



# Thoughtfulness

## Thoughtfulness

In this module we are going to consider **THOUGHTFULNESS** - what it means, how it can affect our behaviour and the behaviour of others.

First of all what does the word "thoughtfulness" mean?

Thoughtfulness is similar to kindness, and is demonstrated when we put the interests of others ahead of our own. However, it can also mean thinking carefully about situations and interpreting them accurately. For example, thinking about the impact on others before we say something or before we do something.

What does the Bible say about thoughtfulness?

"Lord you have examined me and you know me. You know everything I do; from far away you understand all my thoughts. You see me, whether I am working or resting; you know all my actions." Psalm 139 verses 1-3

Does the Bible give us any examples of thoughtfulness?

The Bible shows us many examples of the way people interpreted a situation. It can be so easy to misunderstand a situation and not consider the consequences, despite the warnings of others. For example, in Luke's Gospel we will read about how Jesus healed a paralysed man. You would have expected everyone to be delighted for the man, but for some in the crowd all they could see was the problem of the Sabbath being defiled. Jesus knew what impact His actions would have and could see the hardness of their hearts. Also we'll look at the Book of Genesis and how Lot departed from Sodom, which was such an evil place. The people of Sodom had been given numerous chances by God to reform their ways, but they didn't believe that God would carry out His threat to raise Sodom to the ground. However, God knew Lot's thoughts and protected him as he left. Finally, we will look at the Gospel of John and consider the meeting between Mary Magdalene and Jesus, after Jesus' death on the cross. In her grief Mary didn't recognise Jesus, thinking Him to be the gardener. Lots of things in life can blind us to the reality of God's love and His presence with us always.

Jesus knows the thoughts of the Pharisees

(You can find this story in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 6, verses 6 - 11)

## Thoughtfulness

Here are some interesting facts about this story:

1. On another Sabbath Jesus went into a synagogue and taught. A man was there whose right hand was paralysed.
2. Some teachers of the law and some Pharisees wanted a reason to accuse Jesus of doing wrong, so they watched Him closely to see if He would heal on the Sabbath.
3. But Jesus knew their thoughts and said to the man, "Stand up and come here to the front." The man got up and stood there.
4. Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you: What does our law allow us to do on the Sabbath? To help or to harm? To save someone's life or destroy it?"
5. He looked around at them all, then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand became well again.
6. They were filled with rage and began to discuss among themselves what they could do to Jesus.

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees were so concerned with the letter of the law that they didn't really understand why God had given them the law in the first place. God gave them the law to ensure that His people would always serve and glorify Him first and foremost, and support and care for others. The teachers and Pharisees enjoyed their position and the power it gave them over the ordinary people. They viewed Jesus as a threat and took this opportunity to scheme against Him and plot His death. But we know that even this was in God's plan of redemption and through Jesus' death on the cross our sins are washed clean through His perfect sacrifice.

### Activity

Whilst we know that God can see the thoughts of our hearts and minds, sometimes we find it difficult to understand what others are thinking and why they act as they do. Get the children to play a game of, "I Spy." Someone in the group should think of a word from something they can see in the room. They should tell the group what the first letter of the word is by saying, "I spy with my little eye something beginning with ..... and everyone else has to guess it. The child who guesses it correctly can take

the next turn. This activity will help you to demonstrate that it can be difficult to know exactly what is on someone else's mind.

### Lot leaves Sodom

(You can find this story in the Book of Genesis Chapter 19 verses 12 - 29)

Here are some interesting facts about this story:

1. The two men said to Lot, "If you have anyone else here—sons, daughters, sons-in-law, or any other relatives living in the city—get them out of here, because we are going to destroy this place. The Lord has heard the terrible accusations against these people and has sent us to destroy Sodom."
2. Then Lot went to the men that his daughters were going to marry, and said, "Hurry up and get out of here; the Lord is going to destroy this place." But they thought he was joking.
3. At dawn the angels tried to make Lot hurry. "Quick!" They said. "Take your wife and your two daughters and get out, so that you will not lose your lives when the city is destroyed." Lot hesitated. The Lord, however, had pity on him; so the men took him, his wife, and his two daughters by the hand and led them out of the city.
4. Then one of the angels said, "Run for your lives! Don't look back and don't stop in the valley. Run to the hills, so that you won't be killed." But Lot answered, "No, please don't make us do that, sir. You have done me a great favour and saved my life. But the hills are too far away; the disaster will overtake me, and I will die before I get there. Do you see that little town? It is near enough. Let me go over there—you can see it is just a small place—and I will be safe."
5. He answered, "All right, I agree. I won't destroy that town. Hurry! Run! I can't do anything until you get there." Because Lot called it small, the town was named Zoar.
6. The sun was rising when Lot reached Zoar. Suddenly the LORD rained burning sulphur on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and destroyed them and the whole valley, along with all the people there and everything that grew on the land. But Lot's wife looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt.

7. Early the next morning Abraham hurried to the place where he had stood in the presence of the Lord. He looked down at Sodom and Gomorrah and the whole valley and saw smoke rising from the land, like smoke from a huge furnace. But when God destroyed the cities of the valley where Lot was living, he kept Abraham in mind and allowed Lot to escape to safety.

This story demonstrates the terrible outcome when we fail to take God at His word. Sodom and Gomorrah were very wicked places where the inhabitants did just what they liked and didn't consider God's laws. Ample warning had been given to the people to change their ways or they would be destroyed along with their cities, but the people thought they knew better. They didn't believe that God would destroy them. Lot, the nephew of Abraham, although living in Sodom, was a God-fearing man and knew that God would not tolerate the wicked lifestyle of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah for much longer and so he made his escape before God brought down fire and brimstone on the place. He had been commanded specifically not to look back but to escape to the hills. However, Lot's wife, when making her escape, looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt.

God knew the state of Lot's heart and that he was a God-fearing and honest man but even then Lot had to obey the command of God in order to escape safely. God knows our hearts too. He knows what we are thinking and what our intentions are, but we still have to obey Him and to put His will first in our lives.

### Activity

Here are a few pictures. Invite the children to guess what might happen next.



## Thoughtfulness



In the first picture it looks as if the little boy on the bicycle is heading towards a hole in the pavement, and he may not be able to stop in time. However, what appears to be a hole in the road could be a rubber mat that has been placed on the pavement to stop children from going too fast on their bicycles.

In the second picture it looks as if the man putting his hands out towards the car is going to run right in front of it. Whereas, he could be checking underneath the stationary car to see if there is anything wrong with it.

The final picture looks as if the cat is running for its life away from a chasing dog. But maybe it's very hungry and running towards its dinner!

It's very easy to jump to the wrong conclusion, particularly when we haven't thought things through properly. We should ask God to help us interpret the facts about a situation carefully and understand the ramifications of any subsequent action we take.

## Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene

(You can find this story in the Gospel of John, Chapter 20 verses 11 -18)

Here are some interesting facts about this passage of Scripture:

1. Mary stood crying outside the tomb. While she was still crying, she bent over and looked in the tomb and saw two angels there dressed in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and the other at the feet.
2. "Woman, why are you crying?" They asked her. She answered, "They have taken my Lord away, and I do not know where they have put him!"
3. Then she turned around and saw Jesus standing there; but she did not know that it was Jesus. "Woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who is it that you are looking for?"
4. She thought he was the gardener, so she said to Him, "If you took Him away, sir, tell me where you have put Him, and I will go and get Him."
5. Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned toward Him and said in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (This means "Teacher.") "Do not hold on to me," Jesus told her, "because I have not yet gone back up to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I am returning to Him who is my Father and their Father, my God and their God."
6. So Mary Magdalene went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and related to them what He had told her.

Personal circumstances can make it hard sometimes to understand what God is telling us. It may seem obvious to someone else, but the thoughts of our hearts and minds can be overshadowed by fear, failure and sometimes sin. Mary was distraught at the death of Jesus and her sorrow had blinded her to the joy of the resurrection. She thought the man who stood beside her was the gardener. I wonder why she didn't recognise immediately that it was Jesus. Maybe her head was hung low in sorrow, or her eyes blinded with tears. If we allow fear, sorrow and doubt to overtake us, then we may miss the miracles that God can work in us every day.

## Personal testimony

Share about a time you either chose to demonstrate thoughtfulness or when your thoughts were far from God's will for your life. What were the circumstances that caused it to be difficult to be thoughtful, and share the natural consequences that ensued? Ask the children if they have ever been in a position where being thoughtful was a challenge. As a group discuss how they can choose thoughtfulness even if it's a difficult choice to make.

### [Here is an up-to-date story about thoughtfulness](#)

Mr Patel worked in a factory on the outskirts of the big city making motor cars. He had worked there for 10 years and he was very happy in his work. Although the cars he made were fast, streamlined and very handsome to look at, the car he drove was really old and just about managed to chug him to the factory and back each day. Nevertheless, it was certainly better than having to walk everywhere.

Mr Patel's friend, Mr Sunil, worked alongside him and they had been friends for a couple of years. Some years ago the little daughter of Mr Sunil and his wife had been taken ill and after a lengthy time in hospital she had died. This made Mr and Mrs Sunil very sad, but thanks to Mr Patel he was able to



share with them the good news of Jesus Christ and that His love and peace would surround them through their difficult time and be with them forever. So Mr Patel and Mr Sunil became special Christian friends. Also working alongside them was Mr Khan, a rather quiet man who kept himself to himself and found it difficult to mix with the others. Mr Khan rarely went out in the evenings or at weekends and despite the best efforts of Mr Patel and Mr Sunil they couldn't seem to draw him out of his shell.

Every day the factory closed at 6pm on the dot and all the workers poured out and made their way home. However, one particular day word got around that the local football team, who were doing rather well, would be playing an important match against their rivals. Evening football

matches took place at the stadium on the other side of the city under floodlight, but sadly the floodlights had started to go wrong and despite every effort to repair them in time for the match they just couldn't get them repaired in time. So the organisers of the match decided to bring the kick-off earlier and start the match at 5.30pm so that it could be completed in daylight. The men who loved football and worked at the factory were devastated. They knew that they would miss at least the beginning of the match. They tried to persuade their boss to allow them to go early that night and promised to go in earlier the next day, but the boss would not hear of it. After much protest the boss finally agreed that six men could leave early, but that everyone else would have to work their shift as usual. So after much deliberation, the men decided to choose lots in order to decide who the six men would be. All those wanting to go early wrote their names on a piece of paper and put them in a hat. Their manager pulled out six names. Mr Patel's name was drawn but sadly not Mr Sunil's. "If you're not going", said Mr Patel to Mr Sunil, "then I won't go." "Don't be silly," said Mr Sunil, "I really want you to go so that you can tell me all the details about it afterwards." The names of the successful men were posted on the board. On the list was Mr Khan. The other men were quite surprised by this as they didn't think Mr Khan was at all interested in football.

On the night of the match, the men who had been selected all left the factory at 5.00pm and made their way to the stadium. Crowds of supporters of both teams lined the streets and there was a real party atmosphere. When the men arrived at the stadium they all



sat together. Mr Patel noticed that there were only five of them. He looked up and down the row and noticed that Mr Khan was missing. "Anyone seen Mr Khan?" he shouted, but the others just shook their heads. The game was brilliant and the two teams were tightly matched and it was only in the last five minutes that the winning goal was made. "We've won!" shouted Mr Patel to his fellow workers. Everyone made their way home in good spirits.

The next day Mr Sunil was anxious to hear all about the match and he couldn't wait until his break to find out from his friend Mr Patel exactly

## Thoughtfulness

what happened. Mr Patel described it in detail and Mr Sunil really felt that he had been there too! "You know what though," said Mr Patel, "Mr Khan never showed up. How strange is that? I don't think it's fair that he put his name into the hat if he had no intention of going to the match, do you?" "Well it is rather strange, but still it sounds like a really great night," said Mr Sunil.

Over the next few weeks Mr Patel began to think about this more and more. He was angry that his friend Mr Sunil was denied a chance to see the match because Mr Khan had put his name in the hat. In fact on a number of occasions Mr Patel didn't say good morning to Mr Khan and didn't invite him to join them to have lunch in the canteen. In fact Mr Sunil began to notice this and asked Mr Patel if there was anything wrong. "I still don't think Mr Khan acted fairly and I'm angry about it." "Look please forget about it," said Mr Sunil, "I have."

The next day on his way into work Mr Patel noticed a crowd of people standing in the road. As he got nearer he saw that someone had fallen off his bike and was lying in the road. As he got nearer he saw that it was Mr Khan. Mr Patel was going to stop the car, but then he thought, why should I help him? He was so unkind to my friend Mr Sunil. So with that he went on his way. Half way through the day a rumour went around that Mr Khan had been knocked off his bike and was in the hospital with a broken leg.



A number of the men started a collection to buy Mrs Khan some flowers and to take some fruit to Mr Khan. When Mr Patel was asked if he wanted to contribute he said that he would rather not. This surprised some of the men because they knew Mr Patel was a Christian. A few of them asked Mr Sunil why his friend Mr Patel had refused to donate some money, so he told them about the football match and that Mr Khan had not bothered to go. "Oh," said the men, "we know why he didn't turn up, his wife is having a baby and she was taken into hospital that very afternoon. Mr Khan has been very worried about his wife for some time, as she has had a number of miscarriages. His mother had offered to sit

## Thoughtfulness

with her that night, but in the end the baby decided to arrive." Mr Sunil went straight away to his friend Mr Patel and told him the reason Mr Khan hadn't gone to the football match. Mr Patel sat in silence listening to the story. He felt really bad inside. He had thought that Mr Khan was being mean, but instead he couldn't go because he was visiting his wife in hospital. But worse than that, he had failed to stop and see if he could help him as he lay in the road. He had allowed himself to think unkind thoughts. He had jumped completely to the wrong conclusion and now he felt foolish. Worse than that though, the men knew he was a Christian and yet he had failed to act the way a Christian should act.

During the afternoon break, Mr Patel got up and confessed to the men how foolish he had been. He told them that he would visit Mr Khan in hospital that evening and apologise to him. It was difficult to admit it to everyone, but he felt much better afterwards.

So that evening he visited Mr Khan, shook his hand and apologised unreservedly. Mr Khan accepted his apology and reassured him that all was forgiven. "There is one thing you could do for me though," said Mr Khan. "I'll do anything," said Mr Patel. "Would you mind checking on my wife for me?" he said. She came out of hospital two days ago and she may need a bit of help now that her mother has had to return home." "Of course I will," said Mr Patel, "In fact I'll ask my wife if she would go and stay with her for a few days until you get out of here." "That's brilliant," said Mr Khan shaking Mr Patel's hand warmly. "You are a true friend!"



## Prayer Time

Pray with the children that God will help them to be thoughtful and kind, and have righteous thoughts.

## Activity

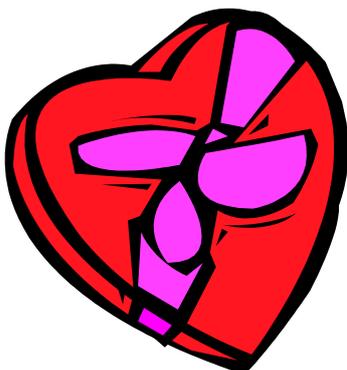
Here's an activity that will teach the children to *think* about names.

Choose a popular name with at least six or seven letters in it and write it down the left hand side of a piece of paper, one letter under another. (You will need to make enough copies so that each child has a piece of paper.) Now give everybody 5 minutes to write down as many first names

## Thoughtfulness

as they can think of which begin with the letters in that name. Score one point for each name that they come up with. You can make the scoring more exciting by awarding two points for any name that no-one else comes up with.

At the end of the activity you can tell the children that *God* knows each of our names and that if we love Him with all our hearts then our name is written in the *Lamb's Book of Life*, which means we will dwell with Him forever in Heaven when we die.



### Activity

Here are seven boxes. Cut out the shapes and stick them onto card. On the reverse of the square boxes write one of the words from the following list: *Good Job, Money, Fast Car, Good Looks, Lots of Friends*. On the reverse of the heart-shaped box write the words: *Jesus Loves Me*.

Get the children to think about what would be the very best present out of the seven they would like to have and why.

## TEACHING NOTES TO ACCOMPANY THE MODULE ON "THOUGHTFULNESS"

These notes are to be used in conjunction with the teaching module on "Thoughtfulness".

The Bible stories used in this module are from the *Gospel of Luke* Chapter 6 verses 6 - 11 which tells how Jesus healed the man with the paralysed hand on the Sabbath; also the story of the escape of Lot and his family from the evil city of Sodom which can be found in the *Book of Genesis* chapter 19 verses 12 - 29, and finally the resurrection appearance of Jesus to *Mary Magdalene* recounted in the *Gospel of John* chapter 20 verses 11 -18. It will be useful to familiarise yourself with these stories before presenting the module to the children.

You will need paper, pencils, card, and glue. Also you need to make enough copies of the name activity for each of the children to have one. Cut out the seven boxes and stick them on card. Write a phrase from the list on the back of each one, making sure that the words, "Jesus loves me", appear on the back of the heart-shaped box.

### Jesus knows the thoughts of the Pharisees

Jesus knew that by healing the man with the paralysed hand on the Sabbath it would cause real tension among the Jewish leaders. The teachers of the Law and the Pharisees were so concerned with the letter of the law that they didn't really understand why God had given them the law in the first place. God gave them the law to ensure that His people would always serve and glorify Him first and foremost, and support and care for others. These teachers and Pharisees enjoyed their position and the power it gave them over the ordinary people. They viewed Jesus as a threat and took this opportunity to scheme against Him and plot His death. But we know that even this was in God's plan of redemption and through Jesus' death on the cross our sins are washed clean through His perfect sacrifice.

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### Conclusion

It can be so easy to misunderstand a situation and not consider the consequences of our actions, despite the warnings of others. Thinking about the impact of our actions on others before we say something or before we do something will help us to think rationally and avoid misinterpretation. Being kind to others and considering their feelings will help us to avoid these pitfalls. The Lord knows the thoughts of our minds and the intentions of our hearts and by being thoughtful to others we can demonstrate that we are children of our Heavenly Father.