**Lessons from a Lockdown**

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**Day 14**

**Philippians 4:8-9**

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

***Questions for Personal Reflection:***

1. What do I often think about these days? Am I convinced that I can control my thoughts?
2. Why is what I think about important? How is my relationship with God connected to my thoughts?
3. What are the things which distract or prevent me from focusing on God? How can I overcome these?
4. What are examples of true, noble, right, pure, lovely and admirable things which I should think about? How do I think about such things?
5. What are examples of excellent or praiseworthy things I should think about? What activities should I engage in to generate these thoughts?

*Insight:*

Paul told them to think about certain things. This means that we can choose what we think about. Our thoughts are within our control. We can take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Co 10:5). Because of this, we should choose to focus our thoughts on things God wants us to think about. How do we do that? Meditating on the Word of God helps us understand what is important to God so that we know what to think about. Praying frequently and deeply allows us to connect to God and helps us keep in step with the Spirit. Writing down our insights when we read the Bible helps us sort through the ideas God is teaching us. Writing God letters to God, singing to God and creating works of art sometimes also helps us connect with God. We should engage in those activities that help us focus on God and avoid those which distract us from God.

What are the true things we can think about? The Bible teaches about what is true. There is such a thing as absolute truths. Truth is not relative. Truth is not a matter of opinion. As disciples we should be careful that speak only the truth. When we share information, we need to make sure it is true. During these times of pandemic sharing false information, even if we have good intentions, is not helpful and can even be criminal. Sometimes we are exposed to lies told by others and it can annoy or even anger us. We can’t stop people from lying or misrepresenting the truth, but we can choose not to dwell on them.

What are the *noble* and *admirable* things we can think about? The Greek word translated as “noble” in the NIV is translated as “honorable” in the more literal translations of the NASB and ESV. The word seems to refer to things of a good reputation. The word admirable is similar and is translated as “commendable” in other translations. These days while there are reports of despicable actions of some (e.g. disregarding quarantine, hoarding etc.) there are also stories of heroic actions of others (e.g. health workers sacrificing themselves, people giving to the less fortunate, employers sacrificing profits for the sake of their employees, people using talents to serve others for free, etc.). These are the things we should think about and allow them to inspire us to be the same.

What are the *right* things we should think about? The word is also translated as “righteous” in other parts of the Bible. It means keeping with the commands of God or doing what is just. One application is that we should think about our righteousness. Are we being righteous during this lockdown? Are we meeting the demands of every relationship? Are we doing what God expects us to do? What more can we do to fulfill all righteousness?

What are the *pure* and *lovely* things we should think about? Pure means clean or sacred while lovely means acceptable and pleasing. We should therefore avoid activities and media that can corrupt our minds and cause us to have impure thoughts. Considering we are spending more time on the internet or watching television these days, we should be careful what we allow into our minds.

Every day we may be exposed to things which trigger thoughts opposite to those Paul listed down. That is why we need to be careful to engage only in activities that help us to only have excellent and praiseworthy thoughts. We become or act according to our thoughts. So we need to plan out our days and weeks to protect our thoughts. We need to remembers that when we are idle we are more vulnerable to sinful thoughts.

Sometimes we do fall into these thoughts. The good news is that we can always change our minds.

Let’s be honest. There is an overwhelming number of things that are going wrong in our society today even before the pandemic and even more so now. But we can choose what to focus on.

“You can focus on the mess or you can change your mind and focus on who God is, what God can do, the qualities he can put in our lives, the changes he can make, the victory he will most certainly achieve, and the grace that will allow you to share in it.” – Thomas Jones

During this lockdown, let us lock-on our thoughts on God.