

Intentional Thoughts

Ready:

“Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.” - Romans 12:2

Set

When I ran my very first race it was typical March weather in Chicago—not what anyone was expecting. There were reports that a snow storm was coming in on race day even though the weekend prior had been sunny and mild. The night before the race I read my Bible. Before I went to bed I prayed and concluded by telling God, “I’m not going to worry about the weather. I will run the race set before me.” In the morning I jumped out of my hotel bed and went to the window...blizzard conditions. When I arrived at gear-check athletes were huddling together under the tents to stay dry and warm. I kept remembering what I had told God: “I will run the race set before me.” By the time I made my way to the start corrals I could not feel my hands or feet. I stayed positive and focused. Suddenly I heard a whisper clearly say, “You don’t have to do this.” I firmly responded, “I am doing this!”

As athletes and coaches we put a great deal of emphasis on training our bodies. But training our minds should receive equal attention. The Bible teaches that our thoughts are important because they affect us in the natural and supernatural realms. In Matthew 5:21-22 Jesus says, “You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, ‘Do not murder, and whoever murders will be subject to judgment. But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Fool!’ will be subject to the Sanhedrin. But whoever says, ‘You moron!’ will be subject to hellfire.” In verse 27-28 Jesus continues, “You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Notice that Jesus is not only focused on the physical actions of people but also on their thought processes.

All actions are precipitated by thoughts. Perhaps it is a fleeting idea or something we’ve dwelled on for days. Regardless, our thoughts matter because they influence what we do. Luke 6:45 states, “A good man produces good out of the good storeroom of his heart. An evil man produces evil out of the evil storeroom, for his mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart.” The Lord even asks us to consider our minds when donning the spiritual pieces of armor listed in Ephesians 6:17 (the helmet of salvation). We have a responsibility to maintain the temple of the Holy Spirit in its totality—body and mind.

Before a training run I have found it helpful to I think about what obstacles I may encounter on the route and how I will respond. I think about how I will be aware of my body and know when

to hydrate, when to eat and how to push myself when I want to stop. I think about encouraging other people on my route. Then I set out on my run. I use the time to pray and recall all the blessings in my life. When I feel myself getting tired, I recite over and over again, "Thank You, Jesus." When a negative thought pops up I recall Scripture and inspirational quotes I've memorized.

This intentionality of thought may seem odd to some. Most people in our society don't allow themselves enough time to be aware of their thoughts. They rely on their electronic devices to keep them occupied and mentally absorbed. We have this need to be constantly entertained. But how much better would our lives be if we thought about what we thought about? We could strengthen our faith and make better decisions if we filled our minds on purpose with godly truth and wisdom.

Intentionality of thought is a key component we need to incorporate into our sports training and our daily lives. It's one of the most effective ways we can begin to truth God more fully and act accordingly.

Go

1. How have your thoughts impacted your training and competition?
2. Is your thought-life honoring to God?
3. Have you memorized Scripture recently?
4. How could intentionally changing your thoughts help you grow in Christ? How could this impact the people around you?

Workout

- Deuteronomy 11:18
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-5
- Ephesians 6:10-20
- Philippians 4:8
- Colossians 3:2

Bible Reference:

Deuteronomy 11:18
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