

RISE Bonus Lesson 1

How to Conquer Impure Thoughts (Female Edition)



By Pastor Jane Evans – March 2022

Many Christians are discouraged because they are unable to conquer impure thoughts or controlling habits. This sets up a cycle of defeat and shame and a feeling of not being good enough or strong enough to win. They're unaware that they're fighting the wrong battle. Controlling habits are a byproduct of incorrect thoughts, and only as the battle is won in the thought life will there be hope of victory in actions.

BEGIN A WAR THAT YOU EXPECT TO WIN

Most Christians expect to lose the war that starts in the mind with wrong thinking, but they hope that by trying to oppose such thoughts, they might reduce the number of defeats. This approach not only gives Satan a foothold, but also destroys the very basis of discipline and dedication that God calls for in Scripture.

"Always continue to fear the Lord. You will be rewarded for this; your hope will not be disappointed." (Proverbs 23:17–18, NIV)

"Think of all the hostility he (Jesus) endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up. After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin." (Hebrews 12:3–4, NLT)

"... the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord." (James 1:6-7, NIV)



PERSONAL REFLECTION

Take a few moments to reflect on the thoughts you battle with that lead to controlling habits and wrong actions.

(Examples: I need food for comfort. I have to try harder. I'm not good enough and I doubt I ever will be. I just can't help myself—I'm wired this way.)

Keep these in mind as we go forward with this lesson.

It's not surprising that Satan doesn't flee when we try to resist this kind of thinking. He knows that, after one or two tries, he will gain victory, and that victory will reinforce to us that we are weak and will never be able to overcome.

Resisting impurity, toxic thinking and controlling habits involves a total commitment of our whole being in the knowledge that our victory has already been won by Christ on the cross. We enter into that victory when we become Christians.

"The sting of death is sin, and the power of it (by which it brings death) is the law; but thanks be to God who gives us the victory (as conquerors through our Lord Jesus Christ.)" (1 Corinthians 15:56-57 AMP)

Notice it says the victory comes through partnership with Jesus Christ **OUR Lord**, not **the Lord**. It's personal. To call someone "lord" means that they have absolute rule over you; you have submitted everything to them.



DISCUSS

How hard is it to grasp that concept in today's world?

What feelings are evoked in you when you think about the possibility of someone having COMPLETE CONTROL over your life?

Now ask yourself, how is it going doing it your way?

Take a moment to meditate on this quote:

"I crept into the throne room of my heart too afraid to lift my eyes to acknowledge what I have enthroned there, to discover the identity of the deity I have empowered."

What or who is on the throne of your heart? We are servants to whatever our hearts magnify.

Pray now and deliberately dethrone whatever is there and invite Jesus to occupy that place of Lordship in your life.

REPLACE THE SECRET PICTURES IN THE GALLERY OF YOUR MIND

At the heart of impure thoughts or wrong thinking are secret pictures in the back of our minds. During times of temptation or triggering, we're able to revive these pictures and focus on them. Fighting to remove the pictures usually doesn't work, but superimposing God's pictures over them does.

The first vivid picture we should have is that of Christ being bruised for our iniquities. The word "iniquity" is most often used to refer to moral impurity. David prayed, *"Wash away all my iniquity..."* (Psalm 51:2). As we confirm the experience of our own salvation, we should visualize that our iniquities nailed Him to the cross and that He died for the purpose of freeing us from impurity.

"We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin." (Romans 6:6, NLT)

"Sin is no longer your master..." (Romans 6:14, NLT)

EMBRACE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST, NOT YOUR OWN

Jesus said in John 6: 33, *'But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.'*

Satan's deception is to try and get us to be righteous by our own efforts. Do good, get good. Work harder to be better.

- Then when we fail, he uses shame to keep us separated from God so we feel unworthy to talk to God.
- As a result, the devil is able to create a cycle of temptation and condemnation that keeps us in perpetual defeat.

We need to know that we will not succeed in winning the battle by trying to beat it with our mind and emotions.

When you fail, do the opposite of what you feel and talk to God immediately. Don't wait till you feel more righteous. The deception is to believe that feeling better about yourself equates to your relationship with God being better. The truth is, you're only righteous because of the grace of God through Jesus. Say to yourself, "I am the righteousness of Jesus. I am righteous because Jesus makes me righteous." And move on.

The more you do the opposite of what you feel, the more victory you will experience.

BE A CONSEQUENTIAL THINKER

The next series of pictures in our minds should be the tragic consequences in the lives of men in Scripture who lost the battle against impurity: Samson with his eyes gouged out and David with a divided family and kingdom. Those who gave in like Eve because what she saw looked good, and Esau who gave away his birthright. For a moment of pleasure, they changed the course of the future.

Train your mind to really think through the results that would occur if our thinking turned into actions. Imagine the consequence if you follow through on what you think. This helps form a protective shield around your life.

MAKE A COVENANT WITH YOUR EYES

Job was one of the most righteous men who ever lived. A key to his righteousness is found in Job 31:1:

"I made a covenant with my eyes not to look with lust at a young woman." (NLT)

The key to controlling our minds is in controlling our eyes.

“Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. But when your eye is unhealthy (with sensual thoughts toward a person), your whole body is filled with darkness...” (Matthew 6:22-23, NLT)

“Guard your heart above all else... Look straight ahead, and fix your eyes on what lies before you.” (Proverbs 4:23, 25, NLT)

If our eyes are under God's control, we must train them to see what He sees. Christ looks at us not for what we are but for what we can be through Him. If we are to think God's thoughts, we have to see what He sees and desire to accomplish what He wants in the life of each one whom we meet. We have the ability to visualize how the most ungodly people can become radiant and beautiful expressions of Christ. This prompts us to pray for those whom we meet, and it builds the godly restraint we need in our thought life.

When we visualize a person as having been made by God, loved by God, redeemed by Christ, and made godly through our prayers, we are forced to the Scriptural realization that whatever we do to that person is being done to Christ.

“...whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25:40, NIV)

GIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT HIS MOST EFFECTIVE WEAPON

Our battle against impure thoughts is far more than a mental or physical struggle—it is spiritual warfare.

“For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12)

Both the Spirit of God and Satan need a person's mind, will, and emotions through which they can express themselves. God knows that our natural inclinations easily betray us. They betray us to the delusive, sometimes glamorous, and always temporal pleasures that Satan offers. God does not want us just to conquer Satan; He wants us to use the pressure of the battle as daily motivation to transform our minds to His way of thinking. This will be achieved by the Holy Spirit if we give Him His weapon, *“... the sword of the Spirit ... the word of God.”* (Ephesians 6:17)

Not only is it important to resist temptation, but it's equally important to prepare ourselves for the next temptation.

REMOVE HIDDEN PROVISIONS FOR DEFEAT

The Scriptural warning in Romans 13:14, *"...don't let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires"* is far more important than many people realize. The King James Version of the Bible says, *"do not make any provision for the flesh."*

Making provision for something means "to make space" and actually prepare for it. It means not only that we expect to fail, but it creates space for—and invites—temptation. It provides tempting possibilities for our minds, stirs up our emotions and then overthrows our wills.

God will certainly reveal to us those things which we have brought into our lives which Satan uses for our defeat: impure pictures, friendships, the music we listen to, the shows we watch, or other activities we take part in. Only as we remove these from our lives will we start to win.

REALIZE THAT WINNING A WAR MEANS FIGHTING MANY BATTLES

There are many stories in the Bible that give us keys to overcome battles we will face. (See 1 Corinthians 10:6.)

To remind King Joash of the battles that he would face, the prophet Elisha gave him some arrows and told him to strike the ground with them. Joash struck the ground three times and then stopped. Elisha was deeply disappointed with the king and told him that if he had struck the ground five or six times, he would have subdued his enemy but because he struck only three times, he would only have three victories. (See 2 Kings 13:14-19)

So many times **we give up too soon**, before we see a complete result. Scripture is filled with examples and reminders that we need more determination than we think necessary:

"If racing against mere men makes you tired, how will you race against horses?"
(Jeremiah 12:5, NLT)

"If you fail under pressure, your strength is too small." (Proverbs 24:10, NLT)

"Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?... Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation." (Matthew 26:40-41, NIV)

"So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you. Patient endurance is what you need now so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that he has promised."
(Hebrews 10:35-36, NLT)

LEARN TO LIVE IN THE FEAR OF GOD

A sincere Christian cannot enjoy sensual thoughts or wrong thinking unless he temporarily blots the presence of God out of his consciousness. If we knew that God was evaluating every one of our thoughts, we would quickly reject those which were impure.

"By fearing the Lord, people avoid evil." (Proverbs 16:6, NLT)

This is precisely what the fear of the Lord is—the moment-by-moment awareness that God is watching and weighing every one of our words, thoughts, actions, and attitudes.



DISCUSS

What does "the fear of the Lord" mean?

The following verses should be committed to memory so they can serve as reminders of God's presence:

"You are the God who sees me..." (Genesis 16:13, NLT)

"The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good." (Proverbs 15:3, NIV)

"We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body." (2 Corinthians 5:10, NLT)

"Is he deaf—the one who made your ears? Is he blind—the one who formed your eyes?" (Psalm 94:9, NLT)

"For the Lord sees clearly what a man does, examining every path he takes." (Proverbs 5:21, NLT)

"You know my thoughts even when I'm far away." (Psalm 139:2, NLT)

"You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord." (Psalm 139:4, NLT)

LEARN GOD’S LIMITATION TO CURIOSITY

Undisciplined curiosity is one of Satan's most powerful means of defeating us in our thought lives. God has given us a marvelous intellect, but with it, He gave one limitation—we are not to learn the details of evil.

God would have us to be *"...wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil."* (Romans 16:19) It's significant that the next verse, Romans 16:20, refers back to Satan's victory in the Garden of Eden when he defeated Adam and Eve through their curiosity. God never intended that we learn evil with our mind or through experience, but with the discernment of our spirit.

"...Test the spirits to see whether they are from God..." (1 John 4:1, NIV)

The more we are mighty in God's Spirit, the greater our discernment will be. A prerequisite to being mighty in spirit is conquering impure thoughts.

"For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh..." (Galatians 5:17, NIV)

In practical application, this means that we must remove a number of things from our eyes and minds—a host of books, YouTube videos, TV shows, music, social media posts, and conversations which appeal to the lust of the flesh. (See Ephesians 5:3-4).

USE TEMPTATIONS AS “SPRINGBOARDS” TO SPIRITUAL INSIGHTS

Temptations are often based on legitimate human needs. Satan prompts us to fulfill our needs in his way, but God calls us to give Him our needs and to trust Him to fulfill them in His time and in His way. Therefore, we should turn each temptation into a signal to ask the Lord for the Scripture or the insights that He would have us quote in response.

The result of this will be a transforming of sinful desires into spiritual power, and we will discover that some of our greatest insights will grow out of these struggles.

REALIZE THAT VICTORY IS POSSIBLE

The following testimonies have been written by individuals who have overcome impure habits. Each person applied seven Scriptural steps of action. (These steps will be explained in other material.) Certain prerequisites, however, must be in one's life before these steps of action can take root and bear fruit. They are identified through these testimonies.

The need for revelation

"Although I knew Romans 6-8 for years and even taught it to others, I lived all my life in moral defeat. Then I heard of the principles of Christ's death, burial and resurrection, and the Lord opened my eyes to the way of victory. Now I have complete freedom from the chains of sin."

The need for identification

"For many years I have been struggling with moral impurity. Although I read several books on having victory over sin, I just couldn't put it all together. When I realized that my power to rise above pressures and temptations comes from my identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, I finally experienced victory over sin."

The need for accountability

"I was so encouraged to learn about overcoming sinful habits. I memorized Romans 6 and then meditated on these verses at least twice a day all year. However, I still was not free of my sin. You see, my shame kept me from confessing the problem to one in authority in my life. Finally, in desperation, I decided getting free was more important than my dignity, and I confessed my sin. Now I have complete freedom from this sin."

The promise of victory is assured in Scripture to those who discover and apply God's truth!