

# Catch those Thoughts!



BY BOB KLYNSMITH

We've all heard of the snowball principle. How a small snowball rolling down the slopes of a mountain gradually enlarges and gathers momentum. It soon becomes an avalanche capable of causing immense destruction.

This is what sometimes happens with our thinking. Life situations and bad experiences often invade our lives and trigger certain thoughts. Perhaps someone has harmed us or we find ourselves in a negative frame of mind as we face difficult trials. And so we set in motion, the nurturing of toxic thoughts, until they dominate our minds. They spread their tentacles and may take root in the form of anxiety, worry, bitterness, anger, resentment or even hatred. Our sense of objectivity and "level headedness" then starts to wane as we begin to ride on an emotional roller coaster.

We need to be very aware of what is going on in our minds at all times. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul instructs us to "...take captive *every thought* to make it obedient to Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:5) In other translations this verse is rendered *every intention* or *every purpose*.

Criminal case studies reveal that an offence often starts with a grudge that is never mentioned or spoken about. Over time the grudge snowballs into resentment and intense anger until it finally results in the deed of a tragic crime, in particular family murders.

"The tongue is a small part of the body but it makes great boasts," we are told in James 3:5. "Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark." Sooner or later the harbouring of noxious thoughts will become words and possibly deeds at a later stage, which may very well hurt others, even our loved ones. When a negative "spark" enters our minds,

we need to extinguish it immediately, before it becomes a raging forest fire. This is best achieved by turning to our loving God and allowing the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with perspective, insight and wisdom. Indeed, there is a more noble and enriching way of lifting our thoughts to greater depth and maturity levels that will confound the wisdom of the world. “For though we live in this world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds (2 Corinthians 10: 3-4).

### ***The Power of Meditation***

The quietening of the mind or meditation is fast becoming a lost art, in a world that is often filled with frenetic activity. Yet it is one of the most effective disciplines that enables us to improve the quality of our thinking. A Jewish Encyclopaedia describes meditation as “the cleaving of thought to a particular subject, concentrated delving to the depth of a particular subject in an attempt to comprehend it from all its aspects”. Meditation needs to become an integral part of our daily lives. It provides us with the opportunity to remove the clutter from our minds and think clearly. Even ten or fifteen minutes each day can make all the difference. In fact, a great many original thoughts and creative ideas occur through the process of meditation.

In her well-known book, entitled “Springs in the Valley,” Lettie Cowman writes about a traveller making a long journey deep in the jungles of Africa. African tribesmen carried their load and travelled far with them on the first day. The travellers were hopeful of a speedy journey. But, the tribesmen refused to move on the second day. They simply sat and rested. On enquiry about this strange behaviour the travellers were informed that they had gone too fast the first day, and the Africans were now waiting for their souls to catch up with their bodies. A beautiful story and lesson for us today.

Our busy lives often result in a spiritual void that leaves our “souls” feeling empty. As one author states, “beware of the barrenness of a busy mind.” It is so easy to become caught up in the spiral of negative thinking, which bombards us from all sides. Sometimes it shows up in the way we speak or our reactions or our attitudes. How often do we find that something small, such as someone who jumps the queue and cuts us off in traffic, causes us to explode? It is absolutely vital that we create the time and space, each and every day, to meditate and let the churning waters settle so that we can bring a divine perspective to our thinking, through the presence of Jesus and the Holy Spirit (James 1: 5).

Meditation empowers us to examine our thoughts and apply the “catch and release” principle. Catch the thought, and ponder God’s perspective on the matter? Is it worth holding on to? Is it worth the price tag of anger, resentment, bitterness or unhappiness? Consider the insights revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures. Then release the thought, let it go and replace it with a divine attitude (Rom 12: 21).

There is a great need today for deep thinking and the capacity to lift our thoughts above the vast sea of human nature. “Do not be anxious for anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (Philippians 4:6-7). Sadly, the fast paced lives we lead today inwardly strangles the re-creating presence of God’s Spirit in our minds. King David led a busy life, but found time to meditate. “I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done.” (Psalm 143:5). In stillness we are able to find God and enjoy His presence. Mother Theresa said, “God cannot be found in noise and restlessness.”

### *Some practicalities*

We sometimes tend to become too analytical and so restrict the flow of creative thinking. Real solutions and wisdom are often achieved by allowing our minds to “free wheel”. Meditation calls for a focused but relaxed mode of thinking. Deep and rhythmic breathing exercises can be very helpful. Besides the deeper forms of meditation one can also inculcate freethinking principles in the simple daily activities that help to still the turbulent waters. This may include going for a walk, enjoying a cup of coffee, soaking in a bubble bath, gardening or lighting a candle in the quietness of a room. Even more robust activities, such as exercising, jogging, swimming or gyming provides the opportunity for us to let our minds run free. CEOs of large and small companies agree that the best ideas are seldom raised in the boardroom, but while on holiday or in the shower

Deep meditation calls for a quiet environment, enabling us to focus on the real issues of life in a relaxed frame of mind. A place where we can join in conversation with God, focus on a passage of Scripture or Biblical principle. A time to reflect on a specific difficulty we may be struggling with or ponder about the day’s activities and the attitudes that accompanied them. Meditation creates the opportunity for God’s transforming presence to take root in our lives as well as the courage and resilience to face trials with strength and dignity. Indeed, it brings an inner peace and joy that transcends all understanding.

## THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION by BOB KLYNSMITH

<b>CALMING THE MIND</b>	<p>Activities that promote the relaxation of the mind and body – It's all about letting go of analytical thinking – removing clutter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deep rhythmic breathing exercises.</li> <li>• Go for a walk &amp; let your mind freewheel.</li> <li>• Enjoy and savour a cup of tea.</li> <li>• Relax and soak in a bubble bath.</li> <li>• Light gardening. Get your fingers into mother earth.</li> <li>• Sit back in the twilight and listen to soothing music. Light a candle.</li> <li>• Clean the pool</li> <li>• Exercise: Jog, cycle, swim, aerobics etc.</li> </ul>
<b>SOLITUDE</b>	<p>Find a place of peace and solitude:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Away from noise, crowds and interruptions.</li> <li>• Find one or two special places that become you regular retreats. Your daily sanctuary.</li> <li>• Choose a time where quietness and stillness prevails. Early morning, sunset or evening.</li> </ul>
<b>FOCUS</b>	<p>Tell yourself you have got all the time in the world. You cannot rush through meditation e.g. if you only have twenty minutes available, don't rush the twenty minutes.</p> <p>Relax and allow God's loving presence to soak into your thoughts.</p> <p>Decide on the focal point of your reflection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A passage of scripture or biblical principle.</li> <li>• Combine bible study and meditation. Reflect on God's word while you are studying.</li> <li>• Reflect on God's perspective regarding a specific trial you are going through.</li> <li>• Simply reflect on the day's activities and attitudes.</li> <li>• Meditation is absolutely critical when you have reached a defining moment in your life and a vital decision has to be made.</li> <li>• Identify a specific social issue that affect you deeply.</li> <li>• God's creation.</li> <li>• Reflect on your own spiritual journey and growth path.</li> <li>• Building bridges in a relationship. Marriage, children, friends, colleagues etc.</li> </ul> <p>The list is endless but keep to the focus even if your mind wanders. Gently nudge your thoughts back to the subject at hand. Remember to let your mind move into a relaxed but focused free flow-thinking mode.</p>
<b>STOPPING MOMENTS</b>	<p>Set aside small pockets of time each day to enjoy a meditation break.</p> <p>Tea in a quiet corner. Short walk. Sitting in the garden/park etc.</p>