

Entertaining Thoughts

Early one morning, when the children were young, I was in the kitchen washing dishes. I heard a knock at the door. "Must be George," I thought. I dried my hands and headed to the mudroom, wondering vaguely why George was knocking instead of just walking in like he usually did. I opened the door wide, and it wasn't George. I was staring into the red eyes of a stranger. Dreadlocks. Blurred speech. "Is your husband home?" And then, "Do you have any money?" I remember thinking, "I'm going to die." Heart pounding, I closed the door and backed up a few steps, feeling behind me for the key. Never taking my eyes off him. Somehow, I got the key in the lock. Help came, the man left, and all was well.

What would you have thought if, instead of locking the door, I'd invited him in? "You look drugged and desperate, and you could have a knife or a gun. My husband just left for work, and I'm alone here with three small children. But, hey, why don't you just come on inside and make yourself comfortable?" Choosing to entertain that man would've been crazy dangerous.

Why, then, do we so readily 'entertain' every dangerous thought that shows up at our door? Here's what I'm talking about. You're minding your own business when this thought appears at your door: "I can't believe I'm spending another Saturday night alone." The thought just shows up uninvited, and there's nothing you can do about that. But now you have a choice: are you going to slam the door on it and lock it out, or are you going to invite it in and entertain it and give it your full attention? If you choose to entertain it, be prepared for the downward spiral. "No one ever invites me anywhere. Why would they? I'm kind of boring, and I'm sure not much to look at." Before the night is over, you'll likely be somewhere in this neighborhood: "My life stinks. I might as well have another bowl of ice cream (or glass of wine)." The evening is lost to self-pity and complaint. Inviting that thought in was crazy dangerous.

Today, be intentional. A lot of thoughts will knock at your door. Which ones will you choose to entertain?