

# **Ethics: Mind**

By Bryan Hodge

The Christian is in a spiritual warfare (2 Corinthians 10:3-ff; Ephesians 6:10-ff; 1 Peter 2:11, etc.). This war involves the mind (Romans 8:7; Ephesians 2:3, 4:17, 23; Colossians 1:21). A Christian should think differently, than this sinful world (Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:17, 23). A Christian should strive to bring “every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). A Christian’s mind should be focused on things above, and not just things of this earth (Colossians 3:1-2).

**Ideas, Images, Lyrics.** The world is constantly preaching to us. It does so through a variety of channels. In this study, we’ll narrow our focus to the entertainment industry.

Writers of movies, television programs and ads, and books are clever. They know how to make the sinful appear appealing. They know how to make one sympathetic to a criminal (e.g., John Q, Midnight Express). They know how to make premarital cohabitation, and fornication to appear normal or glorious (e.g., Titanic, Ghost, Ladder 49). They know how to make adultery appear beautiful (e.g. The Bridges of Madison County). Even, homosexuality is viewed as special and loving (one episode of Cold Case). Television ads make alcohol appear desirous. The Bible warns, “Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper” (Proverbs 23:31-32).

Music writers do the same. Music is a powerful influence on thought. This has been known for a very long time. The Republic by Plato says, “Musical training is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten....” Rolling Stone magazine commented, “The surest shortcut to memorable videos seems to be a liberal dose of sex, violence, or both” (Gene Burgett, A Christian Look at Contemporary Music, The 6th Annual Shenandoah Lectures, p. 443).

The internet is the media of today. Ask a young person which they would least like to give up: newspaper, radio, TV, books or phone. The answer, I assure you, will be the internet. Communication can occur by internet (this covers the phone). News, books, music, and video can be accessed by the internet (this covers the newspaper, books, radio and TV). It is a wonderful tool. It has made the world much smaller. It has made access to information much easier. It also has made it easier to view things one ought not. According to Family Safe Media, there were 4,200,000 pornographic websites available in 2003, which constitutes 12% of all websites. Internet porn is a \$2.5 billion a year business ([www.familysafemedia.com/pornography](http://www.familysafemedia.com/pornography)). It needs to be understood that one can sin with the eyes (Matt. 5:28). We should be like Job, who said, “I have made a covenant with my eyes, why then should I look upon a young woman?” (Job 31:1).

We Americans like to be entertained. There is nothing wrong with rest and relaxation. However, stewardship of time should be considered (Ephesians 5:16, Colossians 4:5). We spend an average 153 hours per month watching TV and 68 hours per month online ([www.cleancutmedia.com](http://www.cleancutmedia.com)). That is 5 hours per day of TV and 2 hours per day online. One study suggests that most know this is too much; 68% feel guilty about watching too much TV and 53% for spending too much time in front of the computer (Frank Luntz, What Americans Really Want, Really..., p. 39).

**Guidelines.** What is it on which a Christian should spend his time thinking? Meditate upon the guidelines of Philippians 4:8.

**1. What is true.** This means that I should be interested in truth. God's word is truth (John 17:17). I should meditate upon God's word (Psalm 1:2; 119:15, 23, 48, 78, 97, 99, 148) and upon God (Psalm 63:6; 77:12). Such will keep us from sin (Psalm 119:11).

I should be careful with what I fill my mind. I should not want to full my mind with anything which leads me away from God or His word.

**2. What is honest (KJV).** Other translations render this "noble" (NKJV), "honorable" (ASV, NASB, ESV). The reference is to thoughts and behavior which is respectable, honorable.

I should seek to fill my mind with what prompts respectable thought and behavior. I should shun that which is contrary to respectable thought and behavior.

What if everyone could see your thoughts? Remember God can (Psalm 139:2).

**3. What is just.** This word is also translated "right" (NASB). Thayer indicates the word refers to "observing divine and human laws". Wayne Jackson commented "the state of being right according to the divine standard" (Jackson, Book of Philippians, p. 82).

I should fill my mind with that which engenders right thought and behavior. The issues of life flow from the mind (Proverbs 4:23).

I should think about that which is the just and right thing to do, not just what happens to be momentarily advantageous to me.

**4. What is pure.** The original word has to do with moral purity. It sometimes is used of sexual purity, translated 'chaste' (2 Corinthians 11:2), and at other times it refers to being pure or innocent in a matter (1 Timothy 5:22).

Clearly, this means that I should avoid pornographic images, and lewd messages. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).

**5. What is lovely.** The literal wording is "toward love". I should think on things which encourage loving behavior.

Messages which tend to stir up hatred, and strife should be avoided. Such is contrary to Christ. "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

**6. What is of good report (KJV).** The original wording is also rendered "commendable" (ESV). The wording literally means "good sounding."

Many dwell upon the negative. They are overwhelmed by bad news.

Some delight to hear and repeat the latest gossip about evil in another. They receive and spread bad news.

Some love to hear and repeat stories and jokes about sin. They delight in evil.

I should fill my thoughts with good things, good people, and good deeds. I should want to speak good sounding words when possible.

**7. What is of virtue (KJV).** The original word is also translated “excellence” (NASB, ESV). The word refers to courage or strength. It refers to moral excellence in the face of trials.

I should think upon things which empower me to do the right thing. I should think on things which help my moral courage.

**8. What is of praise (KJV).** The original wording is also rendering “worthy of praise” (NASB, ESV), and “praiseworthy (NKJV).

I should identify good things. I should recognize good in others, things worthy of commendation I should think on such things.

Review this list. This provides some guidelines to what we focus our minds attention.

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