

# LIVING HOLY

**Life Application:** Asking the Lord to purify our minds and to help us protect them from influences that would defile us or make us less Christ-like.

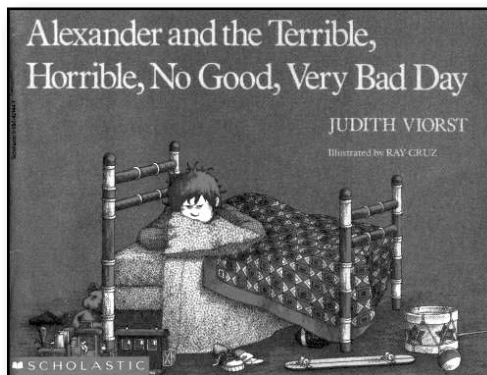
**Key Verse for Meditation:** Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. – Philippians 2:5

**Focus Scriptures:** Psalm 1:1-2; 139:23-24; Isaiah 26:3; Romans 8:6-7; 12:2-3; 2 Corinthians 10:5; Philippians 4:8; Titus 1:15; 1 Peter 1:13

When our children were young, one of their favorite books was, "Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day." They were endlessly entertained by the trials and tribulations of the irascible Alexander, who faced a barrage of bummers worthy of a country-western song: getting smushed in the middle seat of the car, a dessert-less sack lunch, a cavity at the dentist's office, being forced to sleep in pajamas with railroad trains on them, and more. Actually, the poor boy's difficulties caused him to resolve several times to move to Australia!

While we can chuckle over Alexander's

## Attitude Matters!



testy commentary, it actually does illustrate an important truth: our attitude matters!

How would we feel if someone gave us advice on how to have a terrible day? They might begin by telling us to not have faith that God will help us during difficult situations, to remember everything that has gone wrong in the past, and to brood over the things we have no power to change.

Perhaps they would suggest that we wish for what we may never obtain, dwell on everyone else's shortcomings, and criticize the various people we encounter. We should refuse to be cheered up, and of course, we



**Lesson Key:** The key endeavor of a holy Christian is to love God with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength. As individuals who have been set apart and devoted to God, we want the mind of Christ to be in us (see Philippians 2:5), so we carefully guard against anything that would contaminate our thoughts or distract us from our primary purpose of glorifying and serving God.

would be told to complain about the weather, not forgetting to throw in a few grumbles about potholes, the government, our fellow workers, and other drivers. If we heeded this advice, we certainly would have a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day that would rival Alexander's!

In contrast, what if we were given the opposite kind of advice? We would be reminded that God has always been faithful, and we can trust Him to guide us in every circumstance. We would recognize that nothing good comes by brooding over wrongs in the past, and choose instead to think of times others have helped or befriended us. We would count our blessings, instead of continually yearning for more. Rather than criticizing those around us, we would look for commendable traits to focus upon. Our thoughts would dwell on uplifting and inspirational topics, instead of negative ones.

The Apostle Paul knew the value of this approach. He spelled out in detail the things

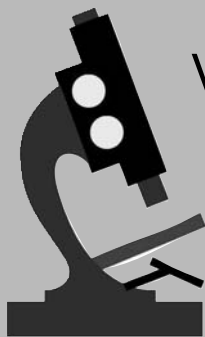
Christians ought to think about, when he instructed the believers at Philippi, "Whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8). Paul meant they were to meditate on them with careful reflection, not just give them casual or superficial consideration. He recognized that holy thinking produces holy living.

Let us challenge ourselves to focus daily on God's good gifts to us—His forgiveness and fellowship, the treasures found in the Bible, the beauty of this world, the love of family, the friendship of other Christians, and material goods we are privileged to have. When we keep our minds and thoughts centered on good instead of bad, and positive rather than negative, the beauty of Jesus shines out through us and uplifts others too. – *From a Daybreak devotional*



"We cannot put dirt into a well and produce clean water." – Unknown

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## Word Search

Romans 12:2 declares, "And be not conformed to [pressed into the mold of] 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." The

Greek word translated *transformed* is *metamorphosis*, and is used today to describe the amazing change that takes place when a caterpillar becomes a butterfly.

In the original language, the verb tenses of the words translated *conformed*, *transformed*, and *prove* indicate continuous action. Thus, the Christian mind should be characterized by continuous development toward maturity.

**Food for Thought:** "As a young child, I loved to read, and that pattern continued after I married. For most people, reading is not a bad thing, but it kept me from cleaning my house and taking care of my husband and children. With my nose in a book, I would ignore my family's needs. I would read up to two books a day.

"One camp meeting at a Bible teaching, the minister spoke about reading edifying materials. My little daughter, who was sitting next to me, said in a loud voice, 'Mommy, you read all those crummy romance books!' It was as though a knife went through my heart.

"Through much prayer, the Lord helped me give those books to Him. These days, I am very careful about what I read, and I limit myself to just a short period of time, or when I am on vacation." – *From a testimony by Linda Zetter*



## For Personal Study

1. What principles regarding the Christian mind are outlined in the following verses?

Mark 12:30 \_\_\_\_\_  
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John 8:31-32 \_\_\_\_\_  
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1 Timothy 4:15 \_\_\_\_\_  
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Titus 1:15 \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. Why is it so important to discipline our thoughts? Proverbs 4:23-27

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3. What should you do if Satan runs a negative thought through your mind?

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## Battlefield of the Mind

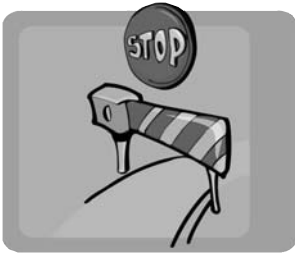
The Apostle Paul defined his goal as a minister of the Gospel in terms of a spiritual warfare. He saw the “fight of faith” as a contest against ideas, philosophies, and general thought patterns that are opposed to God’s Word.

Note the military imagery in his words found in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5: “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; 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.” Clearly, Paul recognized that the battle facing Christians will often take place in the territory of the mind. With vivid word pictures, he described the “pulling down of strongholds,” or entrenched fortifications, in a battle for truth. Any ideas that were not consistent with divine revelation were identified as “imaginations” that must be cast down.

Paul’s goal was not to present the Gospel as one among many valid philosophies of life. Rather, he was determined to abolish every school of thought that did not align with the truth, and bring “every thought” into captivity—under the control of Jesus Christ. He recognized the grave danger of adopting the world’s values, courting the world’s approval, or pursuing the world’s symbols of status.

As Christians, we are called to battle with our “loins girt about with truth” (see Ephesians 6:14). As we look to God, He will help us distinguish between the world’s philosophies and Christ’s truth, and to maintain pure and holy minds in an ungodly world.





## Steps to Guarding Your Mind

**D**id you know that someone is trying to get control of your mind? When we turn our lives over to God, Satan is dethroned from our hearts, but that does not mean he gives up on us! He almost certainly will attack us through our minds. To counter this force, we must be extremely alert and careful to guard against the inroads he will try to make. Here are some helpful steps.

- Yield your mind to God at the start of each day. We can do much to prevent wrong thoughts from occurring by cultivating the presence of the Holy Spirit. The best way to do this is to begin the day by communicating with God.
- Let the Holy Spirit renew your mind through His Word. Daily systematic Bible reading will feed our hearts and revitalize our minds, providing us with spiritual strength to withstand the attempts of Satan to make inroads into our minds.
- “Mind your mind” throughout the day. Be purposeful and aware of what you are thinking about. If your mind begins to drift into negative channels, replace those thoughts with something pure and positive. We cannot always choose what we see or hear, but we can choose what we will dwell upon.
- Guard the entrance to your mind. The mind is the gate to the soul, and the three spiritual enemies listed in 1 John 2:16—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—must be resisted consciously in order to escape the traps of Satan.



## Bible Background

**P**aul challenged the believers in Philippi with the words, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). This phrase could be translated, “Think [*phroneite*] this in yourselves.” The admonition referred to more than mere thought patterns, but actually pointed to disposition and attitudes of the heart.

The Apostle was exhorting the saints to allow Christ’s attitude of lowliness of mind and unselfish consideration of others to dominate their lives. When this is done, there will be an absence of self-assertion, no insistence on personal rights, no determination to promote self-interests, and no living solely for oneself.

**4.** We are admonished, “Whatsoever things are pure . . . think on these things” (Philippians 4:8). Name some things that fit into that category.

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**5.** On several occasions, the Bible instructs the saints to be of “one mind” (see Romans 15:5; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 1:27). Why is being of one mind necessary, and how can it be achieved?

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**6.** While God is the one who purifies our hearts, we have a responsibility to guard it. What did Paul say in 2 Corinthians 10:5 regarding this? Why do you think Paul phrased this responsibility in terms of a warfare?

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