

Boundaries in Your Mind

By Dave Batty

“A few months ago, I was late in paying a debt of \$2,000,” shared Eddie. “The people finally caught up with me, and attacked me with a baseball bat. Now I often dream of revenge. I know I’m supposed to forgive, but it’s a constant battle in my mind.”

Maybe you can identify with Eddie—you too have been hurt by someone’s actions or words. Do you find it easy to play the movie of revenge in your mind?

“Even when I am sitting in church, or at home reading my Bible, I find my mind wandering far away from what is going on around me,” states David. “It’s not that I intentionally try to get my mind to think about something else because I am bored. It just happens.”

A street sign in New York City says, “Don’t even think about parking here.” The truth is, no one will be fined for thinking about parking there. But the person who put up that sign knows the importance of your thoughts. If you start thinking about something, it may not be long until you start doing it.

But a lot of people deceive themselves by saying, “I’ll never do it, but it’s OK to think about it. There’s no harm in the thought.”

But God has a different view. He says, “as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” (Proverbs 23:7 KJV) Jesus made the same point in talking about sexual sins. “²⁷You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’²⁸But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Matthew 5:27-28 NIV)

Where do I start?

You cannot stop a thought from coming into your head, but you can choose what you will do once you realize that thought is in your mind.

The bottom line—you need to put boundaries in your mind. You need these boundaries to protect you from sin and its destructive power—to keep out the evil or unhealthy things that will pollute your life.

You need boundaries in your mind to keep safe the good things in your life.

You need boundaries in your mind when danger is near—and for most of us, danger is near every day.

King David said, “I will set before my eyes no vile thing.” (Psalm 101:3 NIV) He realized the

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power of choice, and the responsibility he had to make this choice. It may not be easy, but what David did here is essential—he called sin what it really is—a “vile thing.” That’s not a term most of us use every day.

David did not pray, “Oh God, keep my mind away from sin.” He realized his responsibility to make this choice.

We have God’s promise of very special gifts He has already given us: “God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.” (2 Timothy 1:7 NIV) Another translation describes the last gift this way: God has given us “a sound mind.” Now the question is—what are we going to do with these special gifts from God?

Romans 12:1-2 challenges us to not allow the world to squeeze us into

- ❖ **What areas of your thought life need new boundaries?**
- ❖ **How can you build new boundaries in your mind?**
- ❖ **How can you protect the boundaries in your mind?**
- ❖ **What are the strategies that can help you attack evil thoughts when they come into your mind?**

its mold, but instead we should renew our minds so we can truly be transformed on the inside. We have a major responsibility to guard our mind, to keep out the sinful thoughts.

How can I build boundaries in my mind?

We need boundaries in our mind if we are to protect the good things God is giving us. So how do we build boundaries in our mind?

The most important thing to use in building boundaries for our mind is God's truth.

When you build a fence around your property, you draw up a plan, get the materials, and build the fence.

If you are going to build boundaries in your mind, you need to determine which areas you need those boundaries. In one respect, every command in the Bible can be a boundary for your mind. These are specific boundaries that God put in the Bible telling us—don't cross this line.

Remember—these boundaries are not just to keep sin out of your life—they also protect the good things God is giving you.

One of the most powerful ways to build boundaries in your mind is to memorize God's word. Each Bible verse can be like a brick in the wall that helps to keep in the good, and keep out what is evil.

How can I protect these boundaries in my mind?

But simply using God's truth to build boundaries in your mind is not the end—you are under attack! The devil will do anything he can to destroy these boundaries in your mind. And this is not just a problem for new Christians. One man who

has been a Christian for 50 years said, "I face just as many battles in my mind today as I did 30 or 40 years ago. They may not all be the same battles, but they are just as powerful."

So how do you protect these boundaries in your mind? You must have a strategy to fight the enemy—and you need weapons.

³For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We demolish arguments and every

God's truth is the most important thing to use in building boundaries in your mind.

pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV)

These verses describe the key steps we need to take to protect the boundaries in our mind.

1. Attack evil thoughts

Paul describes this as a battle in our mind. It's a war! We fight! We use weapons! We demolish strongholds! We take captive every thought!

Paul is not deceived by the lies of the devil. He knows this is war. Paul chooses to attack these evil thoughts. And he realizes he can't do it in his own strength—he relies on weapons that have "divine power." This same point is made in 2 Timothy 1:7 where we are told that God has given us a gift of "power."

You need to use these weapons to attack the evil thoughts that seek entry into your mind. Paul said, "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God." (vs. 5) There's no room for compromise with Paul—we are going to demolish these thoughts!

He goes on to say, "we take captive every thought." (vs. 5) This is a battle, and Paul is approaching it with the mindset of a warrior.

Eve in the Garden of Eden did not take this approach when Satan approached her. She entertained his appeal. Soon she allowed herself to be deceived into believing that what he said was good for her. She relied on her own wisdom and allowed the enemy entry into her thoughts. Her actions followed her thoughts, and sin entered the world through her.

In sharp contrast, when Jesus was tempted by the devil, He responded each time with verses from the Bible that directly attacked each temptation. He did not entertain the devil's appeals.

Jesus followed the strategy described by Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. Jesus attacked each lie with the truth. In Ephesians 6:10-18, Paul describes how we are to prepare ourselves for spiritual battle. We need to arm ourselves with the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Ephesians 6:17 NIV)

You don't demolish thoughts by welcoming them into your mind. You don't demolish them by ignoring them, or running away from them. You must attack them with God's truth, and take them captive. God's power has already been given to you—now you must put it to good use.

2. Know the truths of God

If you are going to protect the boundaries in your mind you must learn how to distinguish between thoughts that are from God and the ones that are from the devil. Paul said, “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God.”

(2 Corinthians 10:5 NIV)

How do you know if a thought “sets itself up against the knowledge of God?” You have to know God’s truth. You’ve got to memorize His truth, and meditate on it. But there is more—you must put it into action. God’s truth is not just to be stored in your brain—it’s to be used as a guide for your daily living.

Memorize verses that deal with the areas where your boundaries are being attacked by the enemy. Not just verses that talk about the devil—but verses that speak to God’s truth about that area of your life. Don’t become an expert on the devil—become an expert on God’s truth.

3. Use your boundaries as “Alarm bells”

We live in a world with all kinds of electronic alarms. We have fire alarms, smoke detectors, car alarms, burglar alarms on our homes, alarms on our computers. But these alarms are not a very good picture of the kind of alarm we need to have in our mind. There is no electronic alarm from God that automatically alerts us when danger is near.

The warning strategy used thousands of years ago is probably the best illustration of what we need today. Each city had people assigned to stand guard—they personally watched for the enemy. When they

saw danger, they alerted others.

We need to use our boundaries as “alarm bells” that the enemy is attacking. But you have to be that watchman of your mind. You have to be constantly vigilant. God tells us, “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a

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roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5:8 NIV)

Use evil thoughts as an alarm bell to take action against this intruder in your mind. You have God’s power at your disposal—which is more than adequate for any attack from the enemy.

4. Feed your mind and soul God’s way

Even the best warriors will grow weak if they do not eat properly. We must be careful to feed on God’s truth every day so we can remain strong for our battles.

If we become careless, and don’t feed on God’s truth, we set ourselves up for problems. Soon the grass on the other side of the fence looks greener. When the enemy comes disguised as an angel of light, we fall for the deception because we are not alert.

The verse in 1 Peter 5:8 also challenges us to be self-controlled. This points to the power of personal choice. You choose what to feed your mind. Every day your mind is bombarded with thousands of thoughts. How do you know if they

are good thoughts or evil thoughts? You have to feed on God’s truth every day.

In Proverbs, chapters 5, 6, and 7, Solomon warns about the dangers of sexual sins. He concludes chapter 5 by describing the man who gives in to sexual sins—he will die for lack of discipline (Proverbs 5:23 NIV). Self discipline is the key to keeping our mind healthy. We must choose to feed it with God’s truth.

5. Make your thoughts “obedient to Christ”

When Paul talks about the battles in his mind, he said, “we take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:5 NIV) He is not interested in just locking up evil thoughts in his mind.

It is very easy for us to have a secret room in our mind where we store our evil thoughts. We don’t let others know about this room. But whenever we choose, we open that door and look at those evil thoughts.

God does not tell you to keep those evil thoughts locked away in some secret corner of your mind. God’s word is clear—we are to make every thought obedient to Christ.

You may not be able to stop a sinful thought from entering your mind, but what do you do with it once you realize it is there? What does God say about this issue?

If it is a thought about sexual sin, then you can take that thought and make it obedient to Christ by thinking about what God’s truth says about the place for sex in your life as a Christian. Solomon said it this way—focus your thoughts on your own wife. (Proverbs 5:15-20) If you are not married, then find those verses that speak to how God wants you to think

about sex as a single person.

Take a look at each temptation that comes into your mind, and ask yourself, “How would Jesus respond to this temptation if He were here today in my shoes?” What would He be thinking? His power is available to you.

How can you do this? “Fix your thoughts on Jesus.” (Hebrews 3:1 NIV) This takes self-discipline.

Paul describes this as a daily struggle. He says that he “dies daily,” that he has to nail that sinful old self to the cross every day. There may be sinful thoughts that come into your mind every day. If you are going to make those thoughts obedient to Christ, then you will have to nail them to the cross every day.

You need to handcuff those evil thoughts, bring them to the cross, and leave them there. Then exchange them for the peace of Jesus. His love and peace can rule in your mind—let Jesus truly be the Leader of your life. It’s not God’s job to handcuff your sinful thoughts—that’s your job.

You may find these evil thoughts are a daily battle. There is no need to feel shame because the enemy has come to battle your mind. You must simply choose to follow Jesus, and commit to bringing every thought into obedience to Christ.

Not only do these boundaries protect you from sin, they provide the setting for you to live in the freedom that God has for you each day. His peace and love can flood your life. But don’t be surprised when the boundaries in your mind face new attacks from the enemy tomorrow. It’s time to take up the weapons God has given you and attack every evil thought, take them captive, and make them obedient to Christ.

Boundaries in Your Mind Discussion Guide

The following questions can be used for your personal reflection on this topic, or it can be used as a guide for a group discussion. If this is used in a group setting, please understand that you are not required to disclose the specific details of past sins, failures, or personal experiences.

1. What is one example where you have put a boundary in your mind that has worked successfully for you? What are some of the areas in your mind where you struggle with boundaries?
2. Read 2 Timothy 1:7. This verse says that God has given you the gift of self control. One translation says God has given you “a sound mind.”
 - A. On a scale of 1-10, with “1” being lots of problems, and “10” being perfect self-control all the time, how would you rate yourself in regards to your thought life?
 - B. If you find this to be a big challenge in your life, why do you think it is so difficult for you?
3. Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. Paul describes this as a battle in your mind. Rate yourself on each of these strategies that he describes. Then describe how you can use each one in your life.
 - A. The weapons we fight with are not weapons of this world. They have divine power.
 - B. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God
 - C. We take captive every thought.
 - D. We make every thought obedient to Christ.
4. Read Psalm 101:3. What is one area in your mind where you need to do a better job of putting boundaries in place?
How can Psalm 101:3 and 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 help you?



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