



And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Romans 12:2

The battle for the mind is one of the most crucial battles of the Christian faith. If the devil has a hold in your mind, he has a hold in your actions. The difficulty with pornographic addiction is that it takes root and makes a home in your mind. It is internal. It is one of the few addictions that can continue without outside influence. With cigarettes, you can get rid of the pack and lighter. With alcohol, you can break the bottles. As long as you avoid them there is a sense of freedom. Even though you may stop intake of porn, you still have no sense of freedom because the battle of porn is in your mind.

The images and videos become engrained in your subconscious. They pop up when most unexpected and unwelcomed. In an unguarded moment, the mind can wander, and it wanders to the archived images and stories, allowing you to indulge though you may be nowhere near a computer. It is like having an addiction to oxygen. It seems the only way you can get free is if you just stop breathing altogether. The idea of tearing your brain from your spine becomes an appealing one at times.

But God wants us to renew our minds. Renew. It does not mean replace. Upon salvation, we are not given a brain transplant. God does not erase our memory and clear our hard drive for a reboot. Instead, He changes our heart, giving us the will and the power to fight for our minds.

Before salvation, you are a slave to sin. You are helpless, stuck, and must answer to its every demand. After salvation, you are free. Free to love God and free to fight sin.

How do we fight?

A modern approach is to think negatively about the problem. If I want to quit smoking, I must focus on the negative aspects of smoking. I must remember that smoking is bad. Smoking causes cancer. Smoking gives me bad breath, and so on. The problem with this is that when I think about not thinking about something, I am still thinking about it.

Read the following paragraph but do not think of the fluffy white kitten.

“Do not think about the fluffy white kitten. Focus on anything but the fluffy white kitten. The fluffy white kitten causes allergies in people. The fluffy white kitten can destroy your furniture and pee on your socks. The fluffy white kitten has a litter box that smells. The fluffy white kitten always wants food. It is a bad kitten. Bad fluffy white kitten.”

What have you thought about while reading that entire paragraph? The fluffy white kitten. So, in thinking negatively or in trying not to think about something, we actually devote more brain energy to think about it. In the end, this technique is nearly as effective as an ostrich burying his head in the sand to avoid being seen.

With regenerate minds, we can take a different approach. Instead of changing what we think about something, we change what we are thinking about.

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.

Renewing our minds is an active process. We are told to actively think on these things, to choose to think on things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, virtuous and praise-worthy. We have to condition our minds to do this. We cannot expect to wake up one morning and voila! Have a clean mind. We do not suddenly focus on the things of God.

How do we go about conditioning our minds? It is much like conditioning our bodies. We may decide to run a marathon, but we will not survive without conditioning. We cannot be couch potatoes until the morning of and then expect to win, or even finish. The same is true with our minds.

If you have been involved in pornography, your mind and body have been feeding off sludge for as long as you have struggled. You have been eating greasy fast food, and there is some cholesterol and plaque build-up in your spiritual arteries. Your muscles have begun to atrophy. You are in serious trouble. Salvation gives you the power, but, just like in physical conditioning, when you first start, your body and mind will ache and burn and cry out for the easy life you had before.

Understand that this is a process. As you journey toward freedom, the devil will still remind you of what you once had. Your body may even crave the greasy pseudo-satisfaction you found in sin. As you begin your conditioning, here are some things to remember.

- 1. Every Thought Counts!** *“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:5*

Sometimes, it is easy to let a little thought slide through. When we are bored or tired, as we daydream, thoughts may come in and we may think, “Oh, there is no harm in this. I am just thinking about it.” If we permit the thought to stick around, it will throw down roots and become stronger.

Every thought should be taken captive to Christ. This is another action. Do not be passive. Do not let the thought slide by. Do not pass it up. Hunt it down like an unwelcome intruder, grab it by the horns and drag it to God. “God, I am having a problem with my thought life. These thoughts are creeping into my mind. Please help me! Purify my mind. Take this thought, do with it as You wish and replace it with something about You.” Believe me, God will take care of that thought. As you practice this, you will develop a nearly subconscious response of telling unwelcome thoughts to take a hike.

2. Think on Something Else.

In Philippians, Paul instructs us to think differently.

When I was younger, I saw an object lesson that has stuck with me through the years. The teacher filled a bucket with water. She added a cup of dirt to the water and asked us to drink. We refused. She placed a garden hose in the bucket and turned the water on. The bucket began to overflow, spilling all the dirty water and replacing it with clear tap water. After a while, the water was completely clear and drinkable. Likewise we must remove the pollution in our minds by filling our minds with other things. Things that are:

~ True- consistent with the teachings of Christ or true to reality. God is truth. He delights in truth. Focus on Him and do not allow your mind to focus on things which are not true to reality (fantasy).

~ Honest- interestingly enough, this does not carry the same meaning as 'truth.' The actual English equivalent is the word 'reverend' or 'august.' 'August' is defined as something majestic, or awe-inspiring. --Titus 2:2

~ Just- approved of or acceptable to God.

~ Pure- pure from carnality, chaste, modest. In most uses, it is translated as 'chaste.' Chaste refers to sexual purity. In English, it is defined as "morally pure in thought or conduct." --Titus 2:5

~Lovely- acceptable, pleasing. This word is only used once in the King James Version. The Greek word appears only in this verse. It is believed to be a composite of two Greek words: one which means, "to the advantage of", the other being 'phileo' which means "love." So, literally, this could be translated as 'to the advantage of love' instead of the modern understanding of 'lovely' which is along the lines of beauty.

~Good report- uttering words of good omen, speaking auspiciously. Again, Philippians is the only time this Greek word is used in the New Testament. It is a composite of the word 'good' and the word 'fame.'

~ Virtue- a virtuous course of thought, feeling, or action. This word is translated as 'virtue' four out of the five time it appears in the New Testament. The other time it is used (1 Peter 2:9) it is translated as 'praise.' This carries the idea of good intent. --2 Peter 5:1

~ Praise- approbation or commendation. When we think of praise, it is easy to think of praise and worship music. Praise can also carry the idea of approval, much like when someone commends you for doing a great job. They are praising you. --1 Corinthians 4:5

3. Fill Your Mind with God-honoring Hooks.

In song-writing, the hook is the part of the song that gets stuck in your head. I am sure we have all experienced that one song that just will not stop playing in our skull. It plays over and over again in our minds because the song has a good hook. So, let's start filling our minds with God-honoring hooks. If the stuff that gets 'stuck' in our head is God-honoring then we are less likely to fall to temptation.

- A. Check your music. Music is a powerful medium for impacting our emotions and thoughts. If the songs I listen to are riddled with lyrics about sex, then I will think about sex. Those songs will be stuck in my head and my thoughts will be in rhythm with those songs. Begin to listen to songs that honor and glorify God or even songs that remain neutral. In my own journey to freedom, I developed a love for Celtic instrumental music. I still listen to it.
- B. Check your friends. Maybe that seems a little harsh, but can you keep a pure thought life when your friends are telling dirty jokes or talking about their own sex lives? This is not to say that we should distance ourselves from people in sin, but we should distance ourselves from sin. Stay sensitive to sin. If the conversation wanders into inappropriate content, ask to change the subject or leave.
In college, as I worked to walk in victory over pornography, my roommates would talk about sex. They were not discussing it in a degrading way at all. In fact, they were discussing it the way I believe it is intended to be discussed- as something sacred and holy. Still, I asked that they not discuss it around me. Was it embarrassing? Sure. But they listened and our friendship grew stronger for it.
- C. Check your eyes. The Bible tells us that if your eye offends you, it is better to dig it out. (More on that in my writing: "Where's that Bat?") Be careful of little bits of pieces of sin that may be present in the world around you. A sex scene may be worked into a TV show because it is 'part of the plot' or you may see a naked body in the name of 'art.' These are the devil's way of making sure you know the invitation is open to go back. Guard your eyes! They are the gateway into your mind.
- D. Hide the Word. The Word (the Bible) is your sword. It is your defense when you find yourself defenseless. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, He used the Word of the Lord to ward off Satan's attacks. Appropriately enough, the Word is also listed in the spiritual armor described in Ephesians. With this armor, we are able to stand against the attacks of the devil. Some good verses to memorize would be:

Philippians 4:8, Psalms 101:3, 1 Corinthians 6:18, 1 Thessalonians 4:3

4. Don't Give Up!

Remember the marathon analogy? Have you ever watched a marathon?

I watched a bike race once and watched in horror as a rider, in an attempt to grab her food bag, came crashing to the ground. All of the riders around her kept on going. She waited for them to pass, crawled out from under her bike, brushed off the dirt and kept riding. She did not finish first, but as the cameras waited at the end of the track, the audience was surprised to see she had fought her way back into the top ten from dead last. She got up.

As you fight this war for your mind, you may lose a battle or two. You may fall, and it is so easy to buy the devil's lie that says, "Ah. God can't use you now. Come back to me where you belong, to keep fighting is pointless." But it is *not* pointless. The devil wants nothing more than to render you useless: God wants nothing more than to conform you to His image. If you fall, ask forgiveness, identify why you fell and get back up! Do not stay down. **You have not failed until you fail to get up.**

If you have made mistakes, there is always another chance for you. You may have a fresh start any moment you choose, for this thing we call 'failure' is not in the falling down but the staying down.

~Mary Pickford

5. Have a Battle Plan.

For some, it is easy to avoid the typical triggers that trip up our minds. It is simple to walk away from a raunchy TV program or to ask a group of friends to stop talking about sex. However, the idle, lonely moments are when we are most likely to fall. Identify your weaknesses and be alert to those. Find ways to reinforce those weak areas of your life. For instance:

Do you fall late at night, when you are tired? Start going to bed earlier and go to bed to go to bed.

Do you often fall in the dark? Leave a light on, even if it is a candle.

Does your mind wander right before you go to sleep? Start praying yourself to sleep. There are many verses in Scripture that talk of meditating on God's Word during the night.

Do you use porn or masturbation as an emotional release when you are angry or lonely? Strengthen your prayer life by taking those emotions to God in prayer.

It is important to realize when you are weak and to admit to yourself that you are weak. It may even be helpful to pray a prayer like this: "God, I am very angry right now, and usually I would relieve this tension by watching porn, but, Father, I want to honor and glorify You so please help me find a different way to deal with this."

Remember, God wants you to be free! He will help you if you ask Him.