expect it to just happen. I recognize this as sin against your nature, God, and ask forgiveness. I also ask for the strength to move forward and ACT to feed others.

Thursday

Read 1 Corinthians 15:50-58

One of the reasons we do not work as hard as we can is because we do not truly embrace the power of the resurrection. In the back of our minds, we doubt God's power to transform lives through us, and we hesitate. The resurrection is not just a nice theological idea. It is the foundation of the entire church – the entire Bible really.

Jesus, your resurrection gives us the power to be transformed and transform. I will not wait for Easter to recall your resurrection and make it central to my life. I will be resurrected.

Friday

Read Luke 15:11-32

This is the parable known as “The Prodigal Son.” Focus on the other brother in vv 25-32. Do you notice how intensely he was working? How focused he was on the wrong tasks? The things he thought would gain favor instead of being focused on his father's desires? What did that produce within him? Bitterness? Anger?

Be intense in the labors God gives you. Listen to his heart and then dive in. Don't dive in and hope you'll find God's will somewhere in there. You may not know the specifics, but the general ideas of what he wants to do are usually pretty obvious. It is only once we have the blueprints and start building that we can know the details.

Father, I want to be about the business of your heart and not simply do things for the sake of routine or tradition. When I heard your call, help me to act and believe in your new life!

rage

Definition

RAGE – the uncontrolled feelings of hatred and anger that move us to act against others.

Monday

Read Matthew 5:21-26

In this portion of Scripture, Jesus is speaking in hyperbole; but he is making the point that *murder* comes from something deeper. Anger is the disease that destroys relationships and leads us down to dark places.

We often think of anger as the visible signs, but anger lurks in many hidden places. It resides in the veiled mockeries of our minds, the biting remarks we keep for ourselves. To defeat anger is not simply to stop the actions of anger but to cleanse our minds of these attitudes toward others.

Jesus, you have placed me on a journey to cleanse anger from my thinking. Right now, you are bringing to my mind situations that are motivated by anger. Give me a heart of repentance toward those with whom I have hidden anger issues.

Tuesday

Read Genesis 4:1-16

The message of this ancient story is quite plain.

Rage

How often does your face fall [v 6] because you are angry with someone?

Anger is a powerful motivator. Once it taints a relationship, it is almost impossible to get rid of. Sometimes it drives us away from people, but more often, we try to bury it and pretend like it isn't there. And then it explodes; and as in any explosion, those closest to us get caught in the path of destruction.

God, I am sorry for catching those closest to me in the path of destruction of my anger. I repent of hurting them; and I pray for the strength to go to them and seek their forgiveness.

Wednesday

Read Ephesians 4:17-32

According to Paul, it is possible to 'be angry and sin not.' What does he mean? We all experience the *feeling* of anger; but if we identify it as anger and get rid of it right away, we will not let this deadly thought rule us. Reread verses 31-32 and make them your creed when it comes to anger.

Father, I will put away bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and slander. I will refuse to act in malice. I will embrace kind and tender-hearted thinking. I will be forgiving.

Thursday

Read Daniel 3

As you read this, watch for how *rage* drives Nebuchadnezzar to extremes; and watch how people respond to his rage. We can choose to be servants of rage and anger or we can choose to serve the LORD. We cannot do both. Anger is rooted deeply in our love of self.

WEEK 5

God, I would rather be cast into the furnace of others anger and be in your will than to join their ragings and sit in splendor. Help me, when confronted with anger, to answer it with faith and love for you than with anger.

Friday

Read Ezra 9:10-15

This is part of a prayer of Ezra, a priest of Israel from around 500 BCE, who led a stage of the return to their lands after being captive in Babylon and Persia for nearly a century. He saw the people of Israel all intermarried with people who did not worship God and knew, from experience, that this would anger God.

It is not hard to see in the Old Testament that God gets angry. His anger is always the result of our rejection of relationship with him. It is not even about breaking his commandments, but about violating the love he pours into his relationship with us by treating his commandments so flippantly.

Our anger and rage will break our relationship with God; and that calls down his righteous anger on us. He will act to restore us, but from our end it will feel like judgment and unless we seek his heart, we will refuse his correction.

God, when I feel the heat of your anger in my life, help me to see that it is I who has wronged and not you. You are perfect and loving; you desire the best for your children, which means you will correct me. Give me perspective on these things and help me to be drawn closer to you rather than pushing you away.

envy

Definition

ENVY – a dissatisfaction with what God has given to you; a hatred of the “hand you’ve been dealt.”

Note: Envy and Pride (the next sin) are very closely related. There is a great deal of overlap in the next two weeks’ meditations.

Monday

Read Ecclesiastes 9:1-6

The book of Ecclesiastes is a difficult Scripture to read. It is the reflection of a man who tried every possible thing to find satisfaction in life and ultimately concludes it is all ‘vanity and striving with the wind.’ This particular passage shows how entangled love, hate, envy and pride are in most people’s lives. We can’t even tell where our actions come from.

Envy drives us to pretend – sometimes to get close to the one we envy, sometimes to destroy them. It is a confusing state of mind and extremely difficult to identify.

Jesus, I acknowledge that envy is in my life, but I confess that I cannot easily identify it or its results. As I journey here, please give me discernment to identify it in my thinking and weed it out.

Tuesday

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

One of the easiest ways to identify envy is to identify what it is not. Envy and pride [v 4] do not result from love.

Envy can sometimes be identified by a hatred for what I have been given. Pride is sometimes manifested by an obsession of what I have been given. In both cases, the thinking derives from a self-centered world view. They come from believing that I deserve the best – and if I do not see what I have as the best, then I hate it. If I do, I obsess about it. The proper perspective is contentment in what I have [Philippians 4:11].

Jesus, I confess a hatred of what I have been given. I confess that I have an unhealthy obsession with something I have not been given, and it has corrupted my thinking.

Wednesday

Read Matthew 6:25-34

The game of comparisons and envy is never-ending. And there is always someone with more; there is always something better. You can choose to look down on what you have or to take your focus off of it and focus on God's mission for you.

God, I take my focus off of all the things I 'could have' and resolve to walk in faith, content with your provision. Take my eyes off what others have; take my eyes off what I have. Instead, turn my eyes toward your glory and honor.

Thursday

Read Proverbs 24:1-22

Envy

When we look around and see who it is that we envy, isn't it always those who seem to be blessed out of proportion to their work or their abilities? We see people making millions as musicians and actors and we wonder why they succeed but we do not.

In this passage, Solomon advises us to remember that even when things don't go our way, it does not mean God is not blessing. And when others stumble, we should not rejoice, because we will probably stumble more often (even if less publicly).

God, you are SO good! Thank you for making me who I am and giving me what you have given to me. I will be content with what you have blessed me with and pursue wisdom with what I have rather than falling into envy and foolishness over what I do not.

Friday

Read Galatians 5:25-6:10

This passage is a classic example of a chapter heading interrupting a thought. The idea of verse 26 is fleshed out in the first ten verses of chapter 6.

Envy will lead a man (or woman) to 'sow to his own flesh' [v 8]. We will plant the seeds of what God has given us in the soil of our own abilities, and the result will be corrupt and mutated.

Creator, help me to sow the good seeds of what you have blessed me with in the soil you have prepared, to bring forth a harvest of blessing and joy in your Spirit!

Pride

Definition

PRIDE – placing yourself above all others.

Monday

Read James 4:1-10

This passage deals with both pride and envy (as stated before, there is considerable overlap between the two). Often when we envy someone, we will try to make ourselves MORE or make them LESS. We identify weaknesses or failures in others and then blow them out of proportion while minimizing our own weaknesses and failures. James identifies this plainly as a work of the Devil [v 8].

In your name, Jesus, I resist the work of the Devil in my life. I refuse to exalt myself above others, as he wants me to do; and will instead honor others and do whatever it takes to live for them.

Tuesday

Read Psalm 10:2-11

Pride is a smug satisfaction with self. It declares your own desires to be your god. Often we do not see it as it is because our pride requires us to justify everything we do.

Pride

Pride approaches everything pragmatically. Anything and everything is okay because it advances ME. Even God is reduced to a version of me.

God, forgive me for worshiping myself. Forgive me for living for myself and calling it your will.

Wednesday

Read Ezekiel 28:1-19

This unique prophecy is a lament over the fall of the ancient city of Tyre. The city was a major player in the politics of the day because of its tremendous merchant fleet and a monopoly on a special purple dye.

Pride will creep in when we have our focus on the results (in Tyre's case, wealth) rather than on the source (God or self). We say, "I am wealthy" or "I am better than ____" without a consideration of the *reason* why this has happened. God blesses us with riches to provide for others; he benefits us with spiritual gifts and talents to lead others into relationship with him. Once again, we are robbing God of what he has determined for us.

God, replace my pride of my accomplishments with a longing and desire to use my blessings to be your blessing on others. Illuminate the things in my life that I have been given to give and clear the path for me to act.

Thursday

Read Daniel 4:28-37

God humiliated Nebuchadnezzar – the greatest king of his age – for his pride. It is only when he realizes that all things, both good

WEEK 7

and bad, come from the immeasurable God that Nebuchadnezzar is restored.

This kind of story is all over the Bible, but Nebuchadnezzar illustrates it so well. His journey into humiliation came from his lack of humility before God. He *appreciated* what he had been given, but he denied the source of it.

God, you are my Creator and my Source. When I walk along the 'walls of the city' that I have built, help to realize that it is really your city and your labor that has made it. And if I forget, chasten me so I will remember.

Friday

Read Romans 15:13-21

There is a good and righteous pride. It stands in contrast to *deadly* pride because it is not about me but about others. In this passage, Paul is proud of Christ's work. He looks on his own labors and sees Jesus being glorified and the Word of God being preached.

There are many ways to be prideful of our own accomplishments; and all of them are evil. But there are also things that Jesus does that we can look on and boast about because we are boasting about Jesus. This is not a license to throw a veneer of 'Jesus' on our own accomplishments. It is, however, a call to get close to Jesus and feel his heart and passion. Then, when his work is done, we will direct all the glory to him. This is good boasting.

All the glory is yours, Jesus. May my works be diminished; and your works exalted. May I see your work being done, and revel and dance in your praise. Give me a refined heart that sees what is YOURS and what is nothing.

...the end

Well, not really. As with all journeys, we have really just scratched the surface of these 'deadly thoughts.' We will constantly struggle with them because the Devil wants us under his control or our own control, but NEVER under God's control.

The struggle never ends; the battle is ongoing. If the apostle Paul, who was a far better Christian than any of us, could say:

I do not understand my own actions! For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good.

So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.

For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

[Romans 7:15-20, ESV]

Then we should all know that we are in good company!

