

A DEVOTIONAL COMPANION

BECAUSE I THOUGHT



A Five-Day Devotional

GENESIS 20:11; PROVERBS 3:5-6

*Learning to submit our thoughts, fears, assumptions, and plans to the
authority of God's Word.*

DEVELOPED FROM THE SERMON PREACHED ON 13 SEPTEMBER 2026

HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL

Each day is designed to be read slowly, with an open Bible and an honest heart. The five readings follow the movement of the sermon: first, we identify the danger of personal reasoning; then we examine how reliance shifts from God to self; finally, we learn to receive God's correction and replace self-derived conclusions with obedience rooted in revealed truth.

Read the Scripture before the devotional exposition. Do not rush the questions or the practical response. The purpose is not merely to understand Abraham's failure, but to recognise the places where the same pattern may be operating in us. The sentence may not be spoken aloud, but the structure can still be present: "Because I thought..."

The answer is not to stop thinking. It is to bring every thought under the authority of God. Proverbs 3:5-6 does not remove responsibility; it establishes the proper source, process, and direction of our decisions. Trust the Lord, acknowledge Him in all your ways, and allow His Word to direct your path.

DAY ONE

I

WHEN THOUGHT BECOMES AUTHORITY

Scripture Reading: Genesis 20:11; Proverbs 3:5-6

“Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife’s sake.”

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

KEY TRUTH

The danger is not that we think; the danger is allowing our thinking to become more authoritative than God’s Word.

DEVOTIONAL

Abraham’s explanation in Genesis 20:11 is remarkably honest: “Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife’s sake.” He does not blame Abimelech, the culture, Sarah, or the circumstances. He identifies the thought that governed his decision.

That thought led him into a familiar failure. Abraham had already acted this way in Egypt. He had received God’s call, walked by faith, and seen the Lord’s faithfulness, yet he still became vulnerable when fear entered his thinking. Spiritual maturity does

not make us immune to wrong conclusions. A believer may know much truth and still make a dangerous decision when personal reasoning takes the place of dependence upon God.

The words “because I thought” are not a condemnation of careful thinking. Scripture never calls us to abandon wisdom, discernment, or responsible judgement. The issue is authority. Whose word settles the matter? Whose assessment determines our action? Abraham’s mind evaluated the place, measured the danger, predicted the outcome, and produced a strategy. Yet his conclusion was wrong because God had not governed the process.

Proverbs 3:5-6 gives the opposite pattern: “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” The command is not, “Do not use your understanding.” It is, “Do not lean upon it.” Understanding may be a useful instrument, but it is a terrible foundation. We may think carefully, but we must not make our thoughts the support on which we rest.

Leaning suggests dependence. When someone leans against a wall, that wall carries the weight. Abraham leaned on his own conclusion, and that conclusion could not carry the weight of his fear. The result was compromise and confusion. The same thing happens when we allow a thought, feeling, fear, or assumption to carry more authority than the clear teaching of Scripture.

This is why the conflict often begins before anyone sees an outward action. The visible failure is usually the final stage of an inward process. A thought is accepted, an assumption is treated as fact, a conclusion is formed, and then behaviour follows. If the thought is detached from divine truth, the action will eventually drift from faithful obedience.

We should also remember that repeated experience does not automatically produce spiritual wisdom. Abraham had seen God preserve him before, but yesterday’s deliverance did not excuse today’s independence. In the same way, a person may have a testimony of God’s faithfulness and still make a self-directed choice in the next crisis. Past grace should lead us to deeper trust, not to confidence in our ability to manage the next situation without God.

The remedy begins with a pause. Before a fearful thought becomes a settled conclusion, bring it before the Lord. Ask what is known, what is assumed, and what Scripture actually says. Prayer is not merely a request for God to bless a decision already made; it is an invitation for Him to govern the decision. The more quickly we submit our thinking, the less opportunity there is for an untested conclusion to become an act of disobedience.

Today, do not merely ask what you are doing. Ask what thought is governing what you are doing. Are you obeying Scripture, or are you defending a conclusion you formed under pressure? Are you trusting the Lord, or are you using Christian language to cover self-reliance? Bring your thoughts into the light of God's Word. Let Scripture correct the conclusion before the conclusion directs your life.

REFLECT AND RESPOND

- What decision, fear, or relationship is currently being governed by a personal conclusion rather than a clear biblical principle?
- Where have you confused using your understanding with leaning upon your understanding?
- What truth from Scripture needs to become more authoritative than your present assessment?

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Write down one recurring thought that has been directing your responses. Beside it, write a specific Scripture that corrects, qualifies, or redirects that thought. Pray over the Scripture before acting on the conclusion.

P R A Y E R

Lord, search my thoughts and show me where I have trusted my own conclusions above Thy Word. Teach me to think carefully without leaning upon myself. Let Thy truth govern my fears, decisions, and responses, and direct my path today.

IN JESUS' NAME, AMEN.

DAY TWO

II

THE DECEPTION OF PERSONAL REASONING

Scripture Reading: Genesis 20:11; Jeremiah 17:9; Isaiah 55:8-9

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.”

KEY TRUTH

Personal reasoning can sound logical while quietly leading us away from revealed truth.

DEVOTIONAL

Abraham’s reasoning in Genesis 20 was not absurd. That is what makes it so instructive. He looked at the people around him, assessed the danger, and reached a conclusion that seemed reasonable: “Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife’s sake.” His thought process had an appearance of logic, but it was built on assumptions God had not given him.

The statement contains several layers. First came a moral judgement: “the fear of God is not in this place.” Then came a prediction: “they will slay me.” Finally, a self-preserving motive shaped the response: “for my wife’s sake.” Each step built upon the previous one. The problem was not simply that Abraham made a mistake at the end. The problem was that the whole chain of reasoning began apart from God’s authority.

Jeremiah 17:9 warns us, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” The heart can persuade us that a wrong conclusion is a necessary conclusion. It can make fear sound like wisdom, compromise sound like prudence, and self-protection sound like responsibility. Because the thought feels reasonable does not mean the thought is true.

Peter experienced the same movement in Matthew 14. He stepped out of the boat at Christ’s command and walked upon the water. But when he saw “the wind boisterous,” the environment began to inform his thinking more than Christ’s word. His perception changed, his reasoning followed, and he began to sink. The pattern is simple: perception, reasoning, deviation.

We must therefore be careful with phrases that sound innocent: “This is just what I think.” “It seems obvious.” “Surely God would understand.” “Everyone else is doing it.” A thought may be common, emotionally convincing, and culturally approved while still being contrary to Scripture. Isaiah 55:8-9 reminds us, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.” God’s thoughts are not measured by the limits of our environment or the preferences of our age.

This danger is especially serious in spiritual matters. Churches may begin by asking how to reach people and slowly start asking what truth must be changed in order to keep them. Leaders may soften conviction under pressure. Individuals may justify sin because circumstances appear to require it. The language differs, but the underlying sentence remains the same: “Because I thought.” Personal reasoning has quietly become the judge of revealed truth.

The answer is not careless ignorance. It is disciplined submission. Before accepting a conclusion, test it by Scripture. Before calling a fear wisdom, examine it in the presence of God. Before changing a conviction, ask whether the Bible has changed or

merely the pressure around you. First Corinthians 3:19 says, “The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.” The world may call obedience foolish, but God’s Word remains the final measure.

This is why biblical preaching and personal Bible reading are so necessary. The Word does not merely give us information; it exposes the reasoning beneath our decisions. It shows us where we have treated a preference as a principle or a feeling as a fact. A faithful Christian is not one who never has a mistaken thought. A faithful Christian is one who allows the Word to correct mistaken thoughts rather than protecting them because they are familiar or convenient.

A deceptive thought loses some of its power when it is named honestly. Do not hide behind vague language. Say what you believe, why you believe it, and what Scripture supports it. When the thought cannot withstand the light of the Word, it must not be allowed to direct your life.

REFLECT AND RESPOND

- What conclusion in your life currently feels logical but has not been tested carefully by Scripture?
- Are fear, culture, pressure, or personal preference shaping your interpretation of God’s will?
- What would change if you treated God’s Word as the final authority rather than one voice among many?

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Take one strong opinion or assumption you hold and write the relevant biblical texts beside it. If Scripture exposes the thought as incomplete or wrong, confess it without defending it and choose obedience instead.

P R A Y E R

Father, keep me from the deception of reasoning that sounds wise but leads away from Thee. Give me humility to test my thoughts by Scripture and courage to reject conclusions that cannot stand in the light of Thy truth.

IN JESUS' NAME, AMEN.

DAY THREE

III

WHEN RELIANCE SHIFTS

Scripture Reading: Proverbs 3:5; Psalm 20:7; Hebrews 11:6

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.”

“Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.”

KEY TRUTH

Partial trust in God is often revealed when self-protection, human methods, or personal perception become our real support.

DEVOTIONAL

Abraham's failure was not only faulty reasoning; it was displaced reliance. He trusted his conclusion more than he trusted God's character. He believed God enough to leave Ur, travel through the land, and receive the promise, but in Gerar he did not rest in the Lord's protection. His trust became divided, and divided trust eventually reveals itself as self-reliance.

Proverbs 3:5 says, “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.” The word “all” leaves no protected corner in which self-rule may remain. God is not asking to be trusted only in salvation, worship, or church work. He calls us to trust Him in danger, finances, reputation, relationships, health, ministry, and the decisions no one else can see.

When reliance shifts, it can usually be recognised in three areas. The first is protection. Abraham feared death and created a false narrative to preserve himself. Fear dictated his action, and his strategy replaced trust. We may not repeat Abraham’s exact action, but we can still protect ourselves through exaggeration, concealment, manipulation, or compromise when we believe obedience is too costly.

The second area is provision. When resources appear uncertain, people and churches can begin to rely on methods rather than God. Wise planning has its place, but no plan can become a substitute for dependence. George Müller demonstrated a life of prayerful reliance while caring for orphans. He did not treat planning as sin, but he refused to let human systems replace confidence in God’s faithfulness. The question is not whether we use means. The question is whether the means have become our master.

The third area is perception. Abraham assumed that the fear of God was absent in Gerar. His assessment became more influential than what God knew. We often do the same. We look at numbers, opinions, trends, personalities, or circumstances and conclude that obedience cannot succeed here. Yet perception is limited. God sees what we cannot see, and He is never confined by the information available to us.

Psalm 20:7 gives a needed contrast: “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.” Chariots and horses represented visible strength. The issue was not that they existed; the issue was where confidence rested. Hebrews 11:6 adds, “But without faith it is impossible to please him.” Faith does not mean pretending that danger, need, or difficulty is absent. Faith means that none of those things is greater than the character and promise of God.

Ask yourself where your reliance has shifted. What do you believe must happen before you can obey? What human resource must be secured before you will move forward? What outcome are you trying to control because you do not believe God can be trusted with it? These questions are not designed to produce shame. They are invitations to return to the Lord.

This does not mean that faith refuses wise counsel, responsible preparation, or legitimate means. Nehemiah built with a trowel in one hand and a weapon in the other, yet his confidence remained in God. Paul used his Roman citizenship appropriately, and Joseph prepared for famine through wise administration. Faith is not a denial of reality. It is the refusal to treat reality as greater than God. We can prepare diligently without placing our security in the preparation.

The practical test is often found in our emotional response when a preferred support is removed. If the loss of a method, opportunity, person, or resource makes obedience seem impossible, it may reveal that our confidence was resting there. The Lord may remove a false support not to harm us, but to teach us that He is sufficient. When reliance returns to its rightful place, we can use resources gratefully without being ruled by them.

Trust is restored when we deliberately remember who God is. He is not merely the God who helped you in the past. He is the God who remains faithful in the present. Put the matter back into His hands. Use wisdom, make responsible decisions, and work diligently, but do not lean on the tool more than the Lord who provides it.

REFLECT AND RESPOND

- Where are you most tempted to rely on self-protection, human provision, or personal perception?
- What visible resource has begun to carry the confidence that belongs to God alone?
- What would faithful trust look like in this situation today?

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Name one area of divided trust. Pray over it specifically, then take one obedient action that demonstrates confidence in God's character rather than dependence on a preferred outcome.

PRAYER

Lord, forgive me for trusting Thee partially while relying on myself secretly. Help me to remember Thy name above every visible resource, threat, and uncertainty. Teach me to use wisdom without worshipping methods, and to rest in Thy faithfulness.

IN JESUS' NAME, AMEN.

DAY FOUR

IV

WHEN GOD REDIRECTS THE PATH

Scripture Reading: Genesis 20:3; Proverbs 3:6; Hebrews 12:6

“But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night...”

“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

KEY TRUTH

God’s correction is not proof that He has abandoned us; it is often evidence that He is lovingly bringing us back into alignment.

DEVOTIONAL

Genesis 20 does not end with Abraham’s wrong conclusion having the final word. “But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night.” God intervened. He exposed the danger, preserved Sarah, confronted the disorder, and brought the situation back under His authority. Abraham’s reasoning had created a crooked path, but the Lord was not finished with him.

This is an important mercy. The presence of correction does not mean the absence of grace. Sometimes we imagine that if God truly loved us, He would allow our plans to continue uninterrupted. Scripture teaches the opposite. Hebrews 12:6 says, “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.” The Lord corrects because He loves, and He redirects because He intends to restore usefulness and fellowship.

Proverbs 3:6 gives the corrective to Abraham's failure: "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Direction follows acknowledgment. God is not to be acknowledged only after a plan has been made, when a crisis has developed, or when our preferred route has failed. He must be acknowledged in all our ways. His presence and authority must be considered before the decision, during the decision, and after the decision.

Divine realignment often comes through three movements. First, there is intervention. God disrupts a path that would have carried us farther from obedience. A plan may collapse, a door may close, or circumstances may change suddenly. Not every difficulty is correction, but every difficulty should be brought honestly before the Lord.

Second, there is exposure. Scripture confronts our assumptions. Preaching reveals motives we would rather leave unnamed. The Holy Spirit shows us where fear has been called wisdom or where self-preservation has been called prudence. Exposure can be uncomfortable, but hidden error cannot be corrected until it is brought into the light.

Third, there is restoration. God's purpose is not merely to make us feel guilty. He redirects the path. Jonah reasoned his way toward Tarshish, but God pursued him through a storm, a great fish, and a difficult confrontation. The correction was forceful because Jonah's resistance was stubborn, but the correction was also merciful because God still intended to use him.

Adoniram Judson also experienced the collapse of early expectations. His missionary work brought imprisonment, loss, isolation, and apparent failure. The Lord used those experiences to reshape his understanding and deepen his reliance. What appeared to be the end of the work became part of the preparation for a lasting work in Burma. God's redirection may feel like loss while He is actually removing a dependence that could not sustain the future He intends.

When God redirects us, we should distinguish between conviction and mere disappointment. Disappointment says, "I did not get what I wanted." Conviction says, "The Lord has shown me something that must change." Both may be present at once, but only conviction leads to spiritual profit. Instead of spending all our energy defending the old plan, we should ask what the interruption is teaching us about our motives, priorities, and dependence.

The safest response to correction is immediate agreement with God. Delayed obedience gives the flesh time to produce explanations, excuses, and alternative routes. Confession may feel humbling, but it is also liberating. We no longer have to defend a conclusion that God has exposed. We can receive forgiveness, accept direction, and walk forward with a clearer heart.

Do not resist realignment by making a small adjustment while refusing full submission. The flesh prefers improvement without surrender. We want God to modify the consequences while leaving our authority untouched. But direction comes through acknowledgment. When the Lord shows you that a thought, method, motive, or decision has been governed by self, confess it plainly and follow the new direction He gives through His Word.

REFLECT AND RESPOND

- Has God recently interrupted a plan, exposed a motive, or closed a door that may require prayerful reconsideration?
- Do you tend to view correction as rejection, or can you recognise it as an expression of God's love?
- What would it mean to acknowledge God in all your ways in the situation before you?

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Review one recent disappointment or interruption. Ask what it may be exposing in your thinking and what obedience God may be directing you toward. Respond with prayer and submission rather than immediate frustration.

P R A Y E R

Lord, give me grace to receive Thy correction without resisting Thy hand. When Thou interruptest my plans, help me to listen. Expose what is false, restore what is broken, and direct my steps into faithful obedience.

IN JESUS' NAME, AMEN.

DAY FIVE

V

BECAUSE GOD SAID

Scripture Reading: Proverbs 3:5-6; 2 Corinthians 10:5; Psalm 119:105

“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”

KEY TRUTH

The answer to self-derived reasoning is not mindlessness, but thoughts brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

DEVOTIONAL

The phrase “because I thought” is a diagnostic statement. It helps us identify the source of deviation. When fear overrides faith, we may say, “because I thought.” When compromise replaces conviction, the same phrase appears. When strategy replaces submission, when perception replaces revelation, and when self-protection replaces trust, the sentence remains the same.

The answer is not to stop thinking. Proverbs 3:5-6 does not command believers to abandon intelligence or responsibility. It teaches us how thought must be governed. Trust defines the source. Acknowledgment defines the process. Direction defines the outcome. We think, but we think beneath the authority of God. We plan, but we plan as servants. We evaluate circumstances, but we do not allow circumstances to overrule Scripture.

Paul describes this disciplined submission in 2 Corinthians 10:5: “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” Every thought does not deserve a throne. Some thoughts must be questioned, rejected, and brought under the rule of Christ. A thought may be loud without being true. It may be urgent without being wise. It may be familiar without being faithful.

Psalm 119:105 says, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” God’s Word does not always reveal every detail of the road ahead, but it gives enough light for the next obedient step. We often want certainty about the entire journey before we obey. The Lord commonly gives direction one step at a time so that trust remains necessary.

Abraham’s failure warns us that maturity alone is not enough. He had walked with God, yet he still needed his thinking corrected. The good news is that failure does not have to become identity. Abraham’s wrong conclusion is recorded, but it is not the end of his story. God corrected him, preserved His promise, and continued His work. A believer who has leaned on personal reasoning can return to full reliance through repentance and obedience.

Today, replace the sentence. Instead of saying, “Because I thought, I must protect myself,” say, “Because God said, I will obey.” Instead of, “Because I thought, this truth must be softened,” say, “Because God said, I will remain faithful.” Instead of, “Because I thought, I cannot trust Him here,” say, “Because God said, I will commit this way to Him.” This is not a slogan. It is a change of authority.

James 1:22 commands, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” The final test is not whether we can explain the principle. It is whether the principle governs our next action. Submit the thought, obey the Scripture, and leave the outcome with God.

Obedience may look small at first. It may be telling the truth when a convenient explanation would protect you, refusing a compromise that would make life easier, apologising without qualifying the apology, or continuing faithfully when visible results are absent. These actions may not appear dramatic, but they declare who has authority. Every obedient step weakens the habit of self-rule and strengthens the habit of trusting God.

There will be moments when you cannot explain what God is doing. In those moments, the promise is not that you will understand everything; the promise is that the Lord will direct the path of the person who acknowledges Him. We do not need complete explanation before we can offer complete obedience. The light of Scripture is sufficient for the step immediately before us.

The Lord does not promise that obedience will remove every difficulty. He promises that He will direct the path of those who acknowledge Him. Therefore, identify the thought that has been ruling you, submit it to the Word, and take the next faithful step. Let the governing sentence of your life be changed from “because I thought” to “because God said.”

REFLECT AND RESPOND

- What thought must be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ?
- What clear command or principle from Scripture should govern your next step?
- Where do you need to replace a self-derived conclusion with the confidence, “Because God said”?

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Write a two-column response. In the first column, record one sentence beginning “Because I thought...” In the second, write the biblical response beginning “Because God said...” End by taking one concrete step of obedience.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, bring my thoughts under Thy authority. Cast down every imagination that exalts itself against Thy truth, and teach me to obey what Thou hast revealed. Replace my fear with trust, my assumptions with acknowledgment, and my confusion with

*faithful direction. May my life be governed by this settled conviction: because God said,
I will obey.*

AMEN.

