

REPLACEMENT—A POWERFUL AND VERSATILE OFFENSIVE SPIRITUAL WEAPON IN PHILIPPIANS 4:8

'Whatever is true (as defined by God), whatever is honorable (in the eyes of God), whatever is right (in God's sight), whatever is pure (in God's eyes), whatever is pleasing (to God), whatever is respectful (of God), if there is any excellence of character (as defined by God) and if anything worthy of praise (from God), let your mind dwell on these things' (Phil 4:8 RCL). Apply these six steps for victory over unpleasant and sinful thoughts: (1) fight (Rom 7:23; 1 Tim 1:18; 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7; Jas 4:1; 1 Pt 2:11), (2) overcome (Jn 16:33; Rom 12:21; Rev 2:26; 3:21; 12:11), and (3) take troubling or sinful thoughts captive in order to obey Christ (2 Cor 10:5), (4) by confessing mental attitude sins (1 Jn 1:9), (5) by claiming promises to immediately replace all unwanted thoughts with the fruit of the Spirit (2 Pt 1:4), (6) and by permanently replacing them with biblical thoughts thru meditating on appropriate Scriptures (Phil 4:8). This is Spiritual CPR: resuscitating godly attitudes with Confession, Promises, and Replacement.

Let's call this spiritual weapon replacement, substitution, distraction, or diversion. Use it to replace disturbing or sinful thoughts in order to restore lost joy and peace of mind. Distraction is just as much a part of spiritual life as everyday life. By making funny noises and faces, for instance, parents often employ this technique to distract crying children. Most spiritual weapons have secular parallels: confessing and forsaking sin to restore broken fellowship (1 Jn 1:9; Prov 28:13) is parallel to apologizing and promising not to do it again. Prayer and supplication parallels asking for help. Ridicule (Lk 14:28–30), sarcasm (1 Kgs 18:27), rebuke (1 Tim 5:20), warning (Lk 12:5), and exposure (Jn 3:20) also have secular parallels. So meditate for awhile on the character and work of Jesus and see how fast your peace-robbing thoughts are overcome, taken captive, and replaced. Do some Bible study and you'll soon be engrossed in positive thoughts. Meditate on Bible doctrine and enjoy your victory over all intruding enemies. Use the verses mentioned below to combat thoughts, words, and deeds that are false, shameful, unjust, immoral, disappointing, disrespectful, ungodly, and censurable.

TRUE: 'as many thoughts and words as are true (plurals of *hosos* and *alethes*),' as opposed to lies and untruth. Truth is defined by God and is found in nature (general revelation) and in the Bible (specific revelation). *Application:* Use truth to fight falsehood and error. If troubled by teachings of evolution, secular humanism, or false doctrine, overcome, take captive, and replace these thoughts with thoughts that are true (from your knowledge and understanding of God's Word).

HONORABLE: 'as many thoughts, words, and deeds as are honorable (plurals of *hosos* and *semnos*),' as opposed to shameful in the eyes of God. *Semnos* means 'marvelous and worthy of respect' (*ho thaumastos kai axios entropes in Etymologicum Magnum*), 'esteemed, highly honored' or 'held in esteem, honour' (*entimos and endoxos in Etymologicum Genuinum*), 'honorable' (*timia* in Hesychius), "noble" (Spica, Tyro), and "majestic/magnificent" (Thackeray). It's used of magnificent buildings: "the king asked another how he could build in such a way that his structures would endure after him? And he replied to the question, 'If his creations were on a great and noble (*semnos*) scale, so that the beholders would spare them for their beauty (Letter of Aristaeus 258, Charles). Or 'majestic/magnificent scale' (Thackeray). Hermopolis is "the great, ancient, illustrious and most august (*semnotatos*) city" (p.ryl 2.110.3 in MM). Of noble works: "the noblest (*semnotatos*) of your works was the liberation of the Greeks' (Polybius 21.23.10). Of Aphrodite: "venerable Kypris" (Babrius 32.2). And God's honorable Laws (2 Macc 6:28). *Application:* to overcome and take shameful thoughts captive like being lazy (Prov 20:4), neglecting children (1 Tim 5:8) and needy parents (Mk 7:11), suing Christians (1 Cor 6:1–7), worldliness (Phil 3:17), and being inconsiderate, headstrong, and self-willed in church ('so that your revered [*semnon*] and famous and lovable name in the eyes of all men is greatly reviled' Clement to Corinth 1:1 RCL), think about what gives you honor and respect such as integrity (1 Kgs 9:4; 1 Chr 29:17; Job 2:3, 9; 27:5; Ps 101:2), imitating Paul (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; Phil 3:17; 4:9; 1 Th 1:6–7; 2 Th 3:7–9; cf. 1 Tim 4:12; Tit 2:7; Heb 6:12; 13:7), being like Christ (Jn 19:13–15; Rom 8:29; 15:2–3; 2 Cor 4:3–4; Gal 4:19; Eph 5:2; Phil 2:3–5; 1 Pt 2:19–21; 1 Jn 2:6; 3:16), and the character of God (Mt 5:48; Lk 6:36; Eph 4:24, 32; 5:1; 1 Pt 1:15–16; Heb 12:10). Use this weapon when (1) tempted to do something shameful (2 Cor 4:2), (2) rightly shamed (1 Cor 6:5; 11:22; Phil 3:19; 2 Th 3:14), or (3) wrongly shamed (Acts 5:41; Heb 12:2).

RIGHT: 'as many thoughts, words, and deeds as are right (plurals of *hosos* and *dikaiois*)' in the sight of God, as opposed to wrong, unrighteous, unfair, and unjust. *Dikaiois*, a legal term, includes all thoughts and deeds that conform to the laws of God—things right, righteous, fair, and just in your dealings with men and God. Of just weights and measures (Lev 19:36 LXX). In a petition for justice, a beekeeper, Hieracion son of Dorion, calls the prefect of Egypt a just judge: "Since therefore the case requires the exercise of your hatred of wrongdoers, I entreat you, my lord and just judge (*dikaiokrites*), to hear me against them. . ." (p.ryl 2.113.34–35). In another petition Demetrius son of Aristomenes asks the Exegetes of Alexandria to decide his legal rights: "therefore we beg you to give a decision on all these points, so that we may obtain our rights (plural of *dikaiois*) from you and be relieved" (p.ryl 2.119, 35–36). "Men most honour the just (*dikaiois*) and the brave" (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.9.6). *Application:* Use this weapon when you're a victim of some injustice—when someone wrongs you and your thoughts cycle between righteous anger, depression, and vengeance (as in cases of theft, betrayal, divorce, child molestation, rape, negligent homicide, and murder). To overcome, take captive, and replace incapacitating thoughts of rage, resentment, and revenge, think righteous thoughts such as "IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS UPON HIS HEAD" (Rom 12:20) and "overcome evil with good" (12:21). Imitate Jesus: "while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously (*dikaiois*)" (1 Pt 2:23). Think about future rewards (Heb 11:26; 12:2) and future possessions such as your heavenly house (Jn 14:2–3; Heb 10:34), the New Jerusalem (Heb 11:14–16; 12:22; Rev 21:2), and a "new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness (*dikaioisune*) dwells" (2 Pt 3:13). And think about this: the world is not worthy of your presence (Heb 11:38)! Astounding!

PURE: 'as many thoughts, words, and deeds as are pure (plurals of *hosos* and *hagnos*),' as opposed to immoral. *Hagnos* includes all things that are morally pure in God's eyes: pure hearts (Jas 4:4), pure motives (Phil 1:17), pure virgin (2 Cor 11:2), pure wife (Tit 2:5), wisdom (Jas 3:17), and Jesus (1 Jn 3:3). *Application:* Use this weapon, for instance, when tempted by sexual sins. Fight, overcome, capture, and replace impure thoughts of mental adultery, infidelity, homosexuality, and other sexual sins by meditating on commands like "purify your hearts" (Jas 4:8), "flee from youthful lusts" (2 Tim 2:22), and "abstain from sexual immorality" (1 Th 4:3). Our souls are purified "by obedience to the truth" (1 Pt 1:22).

PLEASING: 'as many thoughts, words, and deeds as are acceptable and pleasing to God (plurals of *hosos* and *prospheiles*),' as opposed to disappointing or offensive. *Prospheiles* is a *hapax legomenon* in the NT and, when used of things, it means 'desirable' (*agapetois* in Hesychius) or 'acceptable, pleasing' (Thayer). Usage: 'dear in the highest degree (*prospheilestai*) to gods and men' (Xenophon, *Oeconomicus* 15.4). "Truly, such a deed is pleasing (*prospheiles*) even to the gods, fair both to hear, and to tell to posterity" (Aeschylus, *Seven against Thebes* 580). "You are Greeks—a sight most welcome (*prospheilestai*) to my eyes" (Sophocles, *Philoctetes* 224). Plotina, wife of the Emperor Trajan, describes Trajan's successor Hadrian as 'most pleasing (*prospheilestato*) in all things to me' (MM). *Application:* Use this weapon when your godly thoughts, words, and deeds are not accepted, politically incorrect, or spurned (1 Th 2:4; 1 Pt 2:23; 4:19). Focus on your responsibilities to serve and the benefits of pleasing God in order to overcome, capture, and replace your disappointment, frustration, depression, and anger (Mt 17:5; Jn 8:29; Gal 1:10; Eph 5:10; Col 1:9–12; Heb 11:5, 6; 13:16; 1 Pt 2:5).

RESPECTFUL: 'as many thoughts, words, and deeds as are respectful or reverential to God (plurals of *hos* and *euphemos*),' as opposed to flippant, insulting, or blasphemous. *Euphemos* ('eu' good + *pheme* 'report' = say something good about something or to someone) means 'he speaks good things' (*kala lalei* in Hesychius). It may be used of respect in worship: "to utter words of good omen, and to avoid using words of ill omen, during a religious ceremony. . . to observe a religious silence. . . in order to avoid using accidentally ill-omened words" (Donnegan), "respectful" or "show favour or honour, either by suitable language, or by respectful silence" (Groves), "reverent thought (*euphemou phrontidos*), i.e., keeping a holy silence" (Sophocles, *OC* 132 in LSJ), "command silence (*euphemesai*), that we may pray to Jove. . . if indeed he will have pity" (Iliad 9.171). Of respectful silence so the famed poet Agathon can write his odes: "Let all the people be silent (*euphemos*)" (Aeschylus, *Thesm.* 139). Or of respectability: "to dress up the absurdity in respectable language (*euphemois onomasin*)" (Plutarch, *Moralia* 921F), "a fair or honourable name for a bad thing, *euphemism*" (LSJ), and "to the more respectable (*euphemoterois*) members of this pantheon" instead of Terror, Fear, Frenzy and Deceit (Josephus, *Apion* 2.248). *Application:* To defeat, capture, and replace thoughts, words, and acts of irreverence, either yours or of others, such as disrespect for parents (Lev 19:3), husbands (Eph 5:33), superiors (1 Pt 2:18), and God (Mal 1:6–8), or disobedience to God (2 Chr 26:16–21), substituting tradition for God's Word (Isa 29:13), and perverting justice (Lk 18:2–6), let your mind dwell on promises of fearing God (Ps 47:2; 66:16; 103:11, 13; 115:11, 13; 119:63; 128:1; 145:19; 147:11; Prov 1:7; 3:7; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 14:26–27; 15:16; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17; 31:30; Ecc 12:13; Jer 5:22; Dan 6:26; Jon 1:16; Mal 3:5; Mt 10:28; Lk 1:50; 12:5; Acts 10:2, 35; 2 Cor 7:1; 1 Pt 1:17; Rev 11:18; 14:7), learning God's Word (Ps 5:7), and worshipping with fear and trembling (Ps 2:11; 119:119–120; Heb 12:21; cf. a fear of human authority in 2 Cor 7:15; Eph 6:5; Phil 2:12).

EXCELLENT CHARACTER: 'if there is any excellence of character (*arete*),' as opposed to ungodly character. *Arete* means "uncommon character worthy of praise, excellence of character" (BAGD) such as justice (*dikaioisune*), courage (*andria*), self-restraint (*sophrosune*), magnificence (*megalorepeia*), magnanimity (*megalorepsuchia*), liberality (*eleutheriotes*), gentleness (*praotes*), practical wisdom (*phronesis*), and speculative wisdom (*sophia*) (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.9.5–13).

Application: Use this weapon when angered by lowlife behavior. Meditate on godly character: love, grace, compassion, mercy, generosity, forgiveness, goodness, righteousness, justice, honesty, truthfulness, wisdom, patience, and faithfulness. God's character is perfect (1 Pt 2:9; 2 Pt 1:3). For us, excellent character is possessing the character of God and the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22–23). Character is defined by God and comes from faith in God's Word (2 Pt 1:5).

WORTHY OF PRAISE: 'and if something worthy of praise (*epainos*),' as opposed to commonplace or censurable. *Epainos* means "praiseworthy" (BAGD) and refers to all thoughts, words, and deeds worthy of praise from God. *Application:* When ignored, overlooked, criticized, put down, slighted, ostracized, discredited, or reviled for doing good (1 Pt 2:12, 23; 3:16; 4:14), think about rewards for knowledge (Lk 10:42), obedience (Rev 2:4–5), faithfulness (Mt 25:21; Rev 2:10), righteousness (Mt 6:1), prayer (6:6), suffering (2 Cor 4:17), endurance (2 Tim 2:12), sacrifice (Mt 6:3–4), hospitality (10:41), good works (Eph 6:8; 1 Tim 6:18–19), service (1 Cor 3:8), and overcoming all enemies (Rev 2:26–27).

LET YOUR MIND DWELL (logizomai) ON THESE THINGS is "to give careful thought to a matter, think (about), consider, ponder, let one's mind dwell on" (BAGD). Obviously you have to know a lot of Bible to do this. So keep studying!

NOTE: This is not an exhaustive list. You can replace any unwanted thoughts with appropriate verses. Replace discouragement with "all things work together for good" (Rom 8:28), "rejoice always" (1 Th 5:16), and "in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you" (5:18). Claim promises to replace hatred with love (Lk 6:35), sadness with joy (Heb 12:2; Jas 1:12), and worry with inner peace (Phil 4:6–7). To defeat, capture, and replace burnout, thoughts of inferiority, unpopularity, rejection, self-pity, humiliation, or giving up and quitting, let your mind dwell on verses about spiritual maturity (Eph 4:13; Heb 5:14), wisdom (Prov 8:11; 1 Cor 2:6; Col 3:16; Jas 1:5; 3:17), good works (Acts 9:36; 1 Tim 5:10), use of spiritual gifts (1 Tim 4:14; 1 Pt 4:10), God's plan for your life (Isa 49:4; Lk 9:51; Jn 17:4; Acts 2:23; Eph 2:10; 1 Th 5:18; Rev 11:7), position in Christ (Rom 12:5; 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 1:3; Phil 4:7, 19; 1 Pt 5:10), royal-priesthood of the believer (1 Pt 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6), being faithful to the end (Gal 6:9; 2 Th 3:13; Heb 3:6, 14; 10:35; 12:3; 2 Jn 8; Rev 2:3), finishing the race (1 Cor 9:24; 2 Tim 4:7–8; Heb 12:1), and being an overcomer (Jn 16:33; 1 Jn 4:4; 5:4; Rev 2:26; 3:21).