

Media

By Evan Lenow

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read Philippians 4:8 and then study the comments relating to this verse in the section **It's in the Book**. Then read Romans 8:5-8. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What does Paul say is the result for one who dwells on or sets his mind on the flesh versus the Spirit?

Assignment Two

Read Philippians 4:8 and then study the comments relating to this verse in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What things in the media do not fit the description of what we are to dwell on?

Assignment Three

Read Philippians 4:9 and then study the comments relating to this verse in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: How does your media consumption affect what you do?

Scripture to Memorize

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." Philippians 4:8

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit - by the end of this session, disciples will be able to evaluate content presented in various forms of media from a biblical perspective.

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It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

When you are at home, you have a number of choices about how to fill your time. You can turn on the television, read a book, put on your headphones or update your various social media accounts. Or you could do several of these things at once. At any given time, one of your media outlets could place before your eyes or into your mind content that doesn't honor God. What should you do at that moment? Does it even matter?

Dwell on These Things

Read Philippians 4:8-9 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 8. think about these things. Let's start at the end of the verse and then come back to what Paul described in the first part of the verse. Paul gave his readers a list of qualities and then directed them to "think about these things." Some translations use "dwell on" or "ponder" in place of "think about." This helps us understand what Paul is asking his readers to do. He wanted them to spend their time reflecting, thinking and considering those things that met his earlier description. The mind is where this begins, but it should also impact our actions.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now report on the difference between a mind set on the flesh versus a mind set on the Spirit.

Studying the Passage

Verse 8. true. This is the first term Paul used to describe those things upon which we are to dwell. This term describes thoughts, ideas and actions that are honest and righteous. They also reflect God's nature because God is truth (John 14:6). **honorable.** This word appears only four times in the New Testament; once in Philippians, twice in 1 Timothy, and once in Titus. The word means "worthy of respect, noble and dignified." **just.** Paul used this term to describe what is upright and without any sense of falsehood. **pure.** This adjective describes things that are holy and clean. They are free from sin. This theme appears throughout Scripture. **lovely.** This is the only occurrence of the Greek term translated "lovely" in the entire New Testament. The term is not necessarily describing the attractiveness of physical form here. Instead, its focus is on those things that are pleasing and lovable. **commendable.** Again, we have another word that appears only once in the New Testament. Something or someone that is commendable is praiseworthy and reputable. Such a life will not offend. Sometimes this term is translated as "admirable." **excellence.** The Greek term here has extensive usage in ethics because it means "virtue or excellence of character." Paul was focusing on the moral quality of those things which consume our time and attention. **worthy of praise.** The final description in this verse is something that demands our praise. It is worth giving our attention to. Going back to the final phrase of the verse we addressed above, Paul is telling us to spend our time thinking on these things. By contrast, we do

not need to waste our time pondering things that are not described by these qualities. If something is false, dishonorable, wrong, filthy, displeasing, poor, or worthy of disregarding, we should not waste our time and thoughts dwelling on them.

When it comes to media (television, radio, music, movies, books, magazines, social media, etc.), the instruction to dwell on things that are excellent still applies. Various media offer many true, honorable, right, pure, lovely and excellent things. But many other things in the media do not fit such a description. We have to be discerning with our media consumption to make sure our time is spent well and not in dishonor.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now report on what content in the media does not fit Paul's description of how we should spend our time.

On Your Own

Last night you probably spent time watching, reading or listening to your favorite forms of media (television, radio, music, movies, books, magazines, social media, etc.). Write in the columns below what you experienced that met the description of things excellent and worthy of praise in Philippians 4:8. In the other column write those things that were not excellent or worthy of praise. Evaluate the two columns and determine if those things that are excellent constitute the majority of what you saw, heard or read. If not, are you spending your time dwelling on things that you should not be?

Whatever Is Excellent

Whatever Is Not Excellent

How Are You Spending Your Time?

Studying the Passage

Verse 9. what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Paul was now asking his readers to reflect on the excellent and virtuous qualities they had seen in him. He was an example to them regarding the types of things they were to dwell on. Disciples of virtue and excellent character can serve as examples to the rest of the church. In addition, we can still learn from Paul's descriptions of himself on how to focus our attention on what is excellent. **practice these things.** The point of dwelling on what is good is to turn thoughts into actions. If we simply contemplate and ponder things of virtue without acting on them, we accomplish little. Instead, truth should go from our heads to our hands and feet. This is similar to what Jesus described in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." Our actions flow out of our thoughts, and those actions should point others to God.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now report on how

media affect what we do.

Discussion Question

In what ways should your media intake change in light of Paul's instructions to dwell on excellent things?

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share that with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue, I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

A key point to keep in mind is that various forms of media are just that - a medium - a vehicle for communication. No matter what form it takes, all media communicates a message. We need to train ourselves to evaluate the message, dismiss those things that tear us or others down and dwell on those things that are true, right and noble. Of course, we cannot avoid all negative messages in media but we can train our minds not to dwell on them.

The content of social media can be a particularly difficult form of media to discern. With constantly changing status updates, news, photos and more, we can encounter both things of virtue and things that corrupt. This is why we must be careful with our intake of media. Before we know it, we can find ourselves dwelling on those things that reflect the nature of the flesh rather than the Spirit.

In Romans 8:5-8, Paul gave us further instructions about how to use our minds. He wrote, "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind set on the flesh is hostile to God; for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God." May we be people whose minds reflect life and peace.

Follow-Up Question

How can we train our minds to discern the messages we encounter in various forms of media?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.