LIBERTY UNIVERSITY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

OVERCOMING THE FIVE PRIMARY NEGATIVE THOUGHTS:
A TWENTY-ONE DAY MIND RENEWAL PLAN FOR MEN

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ABSTRACT

OVERCOMING THE FIVE PRIMARY NEGATIVE THOUGHTS: A TWENTY-ONE DAY PLAN FOR MEN

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The Bible commands Christians to be transformed by renewing their minds with the Word of God. This project proposes a biblical mind transformation plan targeting men specifically, as well as the broader body of Christ. The plan equips Christians with the skills to learn how to identify, control, and eliminate the five primary negative thoughts. Once identified, these unhealthy thoughts will be replaced with a plethora of healthy self empowering thoughts resulting in a renewed Christ centered mindset. The research for this plan will be based on the Holy Scriptures, neuroscience (brain research), and cognitive behavior therapy (CBT). Pre and post-assessment surveys will be given to all participants to measure the effectiveness of this project in changing their thought lives. Men who wish to be delivered and set free mentally from harassing thoughts such as, regrets of the past, fear of the future, unhealthy comparisons, self-condemning thoughts, and temptations of lustful thoughts of all kinds, this research project is their deliverance. The goal is to renew the mind one thought at a time.

Abstract length: 173 words.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge and thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for saving me and secondly, revealing to me the truths revealed in this twenty-one day mind renewal plan. He revealed these thought regulation truths and paradigms to me while guiding me through a storm. Jesus, I thank you for being such a perfect storm tracker. You never once abandoned me, or allowed me to be tested beyond my ability to bear the trial. Instead, you faithfully tracked me through the storm and brought me safely to the other side.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................ iv  

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ....................................................................................... v  

CONTENTS .......................................................................................................... vi  

LIST OF FIGURES .............................................................................................. viii  

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION ................................................................. 1  
  Statement of the Problem .............................................................................. 3  
  Statement of Limitations .............................................................................. 5  
  Theoretical Basis for this Project ................................................................. 6  
  Statement of Methodology ........................................................................... 10  
  Review of Literature .................................................................................... 11  

CHAPTER 2. THOUGHT CHEMISTRY 101 ........................................... 24  
  Understanding Thinking ............................................................................... 24  
  What are Thoughts? ..................................................................................... 24  
  Are Thoughts Real? ..................................................................................... 25  
  Are Thoughts Harmless? ........................................................................... 27  
  How Many Thoughts Per Day? ................................................................... 28  
  The Five Primary Negative Thoughts: The Filthy Five ............................ 29  
  The Seven Sources of Our Thoughts ......................................................... 33  
  Science .......................................................................................................... 33  
  Sensory Mechanisms (5 Senses) ................................................................. 34  
  Self-Talk ....................................................................................................... 35  
  Specific Events ............................................................................................. 36  
  Spiritual Factors .......................................................................................... 37  
  Secularism (World-view) ........................................................................... 41  
  Social Interactions ........................................................................................ 42  

CHAPTER 3. THOUGHT MANAGEMENT 201: THE 21 DAY PLAN ...... 43  
  Week 1: Thought Chemistry 101 ............................................................... 43  
  Week 2: Thought Management 201 ........................................................... 75  
  Week 3: Thought Builders 301 ................................................................. 114  

CHAPTER 4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION ................................... 158  
  Purpose of Thesis ........................................................................................ 158  
  Outline of the Project ................................................................................ 158  
  Major Findings ............................................................................................ 159  
  Conclusion .................................................................................................. 162
LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1: Anterior Cingulate ........................................................................................................ 62, 67

Fig. 2: The Habit Loop ........................................................................................................ 76
Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis project will explore the science of thought formation and the power of thoughts to produce and eliminate toxic emotions such as fear, anxiety, stress, worry, anger and depression. Concerning depression, according to Harold G. Koenig of Duke University Medical Center states,

Depression is a major public health problem. Based on a joint study conducted by the Harvard School of Public Health and the World Health Organization, depression was the leading cause of disability in 1990 and, in 2020, is expected to be the world’s second leading cause of disability, surpassed only by cardiovascular disease. The lifetime prevalence of depression in the USA is 20% in women and 10% in men.¹

Bolstering this statistic, psychologist, Frank Lawlis, maintains, “It is estimated that more than 90% of us will have a bout with depression at some point in our lives and for some of us this experience may be unbearably debilitating. Almost all of us will have serious anxiety bouts that will restrict us from enjoying life’s opportunities.”² In an effort to decrease the aforementioned estimation of the rise of depression and anxiety, this research project is designed to help Christians discover ways to identify and eradicate negative toxic thoughts which can lead to serious bouts of depression and anxiety.

In this researchers opinion, which is based on over twenty years of pastoral counseling experience, many Christians are oblivious to the connection between their thoughts and the emotions they experience on a daily basis. Unfortunately, numerous believers are not aware of the power that they possess to control and regulate their thoughts and feelings.


² Frank Lawlis, Retraining the Brain: A 45-Day Plan to Conquer Stress and Anxiety (New York: Plume. 2008), 6.
Norman Wright explains the correlation between the thoughts of believers and their feelings “A thought stimulates an electrochemical response, which produces emotion; emotion results in an attitude; and attitude produces behavior. Negative or toxic thoughts produce toxic emotions. Those produce toxic attitudes, which result in toxic behavior.” Thus, it is apparent that human emotions are not the naturalistic product of random chance, but are the byproduct of human thought life. Hence, when Christians learn to manage their thoughts, they are also inadvertently managing their feelings and emotions.

According to Pastor Charles Swindoll, human thoughts have the power to create either positive or negative emotions, attitudes, or behaviors. He goes on to describe the power of thoughts:

Thoughts, positive or negative, grow stronger together when fertilized with constant repetition. That may explain why so many who are gloomy and gray stay in that mood, and why others who are cheery and enthusiastic continue to be so, even in the midst of difficult circumstances. Please do not misunderstand me. Happiness (like winning) is a matter of right thinking, not intelligence, age or position. Our performance is directly related to the thoughts we deposit in our memory bank. We can only draw on what we deposit. What kind of performance would your car deliver if every morning before you left for work you scooped up a handful of dirt and put it in your crankcase? The fine tuned engine would soon be coughing and sputtering. Ultimately, it would refuse to start. The same is true of your life. Thoughts about yourself and attitudes toward others that are narrow, destructive and abrasive produce wear and tear on your mental motor. They send you off the road while others drive past.

Based on the aforementioned quote, this researcher extrapolates it is the failure of some believers to understand the correlation between their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that holds many believers captive to their negative emotional whims and wills. This thesis project is designed to set the captives free from negative strongholds and set them free by learning to

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5 Ibid.
control their negative thoughts rather than their negative thoughts controlling them. In addition, participants will gain knowledge of how to retrain their brains to disengage toxic thoughts before they have the opportunity to take root neurologically.

**Statement of the Problem**

This research project is designed to address the problem of negative and unhealthy thinking, particularly in men, and generally in the broader Body of Christ. The Bible is replete with Scriptures accentuating the importance of avoiding negative unhealthy thinking. While humans may not be able to choose all the thoughts that come to their minds, they do have the responsibility to manage their thoughts. Thought management is understood to be the responsibility of every believer according to the following verse: “We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”

Thought regulation is vital to spiritual and physical health. By way of example, “Research indicates that as much as 75% percent of everything we think is negative, counterproductive and works against us.” This research finding underscores the growing need of Christians to learn to monitor and self-regulate their thoughts lest they find themselves mired in the quick sand of negativity and ailing health. Concerning ailing health, Dr. Caroline Leaf in her research discovered the following astonishing information detailing a correlation between negative thoughts and their impact on one’s health.

Research shows that around 87% of illnesses can be attributed to our thought life, and approximately 13% to diet, genetics, and environment. Studies conclusively link more chronic disease (also known as lifestyle diseases) to an epidemic of toxic emotions in our culture. These toxic emotions can cause migraines, hypertension, strokes, cancer, skin problems, diabetes, infections, and allergies just to name a few.

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6 The Holy Bible, 2 Corinthians 10:5 NASB.

7 Wright, A Better Way to Think, 57.

8 Leaf, Who Switched Off My Brain?, 15.
The fact that there is such a direct correlation between thoughts and health should cause all to guard their hearts and minds against all forms of negative thinking.

This project centers on designing a twenty-one day biblical mind transformation plan to be utilized daily by a sample of Christians who wish to rid themselves or at best significantly reduce the number of negative thoughts and emotions they experience on a daily basis. This plan is designed to help believers overcome the five primary forms of negative thinking which this researcher has labeled the “The Filthy Five.”

Research of this type is vitally important to the Body of Christ for the following reasons: (1) The twenty-one day plan will help many Christians discover that they need not be held in bondage to their varying mindsets, moods and attitudes. They will discover how their brains are hard-wired to control their thoughts, emotions, attitudes and behaviors; (2) Moreover, participants will discover how they can retrain their brain to think more optimistic thoughts. This shall be accomplished by a combination of the following activities; asking themselves reflective questions, employing thought-stopping techniques, engaging in voice therapy, writing their responses to numbers of reflective questions, completing a series of Bible-based studies, and challenging their minds to memorize select Scriptures that address thought regulation. (3) This thesis project will help many Christians become more aware of their brain’s anatomy and thus become less skeptical of science and in particular neuroscience. This project underscores how the study of neuroscience, the Scriptures, and RCBT can augment the spiritual mandate to “be transformed by the renewing of your mind” ⁹ (4) Another benefit of this type of study is that it will assist believers in how to identify which thoughts are helpful in juxtaposition to those thoughts that are toxic and off limits. Believers will be taught how to “…take every thought

⁹ The Holy Bible, Romans 12:2, NASB.
This is vitally important especially in light of the myriad of thoughts that inundate the minds of people at the start of the new day before they can get out of bed in the morning. Understanding that, “the devil likes to get in their head before they get out of bed.” (5) In addition, a study of this type will equip believers to be better prepared for the inevitable spiritual warfare they will encounter from Satan; (6) Finally, such a study, if applied, will result in a less stressful and mentally taxing thought life, and in greater peace of mind with self, others, and God.

**Statement of Limitations**

This thesis project will not attempt to give a detailed analysis of all the brain’s diverse intricate functions, but only those parts of the brain that effect memory formation and recall.

This project will not engage in the age-old debate over the mind-brain dichotomy. For purposes of this thesis project, the brain and the mind shall be viewed as one unified whole as expressed by Pierce J. Howard “The mind is the state that occurs when the brain is alive and at work.”

A third limitation involves not addressing the effects of aging on the brain, but will assume all participants to have a healthy functioning brain, thus avoiding the implications of the effects of trauma or physical injury to the brain and its impediments to making healthy changes.

A fourth limitation will be to not address the impact of substance abuse be it prescription or illegal drug use and its effects on neurochemical imbalances in the brain. All who participate in our sample group will be believed to not have an ongoing history of drug abuse.

The fifth and final limitation involves not addressing depression. While some references to depression are made, this project will not address depression in a clinical sense. The primary

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10 The Holy Bible, 2Corinthians10:5, NASB.

emphasis will be to address negative thoughts and toxic emotions which may lead to feelings of pessimism, apathy, despondency, or melancholy thoughts and feelings often associated with depression.

**Theoretical Basis for this Project**

Based on this researcher’s, personal experience, reading, and research in the area of negative thinking, there are three fields of study that address overcoming negative unhealthy thinking and thought management in varying degrees. They are as follows: the Bible, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), and lastly, neuroscience. The aforementioned fields of study serve as a three legged stool upon which Biblical mind renewal rest. This he hopes to be born out in the twenty-one day plan research project. Each leg is of equal importance as it relates to constructing an effective Bible-based, therapeutically centered, and scientifically supported mind renewal plan.

The first leg of the three-legged stool is the Bible. The Bible is replete with passages accentuating the importance of thought management. Several passages that emphasize the importance of thought management are as follows: The Apostle Peter said, “Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ”\(^{12}\) The Apostle Paul commands all believers to avoid negative thinking, choosing instead to, “Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.”\(^{13}\) Paul goes to explain how believers are to manage their thoughts lives by actively, “taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”\(^{14}\) As we learn to regulate our negative thoughts, we are to replace them with positive healthy thoughts as described in the

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12 The Holy Bible, 1Peter 1:13, NASB.

13 The Holy Bible, Colossians 3:2, NASB.

14 The Holy Bible, 2 Corinthians 10:5, NASB.
following passage of Scripture, “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.”¹⁵ Exchanging negative, unhealthy thoughts with positive, God honoring healthy thoughts is in essence Biblical mind renewal as described in Romans 12:2. From this passage, it appears that thought regulation, resulting in Biblical mind renewal is the responsibility of every believer regardless of his or her level of maturity according to the aforementioned scriptures and a host of others. If believers hope to grow spiritually and overcome the five patterns of negative thinking, they will need to learn to self regulate the negative thoughts that enter their minds and replace them with positive Biblically centered thoughts.

The second leg of the three-legged stool, is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). At it’s core, Cognitive [thought] Behavior [action] Therapy adheres to three fundamental presuppositions: (1) One’s thoughts affects ones behavior; (2) One’s thoughts may be monitored and altered; (3) To bring about a desired behavioral change, one need only to change the way one thinks.¹⁶ Kathleen Romito defines CBT as a therapy that “encourages clients to understand the links between thoughts, emotions, and behaviors…challenging automatic negative thoughts (ANT’s) to help patients identify problematic behaviors.”¹⁷ One of the goals of this research project to help participants learn to overcome five patterns of negative thinking which can result in unhealthy depressive attitudes and behaviors.

¹⁵ The Holy Bible, Philippians 4:8, NASB.


It was Sigmund Freud who promulgated the belief that the cause of depression “was anger turned on the self.” However, it was Aaron Beck, a disciple of Freud, who later became a believer in CBT. In 1963, he concluded through his research that depressed people were depressed because they, “exhibited a systematic distortive pattern in their thinking processes.” In other words, people succumb to depression because of their systematic pattern of negative twisted thinking. A fuller explanation of these twisted thinking patterns will be discussed in chapter three: Thought Management 201: The Twenty-one Day Plan.

The goal of CBT is to give people hope by helping “clients break out of their unproductive cycles of thinking and feeling by giving them tools to think in more accurate ways.” Such tools will be observed in chapter three: Thought Management 201: The Twenty-one Day Plan.

The third and final leg of the three-legged stool is neuroscience (brain research). Neuroscience is the study of the brain. It is through studies in neuroscience that we discover the brain has the capacity to adapt to change. The fact that our brains can overcome the five patterns of negative thinking and replace such thoughts (mind renewal) is the result of the brains plasticity. According to Dr. Frank Lawlis, the human brain has the inherent capacity, to bend and reformat its processing (based on new information and demands)... creating entirely new neuropathways in your brain...neuroscience and brain plasticity go hand in hand. Brain plasticity refers to the brains ability to adapt and change.

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20 Colbert, *Deadly Emotions*, 156-158.
23 Lawlis, *Retraining the Brain*, 8.
In other words, the human brain has the capacity to rewire itself to accommodate new information and data. Each time a person thinks a new thought, has a new idea, gets more educated in a given area, learns a new word, learns the words to a new song, or receives any instruction in moral conduct, they forge a new neurological pathway in their brains.²⁴

This rewiring of the brain is also referred to as neuroplasticity.²⁵ A large part of the twenty-one day plan (to be presented in Chapter 3) deals with neuroplasticity. The plan will teach it readers how to rewire their brain to overcome the five primary patterns of negative thinking and retrain their brains to think positive, healthy thoughts resulting in a renewed Christ centered mind. Believers in Christ have the responsibility to take on the mind of Christ. By the process of brain plasticity, God has made it possible for believers to renew and change their minds as found in Romans 12:2. At salvation, the mind of Christ is spiritually hardwired into Christians.²⁶ According to Dr. Verghese, “It is important to remember that the brain’s plasticity enables the believer to continually modify personality and behavior into Christ-likeness.”²⁷

In summary, this research project will attempt to provide evidence supporting the fact that the Bible says believers can overcome the five patterns of negative thinking and renew their minds.²⁸

Secondly, CBT says one can change their emotional state of mind, as well as their behaviors by

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²⁴ Verghese, Brain Power, 68.


²⁶ The Holy Bible, 1Corinthians 2:16b, NASB.

²⁷ Verghese, Brain Power, 68.

²⁸ The Holy Bible, Romans 12:2; Eph. 4:23-24; Phil. 2:5; 4:8; Col. 3:23; 1Peter 1:13, NASB.
managing and learning to change their thoughts. Lastly, neuroscience says people can change because of the dexterity of their brains.

**Statement of Methodology**

This twenty-one day biblical mind transformation plan is designed to assist Christians in learning how to overcome the five primary negative thoughts and renew their minds one thought at a time. The project will report past and current research in the fields of neuroscience, brain plasticity, and CBT. These scientific disciplines will be compared and combined with Scripture to provide participants with the necessary scientific and scriptural tools to control their negative thoughts and toxic emotions.

This project will utilize a survey administered to Christian adults across all ages, genders, races, and denominational backgrounds. Pre and post- assessment survey will be conducted for the twenty-one day plan to determine a reduction in negative thoughts of the participants after completing the plan. The subjects in the study will be limited to those individuals who are struggling with their thought life and are committed to learning how to change their way of thinking. It is the researcher’s belief that if the plan is enthusiastically embraced and executed, it has the potential to detoxify the brain of many negative thoughts and create new neurological pathways in the brain leading to such positive emotions as joy, peace, contentment and a greater sense of oneness with God. This will be a non-clinical study.

Based on all the information presented in the first chapter, the remaining chapters of the project will be divided into the succeeding chapters:

**Chapter 2: Thought Chemistry 101** will begin by answering four pertinent questions: What is a thought? Are thoughts real? Are thoughts harmless? How many thoughts does one

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30 Lawlis, *Retraining the Brain*, 8.
think per day? What are the five primary categories on thoughts that are to be avoided at all cost? Finally, the researcher shall examine the seven sources of one’s thoughts. As a help to the reader, a glossary of several germane brain terms and definitions has been provided in Appendix A.

Chapter 3: The Thought Management Plan 201 will introduce readers to the twenty-one day plan. This plan is designed to be used daily to equip believers with the tools to overcome negative thought patterns and renew their minds. The plan will be shown to consist of thought regulation strategies (check, challenge, change, and reframe) to fight off the five forms of negative thought patterns, and how to erect mental walls against negative thoughts; mindfulness techniques (learning to live in the moment), metacognition (learning to think about what you are thinking about) etc.31

Chapter 4 will consist of a summary and conclusions of the research. The primary outcome of the research is to see whether participants experienced a significant reduction in negative thoughts as evidenced by a significant decrease in levels of depressive symptoms after participating in the twenty-one day plan. Participants should observe a decline in the number of automatic negative thoughts, (ANT’s) they experienced prior to the study. In the final analysis, the rationale of teaching participants to identify, manage, and replace negative patterns of thinking with positive biblically based patterns of thinking should result in a healthy transformed thought life.

Review of Literature

Four types of literature that inform this research project are books, dissertations, research articles, Scripture, and theological sources.

Book Sources

31 McMinn, Cognitive Therapy Techniques in Christian Counseling, 36.
A Better Way to Think: Using Positive Thoughts to Change Your Life written by H. Norman Wright. This book provides its readers with a rudimentary understanding of the brain, the origin of thoughts, self-talk, identifying core beliefs, how to kick out negative thinking and self-talk. In addition, Wright explains the interconnections between thoughts, emotions, attitudes and behaviors. This book will be a primary source for this project.

In his book, The Feeling Good Handbook cognitive behavioral therapist David Burns explains the unique aspects of CBT and popularizes the works of Albert Ellis and Aaron Beck by summarizing their insights into distorted types of thinking that lead to depression. Burns labels these thought patterns as “Twisted Thinking” and lists all ten. He also lays out a CBT therapist response to each type of a client’s twisted thinking in the context of a counseling session. The book is a classic and instrumental to the development of the project.

Retraining The Brain: A 45-Day Plan to Conquer Stress and Anxiety, written by Dr. Frank Lawlis is also a primary source for this product. Lawlis introduces concepts of “stress storms’ and “brain looping.” In addition, he designs a 45-day plan to rewire the brain using proven brain plasticity techniques together with therapy, diet, and exercise.

Another book utilized in this thesis project is Cognitive Therapy: Techniques in Christian Counseling by Mark McMinn. McMinn is a leading therapist and author in the field of Religious Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. This book is a classic tool providing insight into the concepts of Cognitive therapy. McMinn explains how to apply Cognitive therapy with patients who are struggling with depression, anxiety, stress, and anger.

Dr. Aaron Beck, considered the father of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, published his PhD dissertation converting it into a book entitled, Cognitive Therapy of Depression. In his

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33 Lawlis, Retraining the Brain, 13.
book, he examines the thought process of those individuals who were depressed and concluded it was not anger turned inward, a view promulgated by Sigmund Freud that was causing his clients to be depressed, but rather their distorted thinking patterns. His book has become the template for diagnosing and treating individuals caught in the clutches of depression and suicide. Beck’s *Cognitive Therapy of Depression* is a significant source used in the writing of this thesis project.

Samuel C. Verghese’s book *Brain Power: How to Fine-Tune Your Brain* is a book that will be a primary source for this project. Verghese, a committed Christian, medical doctor, and trained neuroscientist merges his faith and scientific knowledge to produce a Christ-centered book that explains the intricacies of brain plasticity. Verghese illustrates how Christians have been wired to have their minds and lives renewed providing they work in tandem with the Holy Spirit, the chief agent of change. His basic argument is that for mind renewal to be most effective, it has to encompass the believer’s minds, body, and spirit. He argues that any effective mind renewal program should include a scriptural component, exercise program (to get blood flowing to the brain), and a nutrition regiment to boost the capacity of the brain to produce the neurological chemicals needed to augment brain plasticity.

Karen Scalf Linamen wrote *Due to Rising Energy Cost, the Light at the End of the Tunnel Has Been Turned Off; How to Have a Happy, Fabulous Life When Your Circumstances Look Dim*. Linamen discusses the importance of becoming a “Spin Doctor” by learning how to spin negative experiences into a positive thought based analysis. She also devotes a chapter to identifying the voice behind our inner-voice by asking is it the voice of a father, mother, coach, or an ex-spouse.

*Think Your Way to the Life You Want: A Guide to Understanding How Your Thoughts and Beliefs Create Your Life* written by Dr. Bruce I. Doyle, III. Dr. Doyle discusses tiny waves
of energy called “thought-forms” “whose sole purpose is to carry out the intent of the thinker.”

The book offers fundamental insight in the law of attraction. The idea behind the law of attraction is that people attract whom they are and not necessarily, who they want to attract. In other words, like spirits attract. This principle fleshed out in the local church by observing that church gossips frequently congregate together.

Additionally, this project utilizes How God Changes Your Brain written by Dr. Andrew Newberg and Mark Robert Waldman. Dr. Newberg is one the most prominent researchers in the field of Neuroscience. He merges science along with the latest religious research and extols the benefits of prayer, meditation and church attendance in helping create major changes in the brain. In addition, he discusses the role of the anterior cingulate in balancing the limbic system and the frontal lobes.

Who Switched off My Brain?: Controlling Toxic Thoughts and Emotions written by Dr. Caroline Leaf. She is an internationally recognized researcher, speaker and author in the field of neuroscience. She introduces such terms as “The Dirty Dozen” referring to toxic negative thoughts and how to break negative thinking patterns. In addition, Dr. Leaf introduces new brain sweeping techniques to erase negative toxic memories proving the mind can be renewed.

Dr. Tim Clinton and Dr. Joshua Straub have co-authored a book entitled God Attachment: Why You Believe, Act, and Feel the Way You Do About God. Clinton and Straub convincingly make the case from research and the Scriptures that we are “hard-wired” for a relationship with God. It is for this reason that human beings made in the image of God have a fascination with God.

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The Owner’s Manual for the Brain: Everyday Applications from Mind-Brain Research written by Pierce J. Howard, PhD is a comprehensive user friendly textbook comprised of thirty-nine chapters discussing a myriad of topics associated with brain functioning. Some of the topics include addictions, diet, chocolate, happiness, headaches, music, left brain/right brain, motivation, prayer, ADHD, exercise, stress, testosterone, sex, visualization, mood, brain anatomy, emotions, depression, positive expectations and negative emotions, and memory. The manual is a treasure-trove of knowledge on the brain.

Daniel G. Amen, M.D., a noted psychiatrist and researcher in the field of neuroscience, has authored a book entitled Magnificent Mind at Any Age: Treat Anxiety, Depression, Memory Problems, ADD, and Insomnia. In several relevant chapters in this book, Amen discusses how and individual can get their brain unstuck by making it more adaptable to change and how to develop mental toughness for success. Due to the nature of the work, the project will only utilize select sections.

Change Your Brain, Change Your Life also written by noted author, researcher, and famed psychiatrist, Daniel G. Amen, M.D., discusses the anatomy of the brain and how it can be changed by creating new neurological pathways. This book furnishes relevant and helpful information for anyone seeking to change their brain and change their life.

Additionally, this project utilizes Dr. Don Colbert’s book entitled Deadly Emotions: Understand the Mind, Body-Spirit. Dr. Colbert expounds upon the effects that negative toxic emotions such as anger, unforgiveness, rage, and resentment have on the mind, body and spirit. The book offers foundational help for those seeking to manage their emotions.

In Dr. Daniel J. Siegel’s book Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation, he discusses “mental states.” “A state of mind makes the brain work more effectively, tying together relevant (sometimes wildly separated) functions with “neural glue” that links them in
the moment.”  

A mental state has to do with one’s state of mind. Siegel explains that each time a football player puts on his cleats, shoulder pads, jersey and helmet his brain goes to work to form a football mental state. This is a neurological process automatically performed by the brain.

In *Awaken The Giant Within How to Take Immediate Control of Your Mental, Emotional, Physical & Financial Destiny!*, Anthony Robbins contends that change does not have to take long. Robbins contends that the key to change is to employ the Science of Neuro-Associative Conditioning (SNAC). The SNAC premise is that the key to change is to associate massive pain with staying the same and attach great pleasure with the desired change.

**Dissertation/Thesis Sources**

In Dr. Ronnie Moore’s thesis project *How to Get to The Other Side of Emotional Pain*, the author explores multiple ways to overcome any emotionally devastating experience by thanking God for the pain, reframing the painful experience, and choosing to move in a positive spiritual direction.

In Dr. Benjamin Andrew Karner’s thesis project *Easy Effective Counseling: A Strategy For Busy Pastors*, sets forth a four step counseling process to be used by busy pastors to equip them to more effectively counsel. The four steps are as follows: Describe, Dream, Decide, and Do. A very effective template for busy pastors who enjoy counseling, but who do not have time to prepare for each session,

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Research Articles Sources

In the article, *God is in Your Head: Neurotheology and Religious Belief*, author, Ryan McIlhenny, argues that all of mankind is born with an innate knowledge of God as maintained by apologist, Apostle Paul in Romans 1:20-21. It is for this reason that people all over the world will engage in some form of worship to God or some idol.

James B. Ashbrook’s article, *Neurotheology: The Working Brain and the Work of Theology*, research indicates the “left hemisphere takes the lead from the right in anything that requires or permits step-by-step analysis. The right brain responds directly to what is around. It hears, sees, and senses more than the left brain so that it ascertains the felt-meaning of situations more accurately.” 38

In *Side Effects: Why Left and Right Matter*, the author, Sonya Sobieski, begins her article with the following quotation: “Our brains are cross-wired: The right half controls the left side of the body and the left hemisphere controls the right.” 39

Scripture Passages

This section identifies verses and passages of Scripture from the New American Standard Bible (NASB) that are emphasized in this thesis and describes how each adds value to the content. Upon a cursory review of the Bible, this researcher discovered over sixty references that address thoughts, attitudes, the mind, and meditations. For the purposes of this thesis project only twenty select verses will be cited.

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**Genesis 6:5.** Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. From this verse, it becomes clear that subsequent to the fall, and the introduction of sin into the world, Adam lost his innocence, and allowed sin to defile and darkened his heart. Because of Adam’s federal headship, when he sinned, all mankind inherited his sinful nature.

**Psalm 104:34.** Let my meditation be pleasing to Him; As for me, I shall be glad in the Lord. Our thoughts can either displease God or please God. The Psalmist chose to please God in his thought life by meditating upon those things that he knew pleased God.

**Joshua 1:8.** This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. According to this Scripture, a mind saturated and dominated by the Word of God, will result in godly obedience, a happy disposition, and a prosperous soul.

**Genesis 3:4-7.** When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Satan deceived Eve by planting doubtful thoughts in her mind. It was Eve’s wrong thinking that led to her wrong behavior. What she meditated on, she did. All actions are preceded by thoughts. In addition, this passage explains the origin of human toxic negative emotions such as fear, shame, guilt, condemnation, blame, alienation, and selfishness. These specific toxic emotions are the consequences of the introduction of sin in a perfect world.
**Proverbs 23:7.** For as he thinks within himself, so he is. This verse could be paraphrased to read, for as a man thinks, so he will become. This verse clearly demonstrates that human life is shaped, fashioned, and molded by self thoughts.

**Proverbs 18:21.** Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit. Speech expresses thoughts. This verse underscores the power of the spoken word. Words can heal or hurt. All people know this truth well. They need only to say or hear something positive or negative from another person they are in close relationship with to experience the power of words. Actually people can listen to their own self-talk and understand the influential power of spoken words.

**2Corinthians 10:5.** We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. This verse serves as the theological underpinning of this project. In the field of psychology, thought management is the indispensable key to change and overcome maladaptive behaviors. Negative thinking, unbelief, and false beliefs render change virtually impossible.

**Romans 12:1-2.** And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:1-2 are perhaps the seminal verses on retraining the brain. They underscore the fact that change “metamorphoses” begins on the inside starting with thoughts, emotions, and attitudes. The lesson learned from this passage that spiritual transformation begins with challenging Christians to think about what they are thinking about first, then teach them to change their thinking according to the truth of Scripture. The truth shall set their minds free and change their lives.
**Romans 8:4-8.** For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace. This passage places the microscope on the dual nature of man. Once born again by the Spirit of God, believers are to walk according to their “spiritual mind” and no longer walk according to the dictates of their “sinful flesh.”

**Romans 1:28.** And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper. It is the unsaved natural man who possesses a depraved mind, in contrast to the born again believer who possesses a regenerated spiritual mind at the point of conversion.

**Luke 24:45.** Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. This verse calls attention to the fact that it is the mind that the Holy Spirit illuminates to bestow understanding of the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit communicates to His children through the medium of their thoughts.

**Mark 12:30.** You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The Gospel writer underscores the vital role of the mind in garrisoning the strength to direct the affections of the heart and soul to exclusive devotion to the Lord Jesus.

**Philippians 3:13-14.** Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. This verse calls attention to the fact that Christians are not to ponder and repeatedly dwell on their negative past
experiences but are to kick out regrets of the past and set their minds on the good things God has planned for them in the future. An analogous verse is found in Isaiah 43:18 Do not call to mind the former things, or ponder things of the past.

**Colossians 3:2-3.** Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Believer are to fix and focus their minds on their new identify and live as those whose old nature have been crucified and have been set free to live according to their new Christ centered nature. As one would set something in concrete to secure it, Believer’s minds are to be set firmly in their new spiritual foundation.

**Ephesians 4:17-18.** So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God. Believers are to avoid the enemies’ land mines of living like the unsaved whose minds are darkened and as a result walk in darkness following the dictates of the Prince of Darkness.

**1 Peter 1:13.** Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. This verse highlights the reality of spiritual warfare and the need of every believer to prepare for a frontal assault by Satan their mortal enemy. They prepare by focusing their minds on their eternal hope and help in Christ Jesus.

**Matthew 9:4.** And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, why are you thinking evil in your hearts? This verse shows the close symbiotic relationship between the mind and the heart in Scripture. At times, the heart is used to refer to the mind, and soul. The heart, mind, soul refer to the control center of the person. A corresponding verse is Psalm 42:5 Why are you in despair, O
my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence. David’s mind is speaking to his down cast soul and encouraging himself to put his trust in God rather than remain in an emotional state of sadness.

1 Corinthians 2:13. Which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. In distinguishing spiritual thoughts and carnal human thoughts this verse demonstrates that mind transformation, occurs when a believer’s mind is dominated by spiritual thoughts derived from prayer, mediation, and memorization of the Word of God.

Philippians 4:6-7. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Paul identifies a four-fold thought process of metacognition that will safeguard a believer from negative thoughts which will lead to negative behavior. The Apostle encourages believers to think about praising and rejoicing in God’s goodness (v.4), think about exhibiting patience and gentleness in all situations (v.5), think about praying about all anxiety producing things (v. 6-7) and think about positive things that are good, right, pure and worthy of praise (v.8). In so doing, believers will experience peace of mind.

Matthew 12:43-46. Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find it. Then it says, I will return to my house from which I came…then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. One application drawn from Jesus metaphor is the importance of replacing old thoughts with new thoughts. One reason old thoughts must be replaced with new
thoughts is because if they are not replaced they will eventually return. Vacuums in the mind are ultimately filled.
Chapter 2

Thought Chemistry 101

Chapter 2: Thought Chemistry 101 is devoted to understanding thinking. The Chapter begins by answering four pertinent questions: What is a thought? Are thoughts real? Are thoughts harmless? How many thoughts does the human brain think per day? In addition, Chapter 2 will examine the five negative thought patterns that should be avoided. Lastly, included will be an examination of the seven sources of thoughts, and a scientific explanation of how the brain processes thoughts and how thoughts change the brain (brain plasticity).

Understanding Thinking

What are Thoughts?

Dr. H. Norman Wright defines a thought in the following manner:

A thought is the way in which we are conscious of things. They are made up of memories, our perceptions, our beliefs. They are glimpses, even snippets, of ideas….Sometimes they pass fleetingly, barely notices. Sometimes they come sharply into focus. Our thoughts determine the orientation of everything we do. They evoke the feelings that frame our world and motivate our actions. And they have the power to change the way we feel.1

As Wright explains, people think thoughts all the time. How often do individuals find themselves saying things like, “I thought about you yesterday” or “I thought our conversation went well.” or “I thought I had a taste for some broccoli sprouts, but on second thought, I will eat a banana split instead. Believer’s thoughts may be short, fleeting and nonsensical or they may be more weighty and substantive directly affecting how they feel. Nonetheless, all people interface with thoughts every moment of every day.

1Wright, A Better Way to Think, 12.
For more of a technical or scientific definition of a thought, Dr. Caroline Leaf, a leading researcher in the field of neuroscience, asserts, “Thoughts are basically electrical impulses, chemicals, and neurons.” If thoughts are no more than electrical and chemical impulses, then how do individuals become conscious of their thoughts? The answer lies in the fact that people become conscious of their thoughts when the dendrites (hair like follicles’) which are attached to each neuron (brain cells) receive messages from the axon (a long tail-like stem extending from each neuron), an adjacent neuron, and successfully sends it to the dendrites of a receiving neuron; thus completing the sending and receiving process. Conscious thoughts are the result of both sending and receiving neurons. The human brain is made up of approximately 100 billion (100,000,000,000) neurons.

Are Thoughts Real?

In response to those academic disciplines that question the scientific reality of thoughts, Leaf goes on to describes what a thought (brain cell/neuron) looks like in the brain. [Thoughts] look like trees with branches. As thoughts grow and become permanent, more branches grow and the connections become stronger. As we change our thinking, some branches go away, new ones form, the strength of the connections change, and the memories network with other thoughts. What an incredible capacity of the brain to change, rewire, and grow! Spiritually, this is renewing the mind.

To further attest to the tangible nature of thoughts, Dr. Don Colbert author of Deadly Emotions, states, “Thoughts are measurable and occupy mental ‘real estate.’ Thoughts are active; they grow

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and change. Thoughts influence every decision, word, action and physical reaction we make.”

“Every time you have a thought it is actively changing your brain and your body—for better or for worse.” Thoughts are real and they serve as the catalyst of all human emotions, attitudes and behaviors.

Not only are thoughts real, they are also not confined to one’s cerebral cortex. Thoughts travel in space all around us. According to, Dr. Bruce L. Moyle III, an electrical engineer, he contends,

Each thought exist as a minute wave of energy called a thought form. A thought form is real—it exists. It happens to not be noticed by you because its energy vibration (frequency) is outside the range of human senses. It operates faster than the speed of light and is therefore, not visible to you. It might be helpful for you to understand this concept by relating it to something you already know… If you’re like most of us you have a favorite radio station. Perhaps an FM station…Let’s say it’s 102.7 on the dial. What the number means is that the frequency of transmission for the station is 102.7 megahertz (megacycles). Mega is the metric designation for one million. The energy transmitted by the station vibrates continuously in the space around you. But unless your radio is tuned to the frequency of 102.7 million cycles per second, you are unaware of it. My point is this: There is a lot of information vibrating in the space around us that we are not aware of because our senses are limited to a specific range of frequencies. And some of the information vibrating in the space is in the form of tiny, subtle thought forms. In effect, you are like a radio station, WYOU, broadcasting your desires, intentions, and ideas out into the universe—completely uncensored.

While the term “thought form” may be foreign to many, the idea that people transmit their thoughts, intentions, and desires into the universe around them is not. The term most commonly used to refer to this phenomenon are called “vibes”. Individuals have been known to comment, “That person is sending off certain vibes.” The vibes could be perceived as either good, bad or indifferent, but never the less, the individual feels them. The person’s vibe could be

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7 Ibid., 14.
exhibiting an air of confidence or a lack thereof. Christians with the spiritual gift of perception are more acutely aware of peoples “thought forms.” Jesus on several occasions mentioned he knew the thoughts of his disciples and Pharisees even before they uttered a word. Jesus example confirms that thoughts are not just confined to the frontal lobe of the brain of a person.

**Are Thoughts Harmless?**

Having concluded that thoughts are real and scientifically measurable, the next question to be answered is are thoughts harmless? In addressing the question, “are thoughts harmless?” It totally depends upon the content of the thought. As most know, thoughts can be both negative and positive, but people may not know that positive and negative thoughts affect the body differently.

Leaf in her research discovered the following astonishing information detailing a correlation between negative thoughts and their impact on one’s health.

Research shows that around 87% of illnesses can be attributed to our thought life, and approximately 13% to diet, genetics, and environment. Studies conclusively link more chronic disease (also known as lifestyle diseases) to an epidemic of toxic emotions in our culture. These toxic emotions can cause migraines, hypertension, strokes, cancer, skin problems, diabetes, infections, and allergies just to name a few.\(^9\)

The fact that there is such a direct correlation between thoughts and health should raise concerns about the things people ponder and contemplate. According to Leaf, physical, emotional and psychological health weights in the balance. She goes on to explain:

As you think, your thoughts are activated, which in turn activates your attitude, because your attitude is all of your thoughts put together and reflects your state of mind. This attitude is reflected in the chemical secretions that are released. Positive attitudes cause the secretion of the correct amount of chemicals, and negative attitudes distort the chemical secretions in a way that disrupts their natural flow. The chemicals are like littlecellular signals that translate the information of your thought into a physical reality in you body and mind, creating an emotion. The combination of thoughts, emotions and

resulting attitudes, impact your body in a positive or negative way. This means, your mind and body really are inherently linked, and this link starts with your thoughts.\textsuperscript{10} Leaf affirms that good heart attitudes will result in good health conversely, negative heart attitudes will manifest themselves in poor and ailing health overtime. The author of Proverbs states it in the following words, “A cheerful heart does good like medicine, but a broken spirit makes one sick.”\textsuperscript{11} The Message Bible paraphrases the verse to read, “A cheerful disposition is good for your health; gloom and doom leave you bone-tired.”\textsuperscript{12} Unbiased science will always attest to the veracity of the sacred Scriptures. The reason Christians are told in Scripture to monitor their thoughts is because negative thoughts, adversely affect their emotions and physical bodies.

Not all thoughts are harmless. “Negative thoughts secrete “downer” chemicals in the brain which cause people to feel down, depressed, anxious, worried, stressed, or fearful etc. While on the other hand, positive thoughts release “upper” or “feel-good” chemicals in the brain which in turn causes people to feel happy, excited, joyful, and positive.”\textsuperscript{13} Ever wonder why someone is feeling so happy? It is because of the “feel-good” chemicals, activated by their thoughts, and released in their brain.

\textbf{How Many Thoughts Per Day?}

How many thoughts does the average person think in a given day? “The National Science Foundation estimated that the human brain produces as many as 12,000 to 50,000 thoughts per day depending on how 'deep' a thinker the individual proves to be (other estimates

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\textsuperscript{10} Wright, \textit{A Better Way to Think}, 20-21.

\textsuperscript{11} The Holy Bible, Proverbs 17:22, TLB.

\textsuperscript{12} The Holy Bible, Proverbs 17:22, MSB.

\textsuperscript{13} Wright, \textit{A Better Way to Think}, 13.
However, not all thoughts are processed by the brain nor are all of the thoughts new. Because the brain is a creature of habit, researchers believe that many thoughts are carried over from day to day. Furthermore, it is believed that “the vast majority of them are pure nonsense. ‘We often dwell in the past or the future, obsessing about mistakes we might have made, battling guilt, planning ahead or worrying. We are constantly drifting into fantasy, fiction and negativity.’”  

Once again unbiased research confirms the teaching of Scripture to meditate on positive thoughts and build up positive feelings through praise and rejoicing. “Research indicates that as much as 75% percent of everything we think is negative, counterproductive and works against us.” This research finding underscores the growing need of Christians to learn to monitor and self-regulate their thoughts lest they find themselves mired in the quicksand of negativity.

**The Five Primary Negative Thoughts: The Filthy Five**

Upon an in-depth review of the Scriptures, this researcher discovered five thought patterns that obstruct the anterior cingulate from properly balancing the frontal lobe and limbic system in the brain. It is the belief of this author that if Christians learn to avoid these five forms of “stinking thinking”, they will quantifiably reduce the number of negative thoughts they think in a given day. The first of the “Filthy Five” thoughts that believers are to avoid is regrets of the past.

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15 Ibid.

Filthy Five #1: Regrets of the Past

The primary reason in Scripture that believers are cautioned against dwelling on regrets of the past is because Satan uses their past regrets as a chain to keep them mentally enslaved to depressing thoughts and negative mental images. These negative images are often filled with regret, disappointment, sorrow, anger and resentment. The thoughts may be, “If I had not made that misguided investment” or “If only, I had tried harder to save our marriage, or “If I had never left my old job, I would not be struggling financially.” Parents often regret and hold themselves responsible for the decisions and behaviors of their children. A pregnant teenage girl whose boy friend has abandoned her, may regret that she did not listen to her parent’s admonition to refrain from premarital sex. People must keep in mind they are to learn from their past and not live in it.

Filthy Five #2: Fear of the Future

The second of the “Filthy Five” thoughts that believers are to avoid is the fear of the future. Mentally feeding upon fear about the future, will keep the mind spiraling in a negative spin cycle and steal the joy out of life. Fretting over, how to pay next month’s household bills or tuition are common fears of the future? A father may reason, “What if I were to lose my job, I do not know how we would make it?” A wife may ponder, “what if my spouse finds someone more attractive. I fear he will leave me.” Or a patient may worry about the success of an upcoming medical procedure. God wants His children to learn to live in the present. Dwelling upon regrets of the past and living in fear of the future will create a major negative brain drain by releasing negative toxins into the blood stream.17

**Filthy Five #3: Unhealthy Comparisons**

One word of caution, those who constantly compare themselves with others will find themselves on a never ending emotional seesaw. The self esteem ride goes up and down. When people compare themselves to those whom they feel greater than, their self-esteem rises. However, when they compare themselves to those whom they feel less than, their self-esteem plummets. Satan, who desires believers to stay mired in negativity and feelings of insecurity, will be sure to keep them measuring themselves against others to enhance their feelings of inadequacy. At the heart of unhealthy comparisons is a poor self-concept.

A classical biblical illustration of an unhealthy comparison is found in the love hate relationship between King Saul and his army commander, David. King Saul’s unhealthy comparison between himself and David is evidenced in the following story: 1Samuel 18:6-8.

It happened as they were coming, when David returned from killing the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy and with musical instruments. The women sang as they played and said, “Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands.” Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said, “They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?” Saul looked at David with suspicion from that day on.

From that day forward, Saul became green with envy and looked upon David with extreme suspicion. Saul’s internal reaction to the women’s song displayed his unhealthy comparison to David. David may have killed ten thousands, but Saul was still the King of Israel. However, Saul’s thoughts, when he compared himself to David, made him feel inferior and inadequate. Hence, he purposed in his heart to kill David, viewing him as a threat to the longevity of his kingship.

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18 The Holy Bible, 1Samuel 18:6-8, NASB.
Filthy Five #4: Self-condemning thoughts

Self-condemning thoughts (a negative form of self-talk) find their origin in a plethora of sources. They could be rooted in regrets of the past, unhealthy comparisons, or fear of inadequacies to face life’s vicissitudes. Self-condemning thoughts may be rooted in a critical condemning parent, authority figure, a divorce, a history of sexual or emotional abuse, parental abandonment, loss of a job, or loss of one’s virginity, etc. Self-condemning thoughts may also stem from a series of bad decisions that have left people feeling broke, busted, and disgusted. Similar events were the basis of the self-condemning thoughts expressed by the “prodigal” or “lost” son described in Luke 15:11-24. Read the story and observe his self-deprecating comments, “I am no longer worthy to be called your son, make me as one of the hired men.” 19 Self-condemning thoughts, if left unchecked, will lead the Christian down a slippery slope into debasing self-talk, self-hatred, and negative self-labeling. Negative labeling is rooted in the limbic system.

The Filthy Five #5: Temptation

The fifth of the “Filthy Five” is temptation. When overcome with negative emotions, Christians are more susceptible to succumb to temptation. The temptation may be to quit or throw in the towel, flee instead of fight, pout instead of praise, and retaliate rather than wait on God. Jesus, while in the Garden of Gethsemane, warned his melancholy and lethargic disciples to “Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” 20 If Christians were to pray in times of temptation, they would have more

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20 The Holy Bible, Mark 14:38; Matthew 26:41, NASB.
strength to manage their thoughts and stand against the ebbs and flows of their vacillating emotions.

Consistently yielding to the temptation to give into anger, jealousy, rage, self-condemning thoughts, drug use, fears, and other negative behavioral proclivities can cause chemical imbalances in the brain that shut down the anterior cingulate because of an over stimulated amygdala.21 Toxic emotions like those listed above are all based in the limbic system.

**The Seven Sources of Our Thoughts**

In chapter three, participants will be taught to think about their thoughts (metacognition) as well as to identify the origin of their thoughts. This subtopic is designed to equip readers with the skills to trace the origin of their thoughts so they will be able to fully participate in the self-reflective exercises in the twenty-one day plan.

The sources of thoughts vary yet, this research demonstrates that the vast majority of thoughts emanate from seven primary sources. Those principal sources will be classified in the following seven categories: science (the brain’s anatomy), sensory mechanisms (the five senses), self-talk (things people experienced, and believe to be true), specific events (both positive and negative) spiritual factors (God, Satan, and our sinful flesh), secularism (world view) and personal social contacts/interactions.

**Source #1: Science**

First, from a scientific standpoint, all thoughts begin in the brain. Thoughts occur when a neuron receives and sends information to a receiving neuron. “This neuron-to-neuron communication serves as the origin our thoughts.”22 “The brain is the most complicated organ in

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the universe. It is estimated that the brain has one hundred billion (100,000,000,000) neurons/nerve cells and more connections in it than there are stars in the universe.”  

23 The National Science Foundation estimates that the human brains produce as many as 12,000 to 50,000 thoughts per day, but not all are processed.  

24 It is estimated that information in the brain travels at the speed of 268 miles per hour.”  

25 Is it no wonder that the human brain at times feels overwhelmed by a cascade of negative thoughts? It is within this maze of neuroscience complexity that thoughts find their origin.

Source #2: Sensory Mechanisms (5 Senses)

Second, from a sensory mechanism standpoint, a vast majority of thoughts, feelings, and emotions derive from the five physical senses, seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling. Based on the five senses, “Thoughts jump into our consciousness without any planning of conscious prompting.”  

26 At times, Christians may feel that they are pitiful pawns of their own thoughts and emotions. The following illustration demonstrates how the five senses play a major role in the acceleration of positive and negative thoughts.

Just imagine a man is awakened at 5:00AM by his smart phone. However, at 5:00 AM his phone does not appear to be too smart. Immediately an automatic negative thought(ANT’s) pops into his frontal lobe telling him, he is tired and should go back to sleep. It is going to be a terrible day; after all, it is Monday. As he reaches to shut off his alarm, his daily calendar is aglow with activities. Sixteen items appear. At the top of his “To Do” list is a reminder to pay


25 Amen, Magnificent Mind at Any Age, 13.

26 Ibid., 28.
three overdue bills, but he has no money to pay them, at least until his next paycheck. Even worst, at 9:15 AM, he is to meet with his boss for a quarterly evaluation; at his last review; his boss berated him and gave him an unsatisfactory first quarter review. What a depressing thought he thinks. As he rolls out of bed, in the pitch dark, he stubs his toe on the side of his nightstand. Ouch! As he reaches down to grab his left toe, he hops on his right foot toward the bath room, into his third hop, he trips over the clothes basket and falls flat on his face still holding onto his right toe. With shag carpet in his nostrils, and a major rug burn on his face, he hears his wife bark, “Harry, don’t turn on the light, I’m still trying to sleep, and don’t forget to take out the trash before going to work. You forgot to set it out last week and it stayed in the garage for two weeks. It smelled horrible.”

By 5:05 AM, even before he begins to dress for work, his five senses have triggered an avalanche of negative thoughts emotionally coloring his day as another melancholy Monday. Being lead by the five senses, can lead a Christian astray emotionally down a one-way street called Blue Monday. Perhaps this is why the Bible tells Christians to walk by faith and not by sight?

Source #3: Self-Talk

Third, self-talk contributes to the origin of thoughts. Self-talk has to do with the running internal dialogue that each person encounters on a daily basis. Self-talk plays a defining role in the thoughts people experience daily and contributes to self-perception. For example, if children grow up hearing repeatedly that they are unwanted, unloved and worthless, subconsciously and over time consciously those children will begin to believe it to be true. They will develop and internal dialog which says, “I am worthless” and I am unworthy of love.” Wright refers to these thoughts as automatic thoughts. “Automatic thoughts are learned. We listen to others and what
they say about us, and we believe the statements. And what is more, we tend to become what we believe.” 27 This is why the Bible affirms, “For as he [a man] thinks within himself, so he is.” 28 If the self-talk is negative, it will generate negative thoughts and feelings, conversely, if the self-talk is positive, it will generate positive thoughts and feelings.

**Source #4: Specific Events**

Fourth, one’s thoughts are generated by specific events. Specific events may trigger a myriad of negative thoughts. The CBT model maintains that events cause thoughts and thoughts produce feelings. 29 Those specific events, positive, negative, or neutral may include any one or more of the following: events that may have caused a chemical imbalance in the brain, 30 brain injuries, 31 personality traits, ADD/ADHD and other genetic or emotional vulnerabilities, adrenal fatigue, prolong periods of stress and anxiety, failures, disappointing news, a break up, or years of financial strain. 32 On the other hand, positive events tend to generate a plethora of positive thoughts and feelings such as, an engagement, a wedding, a job promotion, the birth of a child, the safe return of a loved one from a military tour, the purchase of a new home, winning the lottery, a beautiful sunset, or great sex with your spouse. Such events generate a flood of positive thoughts and emotions.

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28 The Holy Bible, Proverbs 23:7, NASB.


Source #5: Spiritual Factors

Fifth, are the spiritual factors. The spiritual factors have been categorized in a four-fold manner: God, Satan, the unregenerate flesh, and heart. The spiritual factors will be addressed in the aforesaid chronological order. From the beginning of creation God spoke to Adam verbally or through his thoughts. According to Genesis Chapter 3, God would meet daily with Adam in the cool of the day in the Garden of Eden. It was perhaps during these evening meetings that God communicated to Adam his role and responsibilities as the chief curator of the Garden of Eden. Just as God spoke to Adam in times past, He also speaks to his children today. Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice.”33 All true believers were first drawn to faith in Christ because of the spiritual thoughts the Father used to influence their minds.

The following verses underscore God’s adroitness in influencing the thoughts of believers through the second person of the Godhead the Holy Spirit. God primarily speaks to His children, not so much through audible instruction, but through His written instructions in His word the Bible. Observe the following verse, “Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.”34 Through the Scriptures, Believers are instructed what kind of things to think about. “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.”35 God speaks though his word instructing us to set our affections on Him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with your entire mind, and with all your strength.”36

33 The Holy Bible, John 10:27, NASB.
34 The Holy Bible, Luke 24:25, NASB.
35 The Holy Bible, Philippians 4:8, NASB.
36 The Holy Bible, Mark 12:30; Matthew 22:37, NASB.
emotions, kidneys and the mind are used interchangeably, to refer to the human seat of emotions.\(^{37}\) The closer Christians walk in loving fellowship with God, the more inclined they are to hear the still small voice of God. God speaks through the thoughts of Christians in order to renew their minds.

A second spiritual factor that contributes to the proliferation of negative thoughts is Satan. Satan spoke to Eve and manipulated her thoughts causing her to disobey the command of God (Genesis 3). Satan impelled Eve to disbelief the goodness of God by causing her to think that God was selfishly withholding something good from her by forbidding her to eat the forbidden fruit. The serpent said to the woman,

> You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.\(^{38}\)

It is noteworthy to observe that Satan did not coerce Eve into disobeying God. He simply influenced her thinking, which affected her emotions and attitude, which in turn, produced her disobedient behavior. Observe how later that day God found Adam and Eve hiding and said to Adam, “Who told you that you were naked?” \(^{39}\) Such a question by God, underscores the fact that Satan speaks verbally and intuitively through the thoughts he plants in the minds of believers and unbelievers alike. The following verses illustrate diverse ways in which Satan manipulates the thoughts and minds of believers and non-believers alike. For example, Satan manipulated Judas to betray Christ. “During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas

\(^{37}\) Don Colbert, *Deadly Emotions*, 44.

\(^{38}\) The Holy Bible, Genesis 3:4-6, NASB.

\(^{39}\) The Holy Bible, Genesis 3:11, NASB.
Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him.”

In addition, Satan beguiled Ananias to lie to Peter and church elders, “Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land?” At the beginning of Jesus earthly ministry, God lead Christ, into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil… And the tempter came and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.’

A third spiritual factor that generates negative thoughts and emotions is the unregenerated flesh. According to Galatians 2:20, Christians, although spiritually born again with the nature of God, their sinful flesh is still actively pursuing its evil cravens and desires. A cursory review of the following scriptures attests to the lure of the unregenerated flesh. Concerning the flesh, the Apostle Paul wrote, “For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.” Further illustrating the total depravity of our flesh, Paul warns Christians to, “…put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.” The Believer makes provision for his flesh, when they mentally muse over sinful thoughts. Instead of dwelling upon evil thoughts induced by their sinful flesh, they are encouraged to, “

Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery,

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40 The Holy Bible, John 13:2; Luke 22:3-4, NASB.
41 The Holy Bible, Acts 5:3, NASB.
42 The Holy Bible, Matthew 4:1-4. NASB.
43 The Holy Bible, Romans 7:18, NASB.
44 The Holy Bible, Roman 13:14, NASB.
enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 45

Accommodating the flesh by engaging in one’s sin of choice will always result in feelings of shame, guilt, self-condemnation, and feelings of worthlessness. Sin produces death not life.

The fourth and final spiritual factor that generates a plethora of negative thoughts is the sinful unregenerated heart. Born Again Christians, at salvation, receive a new heart, 46 but the unsaved, unregenerated sinners have sinful hearts that they inherited from their father Adam. Concerning the heart of man, the Bible says, “The heart is deceitfully wicked above all else who can understand it.” 47 In juxtaposition to the Bible’s analysis of the heart, the world encourages Christians and Non Christians alike to follow their hearts. However, the unregenerated heart cannot be trusted.

Prior to the flood, God gives a commentary on the state of man’s heart. “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” 48 Hence, God caused the great flood to destroy mankind, save Noah and his family.

Jesus, in one of his many encounters with the self-righteous, evil hearted Pharisees, asked, ‘Why are you thinking evil in your hearts?’ 49 Christ goes on to say, “For out of the heart

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45 The Holy Bible, Galatians 5:16-21; Romans 8:5-8. NASB.
46 The Holy Bible, 2Corinthians 5:17, NASB.
47 The Holy Bible, Jeremiah 17:9, NASB.
48 The Holy Bible, Genesis 6:5, NASB.
49 The Holy Bible, Matthew 9:4, NASB.
come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.” From the aforementioned verses, it becomes clear that subsequent to the fall, and the introduction of sin into the world, Adam’s innocence was lost and his heart was defiled and darkened by sin. Because of Adam’s federal headship, when he sinned, all humans inherited his sinful nature.

**Source #6: Secularism (World-view)**

The sixth, source of thoughts is secularism. Webster defines secularism as “a system of doctrines and practices that disregards and rejects any form of religious faith and worship.” The Scriptures refer to secularism as a worldview that excludes God. The world entices and bombards the minds of people with pictures, products, and the possibility to indulge fleshly desires with little to no regard for the consequences. When subscribing to a secular worldview, it matters not what God decrees since human judgment replaces the judgment of God. Therefore people feel free to do as they well please without permission from God. Hence, Christians are admonished in Scripture to shun this secular worldview along with its evil practices:

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

This world system, that leaves God out does so because,”… the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” Hence, Believers are encouraged to “… not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that

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50 The Holy Bible, Matthew 15:19, NASB.


52 The Holy Bible, 1John 2:15-17, NASB.

53 The Holy Bible, 1John 5:19, NASB.
which is good and acceptable and perfect.” 54 Because of the evils of this world, we are encouraged to reject its philosophies.

**Source #7: Social Interactions**

The seventh source of human thoughts is from social contacts and social interactions. Interactions with people, who are loving, supporting, affirming, and overall positive, will inspire positive thoughts and feelings in others. However, if people interface with negative, critical, racist, small minded and judgmental acquaintances, their criticisms and negativity will generate negative thoughts in themselves and others. Christians, who habitually associate with negative people, may profit from a word to the wise from Mr. George Herbert, “He that lies with the dogs, riseth with fleas.” 55 If one’s closest friends are “Negaholics”, they will reproduce after their own kind. For this reason, the Bible says, “Bad company corrupts good morals.” 56 While it is not always possible choose whom people will keep company, have to socially interact with, they can choose to self-regulate their thoughts to nullify the negative effects of negative social interactions.

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54 The Holy Bible, Romans 12:2 see also James 1:27 and 2Peter 1:4 , NASB.

55 Peter McWilliams, *You Can’t Afford the Luxury of a Negative Thought.* (CA: Prelude Press. 1995), 355.

56 The Holy Bible, 1Corinthians 5:51, NASB.
Chapter 3

Thought Management 201: The Twenty-one Day Plan

Week 1

Thought Chemistry 101

You are today where your thoughts have brought you;
you will be tomorrow where your thoughts take you.
James Allen

Day 1

Ready or Not?

Welcome to an exciting and dynamic mind renewal and thought transforming personal adventure. The goal of the project is twofold: First, identify your negative thoughts and their origins and triggers. Second, equip you with the skills to learn to shape your thoughts rather than your thoughts shaping you. Thus, God will be able to renew your mind according to biblical truth, and transform it into the mind of Christ, which replaces old negative thought patterns with life changing positivity.

There are three significant discoveries about people that are worth knowing: Primarily, people do not enjoy being negative; they are that way because of stress the pressures of life, fear, and busyness. In addition, most people will modify their negative thinking patterns once they acquire the knowledge and confidence to do so. Finally, many people fail to change or relapse back into negative thinking patterns because of a taunting inner voice telling them, “You will never change” and reminding them of previous failed attempts to change. Their inner voice derides them saying, “Things will never get any better for you, so why bother to try.” Your

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thoughts are keeping you from changing.\textsuperscript{2} The devil likes to get into your head before you get out of bed. Therefore, sit up on the bed with both feet planted squarely on the floor, strap on your spiritual armor, and get ready to rumble. You are going to eradicate a plethora of toxic thoughts beginning today.

This study is entitled, “How to Over Come The Five Negative Thought Patterns”. Your private thought life is critical to your emotional, psychological, physical, sociological, intellectual, and spiritual development.\textsuperscript{3} For this reason, the scriptures affirm, “For as he [a man] thinks within himself, so he is.” \textsuperscript{4} It is imperative that you learn to monitor and self-regulate your thoughts. Think about this question, “Are you shaping your thoughts, or are your thoughts shaping you?” Do you now see why Scripture admonishes Christians to learn to “take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” \textsuperscript{5} This twenty-one day plan holds the key that unlocks negative thoughts that result in toxic emotions such as anger, fear, regret, sadness and depression. Get ready for an exciting adventure that can change the way you think forever. The prerequisites for participating in the twenty-one day plan include completing and signing the online consent form and the pre-assessment inventory on the project website. \textsuperscript{6}

Perhaps you are wondering, why a twenty-one day plan versus a ten or thirty-day plan? It is a twenty-one day plan because that is how long it takes the brain to rewire itself to create a new mental habit.\textsuperscript{7} The brain can neurologically change within four days, yet it takes twenty-one

\textsuperscript{2} Hart, Habits of the Mind, 5.

\textsuperscript{3} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{4} The Holy Bible, Proverbs 23:7, NASB.

\textsuperscript{5} The Holy Bible, 2Corinthinas 10:5, NASB.

\textsuperscript{6} www.thinkrightliveright.com.

\textsuperscript{7} Leaf, Who Switched Off My Brain?,80.
days for that change to become permanent. Keep in mind, mind renewal is an ongoing process. Because it is a process, here is what you can expect: “The first four days will be the most difficult. The fifth through the twenty-first days will become easier as you progress. By the time the twenty-first day, you will feel a marked change.” To affect the type of desired change in your thought life, you will need to practice the thought management exercises at least seven times a day. It is acceptable to exceed seven times per day. The more you practice, the quicker you will change. The ultimate goal of the practice exercises is to introduce the information needed to form a new mental habit. Negative thinking habits must be replaced with positive thinking habits. To maintain the new positive thought patterns after completing the twenty-one days, you will need to continue regulating your thoughts and applying the thought management techniques acquired.

If you are willing to commit to the plan and process, the project could have a profound effect on renewing your mind and transforming your life. The plan simply offers the participants a better way to think. Do you struggle with your thought life? It is exceedingly probable that you do. “Research indicates as much as 75% of everything we think is negative, counterproductive, and works against us; approximately 87% of illnesses can be attributed to our thought life, and 13% to diet, genetics and environment.” Such findings underscore the fact that you cannot afford the luxury of another negative thought. This twenty-one day plan holds the key to your freedom from negative thoughts, but only if you really want to change your way of thinking.

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9 Ibid., 15.
Jesus asked the crippled man at the pool of Bethesda “Do you wish to get well?” You may have agreed to participate in this study, but are you truly sick and tired of your negative toxic thought life? Are you willing to tolerate it another day, month, year, or several more years? The crippled man lay at the pool for thirty-eight years. Do you want to be healed of your chronic propensity toward negativity in your thought life? Or are you going to allow yourself to tenaciously hold on to your “negaholic” ways?

Well, before you can answer the question, do you really want to change? You need to identify where you are in the stages of change in order to access if you are committed to change. Read the stages of change below. Subsequent to reading the stages of change, you may well obtain a realistic assessment of the probability of successfully altering the way you think.

**Stage 1.** Precontemplation—no intention of changing behavior. **Stage 2.** Contemplation—aware a problem exists, but no commitment to action. **Stage 3.** Preparation—intent upon taking action. **Stage 4.** Action—active modification of behavior. **Step 5.** Maintenance—sustained change; new behaviors replacing old. **Stage 6.** Relapse—fall back into old patterns of behaviors.

To successfully make the changes in this twenty-one day plan, it would be helpful for you to be in Stages 3 or above. Where are you on the stages of the change graphic? Circle a stage.

Stage 1  Stage 2  Stage 3  Stage 4  Stage 5  Stage 6

**Stage 6** is especially significant because relapse and failure are necessary steps toward any path to change. Once you fall, your levels of commitment and maturity are demonstrated in your willingness to get back up and try again. The psalmist connotes the trials of Christians are many, yet the believer will overcome them. “For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again.”

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10 The Holy Bible, John 5:6, NASB.

11 [http://media.psychology.tools/Worksheets/English/Unhelpful_Thinking_Styles.pdf](http://media.psychology.tools/Worksheets/English/Unhelpful_Thinking_Styles.pdf)

12 The Holy Bible, Proverbs 24:17, NASB.
In Christ, you have been made righteous. You have the right stuff. Jesus is with you and He is there to pick you up each time you fall. He desires to heal you just as he did the lame man in John 5.

Notice that the lame man never answered Jesus’ question “Do you wish to get well?” Nevertheless, Jesus healed him anyway. You may not be all that resolute in your decision, but learn this one thing from the story; you may have a hole in your resolve, but know that Jesus will supply everything you lack. As you approach this twenty-one day plan, do not approach it from a demand mindset thinking you must read the Bible, memorize scripture, and read the latest brain research. Rather than seeing the assignments as a demand, approach them from a supply standpoint of view. Believe Jesus will supply His grace for whatever is lacking in you to complete the plan. Depend on the all sufficient grace of Jesus to empower you to transform your thinking. Do not think demand, think supply. This will take pressure off you and relax. Jesus has sought you out for divine healing like the blind man, be faithful to show up at the right place every day, and Jesus will supply you with the grace to do the rest.

If you are committed and ready to move forward, congratulations! Your commitment is essential because each lesson will require your full participation. Resist the temptation to skip the exercises, Bible studies or reflective questions. Omitting questions may compromise the effectiveness of the study. Allow God through this study to do amazing things in your life as you grant Him full access to your mind, will, and emotions. You will be glad you did! To enhance the effectiveness of the plan, you should use a personal journal/notebook to record your responses to the assignments.

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13 The Holy Bible, John 5:6, NASB.
Thought Starters:

Read Psalm 139:23-24. Then, answer the following:

1. I have been known to struggle with thoughts of ________________________________

2. Write down two to three personal improvements you would like to make in your thought life.
   I would like to learn how to ________________________________

3. The benefits of the twenty-one day plan are that it offers you a better way to think, by teaching you to self-regulate your thoughts, renew their minds, and transform their thoughts. The plan will require a 15-20 minutes to complete each lesson. Write down when you plan to read your daily lesson. This can be accomplished by setting your alarm to remind you to do the lesson.

   Write down where you will study daily. Whenever or wherever you plan to complete the daily plan, in the early morning, on your lunch break, or in the evening at home, write the time and diligently adhere to the plan.

I plan to read daily at__________ (time) in /at __________(place) seven days per week.

Assignment:

1. If you have not done so, make sure you go to the website:  
   www.thinkrightliveright.com
   and sign the consent form and take the pre-assessment inventory, and then press submit. This information will be forwarded to the researcher.

2. Read Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:1-3; Psalm 119:11, 97. What are the benefits or rewards of Scriptural meditation? ________________________________

3. Using your favorite Bible translation or version, write Philippians 4:6 on several 3 x 5 cards (just as shown below) and begin to memorize it. Carry one copy of the memory verse with you to read, and post the others visibly throughout your house to remind you to practice reading and saying them (ex. bathroom mirror, refrigerator, desk at work)
Week 1

Thought Chemistry 101

“We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts, we make our world.”  The Buddha

Day 2

It’s the Thought that Counts Part 1

Welcome to day two. Have you considered that fact that your every action is preceded by a thought? Many people are unaware of that fact. Thoughts rule our lives positively and, negatively. It all begins with a thought. Hence, today’s lesson is entitled; It’s the Thought that Counts. Today we will discover the powerful impact our thoughts have on our brains, emotions, attitudes, and behavior. Charles Swindoll describes the power of thoughts:

Thoughts, positive or negative, grow stronger together when fertilized with constant repetition. That may explain why so many who are gloomy and gray stay in that mood, and why others who are cheery and enthusiastic continue to be so, even in the midst of difficult circumstances. Please do not misunderstand me. Happiness (like winning) is a matter of right thinking, not intelligence, age or position. Our performance is directly related to the thoughts we deposit in our memory bank. We can only draw on what we deposit. What kind of performance would your car deliver if every morning before you left for work you scooped up a handful of dirt and put it in your crankcase? The fine tuned engine would soon be coughing and sputtering. Ultimately, it would refuse to start. The same is true of your life. Thoughts about yourself and attitudes toward others that are narrow, destructive and abrasive produce wear and tear on your mental motor. They send you off the road while others drive past.

The failure of many to recognize the correlation between thoughts and feelings has caused many to become pitiful pawns of the ebbs and flows of emotions. Hence, to address this conspicuous irrationality, this twenty-one day plan has been designed to equip you with the skills to learn how to identify, manage, and substantially reduce your negative thoughts.

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14 Robbins, Awaken the Giant Within, 96.

15 Swindoll, Come Before Winter, 29.
What Are Thoughts

Dr. H. Norman Wright defines a thought in the following manner:

A thought is the way in which we are conscious of things. They are made up of memories, our perceptions, and our beliefs. They are glimpses, even snippets, of ideas…Sometimes they pass fleetingly, barely noticed. Sometimes they come sharply into focus. Our thoughts determine the orientation of everything we do. They evoke the feelings that frame our world and motivate our actions. And they have the power to change the way we feel.\(^{16}\)

Wright underscores the direct correlation between our thoughts and feeling. Perhaps the following acrostic will assist you in remembering this all important truth: T.E.A=B. Thoughts stimulate Emotions and Attitudes that result in Behavior. T.E.A=B. T.E.A=B. T.E.A=B.

Remember it. Pronounce it TB. It is analogous to the tuberculosis shots of old. Try to imagine each thought as a hypodermic syringe being injected into the brain affecting everything you think, feel, and do.

Thought Starter

1. Think about a number of things you might be feeling down about today. Based on what you know about the T.E.A=B., what is causing you to feel that way emotionally? I am feeling this way because of the things I am______________ about.

2. What other thoughts could you think that would change your emotions? Instead, I could think about_______________________________________________________________________

Remember: If you go through the motions, the e-motions will follow.

How Many Thoughts in a Given Day?

How many thoughts does the average person think in a given day? “A number of years ago the National Science Foundation estimated that the human brain produce as many as 12,000 to 50,000 thoughts per day depending on how 'deep' a thinker the individual proves to be (other

\(^{16}\) Wright, \textit{A Better Way to Think}, 12.
estimates run as high as 60,000 per day).” However, the brain does not process all thoughts and not all thoughts are new. Because the brain is such a creature of habit, researchers believe that many thoughts are carried over from day to day. Furthermore, it is believed “the vast majority of them are pure nonsense. We often dwell in the past or the future, obsessing about mistakes we might have made, battling guilt, planning ahead or worrying. We are constantly drifting into fantasy, fiction and negativity.” This research finding underscores growing Christians need to learn to monitor and self-regulate their thoughts lest they find themselves mired in the marshes of negativity, as the more positive thinkers drive by.

**Thought Starters**

1. In Psalm 42:5-11, David is talking to himself about his downcast emotions. He asks himself, “Why are you in despair, of my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? The soul refers to your mind, will and emotions. How does David use his thoughts in verses 4, 5b, 6, 8, 11b, to turn his emotions around? _______________________________

2. To whom does David turn when he is emotionally down? __________________

3. What do we learn from David’s example? ____________

4. It is believed “the vast majority of [our thoughts] them are pure nonsense. We often dwell in the past or the future, obsessing about mistakes we might have made, battling guilt, planning ahead or worrying. We are constantly drifting into fantasy, fiction and negativity.” Do you find this quote revelatory, shocking, amusing, or all three? Yes or no Explain. _______________

**Assignment:**

1. Continue to memorize Philippians 4:6. Quote the verse to yourself, several times daily until you have it memorized. You have no new verses until week two. In week two you will begin memorizing Philippians 4:7. Carry the card with you everywhere you go.


18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.
Perhaps you can make several cards and place one in your car, kitchen refrigerator, your computer screen at work and at home and do not forget the bathroom.

2. Keep remembering the see saw illustration of the brain and balancing negative thoughts.

3. As you experience an array of emotions today, pause long enough to identify the thoughts you are thinking that have caused you to experience the emotion. Keep a thought record in your journal, to help you begin to tract your thoughts.

4. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to renew your mind and transform your thoughts as He empowers you to do ALL the things entailed in this twenty-one day plan.

**Week 1**

**Thought Chemistry 101**

*All that a man achieves and all that he fails to achieve is the direct result of his own thoughts.*

*James Allen*

**Day 3**

*It’s the Thought that Counts! Part 2*

Welcome to day three. In light of the fact that our negative thoughts tend to outnumber our positive at a ratio of three to one or 75%, it begs the question what is the origin of negative thoughts. As humorous as it may sound, the genesis of negative thoughts finds its origin in the Book of Genesis. Here is recorded an intriguing conversation between two most unlikely characters: a talking serpent and a woman named Eve, the wife of Adam. Satan embodied a serpent and spoke to Eve. He manipulated Eve’s thoughts convincing her to disobey the cardinal commandment of God to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The serpent said to the woman,

You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her,
and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. (Genesis 3:4-7).

It is noteworthy to observe that Satan did not coerce Eve into disobeying God. He simply manipulated her thinking, which affected her emotions and attitude, which in turn, produced her disobedient behavior. Observe the progression, T.E.A.=B. Satan impelled Eve to question the goodness of God by causing her to think that God was selfishly withholding something good from her by forbidding her to eat the forbidden fruit. Later that day, God looked for Adam and Eve and lovingly asked them why they did not keep their prescribed appointment with Him. The scene opens,

They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” He said, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.” And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.” Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” And the woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

20 The Holy Bible, Genesis 3:8-13, NASB.

Thought Starters

1. Reexamine the text and see if you are capable of identifying specific and implied toxic emotions as indicated by the words and actions of Adam and Eve. Write them in the space provided as they appear in the text.

v. 10 We see Fear and g________ t and sh________________e.

2. What happens to the relationship between Adam and Eve? What did they begin doing to one another? (v,12) ____________________________

3. Whom does Eve blame? ____________________________

______________________
4. Whom does Adam blame? ______________________________

5. More negative thoughts erupt as evidenced in Cain killing his brother Abel in Genesis 4. For someone to kill his brother it does not take a great deal of imagination to figure out the kind of heinous thoughts Cain must have been thinking. __________________________

From the aforementioned passages, it becomes clear that subsequent to the fall, and the introduction of sin into the world, Adam’s innocence was lost and his heart was defiled and darkened by sin. Because of Adam’s federal headship, when he sinned, all mankind inherited his sinful nature. Observe God’s critique, “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” 21 In light of the negative impact of sin on your thoughts, you shall now learn how positive and negative thoughts impact your brain.

**How the Brain Processes Thoughts**

How the brain processes thoughts is fascinating. “Thoughts are basically electrical impulses, chemicals, and neurons.”22 The human brain is made up of approximately 100 billion (100,000,000,000) neurons.23 Despite their vast number, they travel through the brain at the speed of 268 miles per hour.24

According to Wright and Leaf, “Thoughts follow specific pathways in the brain. When a thought occurs, the part of the brain called the thalamus goes to work making sense of the information and running it through the part of the brain that stores memories, the amygdala.” 25

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21 The Holy Bible, Genesis 6: 5, NASB.
24 Ibid.
The thalamus works as the central processing unit (CPU). The amygdala works as the random access memory (RAM). “The amygdala is much like a library and is responsible for the first emotional response to any thought. It activates and arouses you to do something.”

It is in the amygdala’s database that your thoughts take on emotions or feeling. For example, a company executive made the decision to close a division in which you worked because it was not generating enough profits; thus all employees were offered a compensation package and immediately released. That event would be stored in your amygdala’s database. Each time you think about that event, the thalamus carries that thought to your amygdala your emotional memory bank of the event. If you felt being laid off was the best thing that could have happened because it led to you finding your dream job or starting your own business, your emotional memory would be one of immense joy, gratitude, or satisfaction.

However, if you felt your layoff was unjustifiable in light of the many years you contributed to the company’s success, you would probably feel grave emotional pain. The amygdala would route your thoughts to a negative painful place in your memory bank. Those painful memories will release toxic chemicals into your brain and your body. These toxic thoughts would result in a toxic attitude, which would produce some form of toxic behavior. This is the process of how the brain interacts with thoughts to produce emotions, attitudes and behaviors.

**Thought Starters:**

1. Everyone emotional wounds and scars filed away in their emotional libraries. Without dredging up all the negative emotions, think about one or two experience that tap into a plethora of your worst emotions. ____________________________________________________________

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2. The Bible in the book of Hebrews commands believers to guard their emotions and, “See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled.” 27 In your opinion, could the writer be referencing the amygdala? Explain __________________________________________

3. Whom do you need to forgive; can you see how these negative memories are causing a plethora of negative thought and toxic emotions? ____________________________________

Assignment:

1. Continue to memorize Philippians 4:6. Quote the verse to yourself, several times daily until you have it memorized. You have no new verses until week two. In week two you will begin memorizing Philippians 4:7. Carry the card with you everywhere you go. Perhaps you can make several cards and place one in your car, kitchen refrigerator, your computer screen at work and at home and do not forget the bathroom.

2. Keep remembering the seesaw illustration of the brain and balancing negative thoughts.

3. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to renew your mind and transform your thoughts as He empowers you to do ALL the things entailed in this twenty-one day plan.

Week 1

Thought Chemistry 101

*Man is obviously made for thinking. Therein lies all his dignity and his merit; and his whole duty is to think as he ought.*

*Blaise Pascal*

Day 4

*Your Thoughts Have the Power to Rewire Your Brain*

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27 The Holy Bible, Hebrews 12:15, NASB.
Congratulations! You are about to complete your fourth day of the first seven days of the twenty-one day plan. I trust you are finding the plan helpful. Today’s lesson will be devoted to how your thoughts change your brain.

Whether you realize it or not, your thoughts not only affect your health, your character and self-esteem, but they also possess the ability to change your brain. The technical term for how thoughts change the brain is brain plasticity or neuroplasticity. According to Dr. Laurence Tancredi, “neuroplasticity…refers to the ability of neurons at the synapses to forge new connections, thereby essentially bringing about a rewiring of the brain. Neuroplasticity results not only in the setting down of new pathways through the cortex, but also the remodeling of neural networks.”

To restate it in laymen terms, each time you think a new thought, have a new idea, get more educated in a given area, learn the words to a new song, or receive any instruction in moral conduct, it forges a new neurological pathway in your brain. The more you repeat a given behavior, the more it becomes deeply rooted in your brain. To paraphrase, Proverbs 23:7, “As a man thinks, so he will become.” Your thoughts are so commanding that they literally have the power to rewire your brain.

Individuals who consistently engage in any sort of dangerous or addictive behavior, such as drugs, sex, gambling, or pornography, they do so because it is a matter of neuroplasticity. Dr. Tancredi maintains,

What often starts as an innocent experiment—drinking alcohol, or smoking pot—can develop over time into compulsive, addictive behavior. Patterns that are repeated over time become wired in the brain and body...substantiating the fact that the human brain is forever changing growing an adapting to new stimuli and information. The brain

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changes, adapts because of the development of new circuitry, and induces more and more of the bad behavior.\textsuperscript{30}

Metaphorically speaking, you should think of the brain’s neuropathways as a giant mix master. Each time you think new thoughts or engage in repetitive behaviors, you are starting construction of a new mental speed lane in your brain adding another lane to the mental mix master in your brain.

Have you ever wondered why you are able to multitask? It is because of the innumerable neuropathways in your brain. Thus, you can drive your car barreling around a curve at 65mph, while talking on your cell phone, all the while looking out for police officers, as you enjoy eating a juicy chicken sandwich. Simultaneously, your stomach acids are systematically digesting your sandwich, as you listen to your favorite worship song on your iPod. The reason you are able to multitask is because your thoughts and actions run on their own separate neurological grid. One part of the brain responds to one’s words, another part to what one sees, another to what one feels, and another to what one tastes.\textsuperscript{31} Amazing!

To demonstrate the power of neuroplasticity, Dr. Edward Taub at the University of Alabama Has developed a novel technique that utilizes the brain’s capacity for neuroplasticity. When a particular limb is affected by a stroke, he immobilized the functioning limb, thus forcing the patient to use the injured limb, resulting in brain rewiring and ultimate restoration of the damaged limb to a functioning level.\textsuperscript{32}

The brain has an awesome ability to adapt, change, and rewire itself to adapt to new information and the new realities it experiences. This truth underscores the truth found in the

\textsuperscript{30} Tancredi, \textit{Hardwired Behavior}, 43.


\textsuperscript{32} Tancredi, \textit{Hardwired Behavior}, 44.
sacred scriptures, “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind”\textsuperscript{33} or “As a man thinks, so he will become.”\textsuperscript{34}

According to Verghese, “It is important to remember that the brain’s plasticity enables the believer to continually modify personality and behavior into Christ-likeness.”\textsuperscript{35} He goes on to prove through his research and that of others that “a rewiring of the brain [in the frontal cortex, the anterior cingulate cortex, and the hippocampus,\textsuperscript{36} occurs with verbal treatment as well as with medications. Moral training, which can involve processes similar to CBT…as well as lectures and reading, therefore offers the opportunity to bring about beneficial neuroplastic changes.”\textsuperscript{37}

Were you aware of how easy it is to rewire your brain?

\textbf{Thought Starters:}

1. No doubt because of the power of the written and spoken word to change the brain, attitudes and behaviors, we find the following imperatives in the sacred scriptures:

   A. “Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction”\textsuperscript{38}

Explain its impact in rewiring the brain. ______________________________________

\textsuperscript{33} The Holy Bible, Romans 12:2, NASB.

\textsuperscript{34} The Holy Bible, Proverbs 27:7, NLT.

\textsuperscript{35} Verghese, Brain Power, 68.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{38} The Holy Bible, 2 Timothy 4:2, NASB.
B. “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.”

2. How does Scripture memory rewire the brain? Explain. ________________________

It is for this reason that the memorization of scripture, Bible mantras, and continual learning about how the brain functions is all a part of the twenty-one day plan. By so doing, you are changing your brain. We can with constant repetition, create new neuropathways in the brain to create new habits.

As believers in Christ, we have the responsibility to take on the mind of Christ by the process of brain plasticity; God has made it possible for us to renew and change our minds (Romans 12:2). You have the onus to work along with the Holy Spirit as he transforms our minds into the mind of Christ (1Cor. 2:16b). This is accomplished through surrender of your will to God’s will, the ingestion, and the memorization of the word because it encourages neuron and neural connections to foster spiritual transformation. It was the Apostle Paul who said. “be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” You will learn to love the Scriptures.

Assignment:

1. Continue to memorize Philippians 4:6. Quote the verse to yourself, several times daily until you have it memorized. You have no new verses until week two. In week two you will begin memorizing Philippians 4:7. Carry the card with you everywhere you go. Perhaps you can make several cards and place one in your car, kitchen refrigerator, your computer screen at work and at home and do not forget the bathroom.

2. Review and memorize what T.E.A.=B stands for.

39 The Holy Bible, Joshua 1:8, NASB.

40 Verghese, Brain Power, 68.

41 The Holy Bible, Romans 12:2, NASB.
3. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to renew your mind and transform your thoughts as He empowers you to do ALL the things entailed in this twenty-one day plan.

**Week 1**

**Thought Chemistry101**

*It is not enough to have a good mind.*  
*The main thing is to use it well.*  
**Rene Descartes**

**Day 5**

**Managing Your Thoughts and Emotions Part 1**

Welcome to day five. Thank you for coming back and following through on the quality decision you made previously. You will be glad you did! You have only sixteen lessons to go to experience a breakthrough that could change the way you think—FOREVER. Here goes! Use your imagination to think back to the time when you were in grade school riding on the seesaw. Have you gotten that image firmly planted in your mind’s eye?

The author will now a share a personal example to illustrate the seesaw. “Speaking for myself, as a child in grade school, playing on the seesaw was a scary proposition. You see, I was an undersized child in grade school. Speaking of “Pee Wee” Herman, I was the original “Pee Wee” Paulie. Ironically, my best friend was the biggest guy in school, Mikey Allen. How big was Mikey? Have you ever watched Bill Cosby’s The Fat Albert Show? Mikey was Fat Albert incarnate. Mikey enjoyed riding the seesaw. Imagine Big Mikey and “Pee Wee” Paulie on the see saw together. Mikey tipping the scale at 80 plus in the second grade, and I’m all of 40 pounds soaking wet. When Mikey sat on the one end, I was catapulted to the top, feet dangling; I appeared to be three stories high. With some coaching, Mikey would let me down safely, on most occasions, but if the school bell rang, when he was in the down position, he would pivot off
immediately and make a bee line for the school house door to be the first in line. In a split second, I’d come crashing to the ground. My skinny knees were too weak to absorb the shock of hitting the ground; I’d come crashing down to the ground with a 2x10 firmly affixed in my buttocks.” You may ask what does this have to do with the brain and controlling your emotions. This seesaw illustration is the crux of the twenty-one day plan. Grasps this see saw concept and you have mastered seventy-five percent of the material in this plan.

The Brain’s Thought Manager

Drs. Newberg and Waldman in their book, *How God Changes Your Brain*, explain how your thoughts are regulated within your brain. They suggest imagining the brain divided into two halves. Imagine one-half of the brain which deals with logic or reason is technically called the frontal lobe and the other half of the brain that controls feelings and emotions is called the limbic system. “The anterior cingulate acts as a kind of fulcrum that controls and balances the activity between the frontal lobe and limbic system.”

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**Figure 1**: Anterior Cingulate (AC)

According to Newberg and Waldman, the aim of every healthy individual is to have a healthy and strong anterior cingulate in order to keep cognitive reasoning in proper balance with emotions so that humans may be able to maintain a healthy balanced state of mind. When the

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emotional laden limbic system is frenetically charged, it totally shuts down all logical and reasoning capacities in the frontal lobe, rendering a person as a pitiful pawn of uncontrolled emotions.\textsuperscript{44}

An imbalance in the limbic system can create an overly emotional amygdala as described in the following true illustration about a man called Nick.\textsuperscript{45} Nick was an overly pessimistic minded railroad yard worker, who chronically feared (limbic system) something bad was going to happen to him. One day, Nick’s worst fears were confirmed; he accidently locked himself inside a refrigerated rail car.

One summer day, the crews were told that they could go home an hour early in order to celebrate the birthday of one of the foremen. All the workers left, but somehow Nick accidentally locked himself in a refrigerated boxcar that had been brought into the yard for maintenance. The boxcar was empty and not connected to any of the trains. When Nick realized that he was locked in the refrigerated boxcar, he panicked. Nick began beating on the doors so hard that his arms and fist became bloody. He screamed and screamed, but his coworkers had already gone home to get ready for the party. Nobody could hear Nick’s desperate calls for help. Again and again he called out, until finally his voice was a raspy whisper. Aware he was in a refrigerated boxcar, Nick guessed that the temperature in the unit was well below freezing, maybe as low as five or ten degrees Fahrenheit. Nick feared the worst. He thought,” What am I going to do? If I don’t get out of here, I’m going to freeze to death. There’s no way I can stay in here all night.” The more he thought about the circumstances, the colder he became. With the door shut tightly, and no apparent way of escape, he sat down to await his inevitable death by

\textsuperscript{44} Newberg and Waldman, \textit{How God Changes Your Brain}, 126.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
freezing or suffocation, whichever came first. To pass the time, he decided to chronicle his demise. He found a pen in his shirt pocket and noticed an old piece of cardboard in the corner of the car. Shivering almost uncontrollably, he scribbled a message to his family. In it, Nick denoted his demise prospects: ‘Getting so cold. Body numb. If I don’t get out soon, these will probably be my last words.’

The next day Nick’s coworkers returned to work. Opening the box car door they found Nick crumpled in the corner dead. When an autopsy was performed, it confirmed the fact that Nick had frozen to death. However, the astonishing thing about Nick’s death was that the temperature in the boxcar was sixty-one degrees. The refrigeration unit of the car had been broken for some time and had been pulled into the yard to be repaired.

This true story illustrates the incredible power of the mind and what can happen when an unhealthy anterior cingulate fails to maintain balance within the brain. According to Newberg and Waldman, the aim of every healthy individual is to have a healthy and strong anterior cingulate in order to keep the limbic system and frontal lobe in proper balance. If one were to scrutinize the premature death of Nick as a case study, one would quickly surmise that the real cause of Nick’s death, from a neuroscientist perspective, was the result of a weak anterior cingulate. The results were from an overly stimulated amygdala which tipped the seesaw in favor of the limbic system, thus shutting down Nick’s frontal lobe where logic and reason reside.

Evidence supporting a limbic imbalance is confirmed by Nick frantically banging on the refrigerated car door until his hands bled, coupled with his ear-piercing screaming which reduced his voice to a raspy whisper, prevented his weakened anterior cingulate from balancing Nick’s

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47 Ibid.
brain chemicals. Such a correction would have allowed Nick to logically reason his way out of his predicament. In such a frenzied state of mind, it is quite easy to fathom how Nick’s brain believed that he was freezing to death trapped in a sixty-one degree freight car. With the emotional laden limbic system being so frenetically charged, it totally shut down all his logical and reasoning capacities in his frontal lobe, leaving Nick a pitiful pawn of his emotions.

According to Newberg and Waldman, to regulate your thoughts “it is essential that you nurture that inner negotiator, (anterior cingulate), which is what meditation and spiritual practices do.” According to Newberg and Waldman, to regulate your thoughts “it is essential that you nurture that inner negotiator, (anterior cingulate), which is what meditation and spiritual practices do.” 48 Almost everything that you will be exposed to in the twenty-one day plan is designed to strengthen the anterior cingulate so it can perform at its optimum level.

**Thought Starters:**

1. Is this your first time hearing about the anterior cingulate? Yes____ No____ (circle one)

2. Try to recount an experience in which your limbic system caused your anterior cingulate to shut down and impede you to think calmly and rationally from your frontal lobe. It may have been a devastating medical report, news of your being written up for an incident at work, being laid off, or even fired, a turn off notice, a break up, an accident of some sort, or an argument with your spouse. Write down the emotions you experienced and how long it took your anterior cingulate to quell your emotions and settle your thoughts.

Assignment:

1. Pay attention to your thoughts, feelings, and attitudes this week and identify those that are positive and negative limbic system driven.

2. Remember to continue memorizing Philippians 4:6 and quote the verse to yourself several times daily until you have it memorized it. Carry the card with you everywhere.

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you go. Perhaps you can make several cards and place one in your car, kitchen refrigerator, your computer screen at work, and at home. Do not forget the bathroom.

3. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to renew your mind and empower you to do the things entailed in this twenty-one day plan.

**Week 1**

**Thought Chemistry 101**

“Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit…” 1Peter 1:13

**Day 6**

**Managing Your Thought and Emotions Part 2**

Get Ready! Get Ready! Get Ready! Welcome to day three. Congratulations for making it thus far. It took a lot of discipline for you to reach this point. For that reason, you deserve a hearty congratulations! Remember, to think supply and not demand. Continue to press through your feelings and the inner voice that tells you to quit. Do not listen. Learn to “Take that thought captive…”49 You will be glad you did! Today we shall continue our discussion on the thought manager of the brain, the anterior cingulate. Remember the see saw diagram? By way of review, the anterior cingulate, works as a fulcrum seeking to keep cognitive reason in proper balance with emotions so that humans may be able to maintain a healthy balanced state of mind. 50 Remember to resist the temptation to take short cuts because in so doing, it will circumvent the effectiveness of the twenty-one day plan.

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49 The Holy Bible, 2Corithians 10:5, NASB.

By examining a troublesome incident in the life of young King David as recorded in 1Samuel 25:4-35, you will witness how a healthy anterior cingulate works. To set the historical context, David and his men, took it upon themselves, to guard the sheep of Naval during the shearing season. In exchange, they hoped to be compensated for their security efforts. Hence, David sent one of his servants to Nabal’s house to barter for food and supplies. Nabal, instead of being appreciative spurred David’s request with numerous inflammatory insults. David in anger (limbic system) said to his servant who relayed Nabal’s response, “Surely in vain I have guarded all that this man has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him; and he has returned me evil for good. May God do so to the enemies of David, and more also, if by morning I leave as much as one male of any who belong to him.”

When Abigail, Nabal’s wife became privy to David’s intentions, she sprang into action and ran to intercept him. “When Abigail saw David, she hurried and dismounted from her donkey, and fell on her face before David and bowed herself to the ground. She fell at his feet and said, On me alone, my lord, be the blame. And please let your maidservant speak to you, and listen to the words of your maidservant.”

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51 The Holy Bible, 1Samuel 25:21-22, NASB.

52 Ibid.
David was operating from his limbic system, but Abigail disrupted his automatic negative thoughts (ANT’s) process by pleading with David to not respond in rage to Nabal’s insult. Instead, she sought to engage David’s rational mind (his frontal lobe) with the following words,

Please do not let my lord, pay attention to this worthless man, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name and folly is with him; but I your maidservant did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent. Now let this gift which your maidservant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who accompany my lord. Please forgive the transgression of your maidservant…”

David was faced with a choice. Confronted by Abigail, David had to decide how he was going to respond. David, by pausing to ponder Abigail’s plea to spare her husband Nabal’s life and his household, gave his anterior cingulate (the fulcrum that balances the frontal lobe and the limbic system visualize the seesaw imagery) time to balance the chemicals in his brain. Now with his frontal lobe fully engaged, suppressing the limbic system, David was able to respond logically to the request of Abigail. He compassionately responds,

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me, and blessed be your discernment, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodshed and from avenging myself by my own hand. So David received from her hand what she had brought him and said to her, “Go up to your house in peace. See, I have listened to you and granted your request.”

Staying with the seesaw image in the diagram, David started off out of balance being high on the limbic side enraged and ready to kill Nabal and his entire clan. However, after listening to Abigail’s impassioned plea to spare the life of Nabal, his servants, and his seed, David’s anterior cingulate kicked in and helped to balance his limbic system and frontal lobe which suppressed his emotional desire for revenge. Remember, when one side of the seesaw goes up the other side goes down. Based on the research by Newberg and Waldman, David had a

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53 The Holy Bible, 1Samuel 25:26-28, NASB.

54 The Holy Bible, 1Samuel 25:26-28, 32-33, 35, NASB.
very strong anterior cingulate. He was able to shut down his limbic system and reason within himself that he should not kill Nabal, and was able to have empathy and compassion for Abigail, Nabal, his herdsman, and clan.

From studying the early life of David, the shepherd, and later the king of Israel, it is apparent from the prolific number of psalms that he wrote; he spent an inordinate amount of time in prayer and meditation. It was prayer and meditation that proved to strengthen David’s inner negotiator, it will do the same for all who employ these spiritual disciplines. More time will be devoted to prayer, meditation, and other spiritual disciplines later in this research project.

The cingulate system consists primarily of the anterior cingulate cortex, and the cingulated gyrus and a few other structures. The cingulate system is a horseshoe shaped band of brain neurons located just below the cerebral cortex “the entire wrinkled outer layer of the brain.” According to Newberg and Waldman a healthy cingulate system encompasses the five following functions: (1) Ability to shift attention; (2) Cognitive flexibility (adaptability); (3) Movement from idea to idea; (4) Ability to see options; (5) Ability to “go along with the flow.”

However, an unhealthy cingulated system will result in the following problems:

(1) Cognitive inflexibility; (2) Getting stuck on thoughts (obsessions) behaviors (compulsive disorders) (OCD); (3) Worrying; (4) Argumentativeness; (5) Road rage; (6) Holding on to hurts from the past; (7) Oppositional behavior/ Uncooperative; (8) Addictive behaviors (alcohol or drug abuse, eating disorders).

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55 Amen, *Change Your Brain, Change Your Life*, 150.


57 Ibid.

To assess the health of one’s cingulate system, Dr. Amen has constructed a seventeen point check list to evaluate the health of the cingulate and limbic system. When your anterior cingulate is unhealthy, it makes you more susceptible to automatic negative thoughts (ANT’s) and unhealthy thinking.

Staying with the seesaw image in the diagram, David started off out of balance being high on the limbic side enraged and ready to kill Nabal and his entire clan. However, after listening to Abigail’s, impassioned plea to spare the life of Nabal, his servants and his seed, David’s anterior cingulate kicked in and helped to balance his limbic system and frontal lobe which suppressed his emotional desire for revenge. Remember, when one side of the seesaw goes up the other side goes down. Based on the research by Newberg and Waldman, David had a very strong anterior cingulate. He was able to shut down his limbic system and reason within himself that he should not kill Nabal, and was able to have empathy and compassion for Abigail, Nabal, his herdsmen, and clan. It was prayer and meditation that proved to strengthen David’s inner negotiator, it will do the same for all who employ these spiritual disciplines.\(^{59}\)

The propensity of the mind toward negativity underscores there are problems in the deep limbic system. As it relates to your emotional health, what you do not know can hurt you. Be of good cheer, as you faithfully work your way through the twenty-one day plan and you are bound to show gradual improvement in your emotional state of mind.

**Thought Starters:**

1. We are most prone to negative thoughts, negative self-talk and negative behaviors when caught in the clutches of an emotionally charged limbic system. As you evaluate Nabal’s interaction with David’s servant, from which side of the brain was Nabal operating, the frontal lobe or limbic system? _____________________________

2. Based on the information you’ve learned about the anterior cingulate, as you evaluate your thought life, attitudes, moods, and interactions with others, where would you say you operate from most often, the frontal lobe or limbic system? ____________________________ 
Explain____________________________________________ _______________________

3. In your opinion, why are negative feelings and emotions so dangerous? _________________

4. Read your new memory verse Philippians 4:6, including verse 7 and see if you can identify the spiritual components that strengthen the anterior cingulate, verse 6 _____________________ and verse 7 _________________________

5. What do Philippians 4:6-7 and Isaiah 26:3 have in common? _________________________

Assignment:

1. Continue to memorize Philippians 4:6. Quote the verse to yourself, several times daily until you have it memorized. You have no new verses until week two. In week two you will begin memorizing Philippians 4:7. Carry the card with you everywhere you go. Perhaps you can make several cards and place one in your car, kitchen refrigerator, your computer screen at work and at home and do not forget the bathroom.

2. Keep remembering the see saw illustration of the brain and balancing negative thoughts.

3. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to renew your mind and transform your thoughts as He empower you to do ALL the things entailed in this twenty-one day plan.

Week 1

Thought Chemistry 101

“Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.”

Colossians 3:2-3

Day 7

Hooked on a Feeling: How to Get Unstuck
Singer BJ Thomas way, way, way back in 1968 released his hit single, *Hooked on a Feeling*. He was referring to a loving feeling. Have you ever been hooked on a negative feeling that you just could not shake? It is as though the thought continues to reverberate in your mind. Neuroscientists refer to it as brain looping. Brain looping refers to the brain being stuck on an obsessive negative thought. This concept is vividly illustrated in the lyrics of a song entitled, “*Good Morning Heartache*” sung by the famed jazz singer Billie Holiday.

Based on what you have learned about the anterior cingulate, it is easy to see how the brain can become stuck on an obsessive negative thought. Such thoughts are usually triggered by some emotionally charged event or situation that over activates the limbic system which in turn shuts down the anterior cingulate. In the aforementioned song, the trigger was a break up, which caused her brain to continue to loop as she obsessed over the breakup. Constant rumination cast this spurned lover into a depressive episode.

Are there any negative thoughts that are looping in your brain today? Perhaps you are obsessed with your dwindling finances? Has a situation on the job, triggered a negative emotional response, or a negative comment by a client that made its way back to your manager? Perhaps another call from your child’s school again, a job interview that did not go well, a call from the hospital, or a romantic break up? You have just not been able to dislodge it from your mind. The negative thoughts may have been triggered by events in the past, present, or future. Is your brain stuck in a looping pattern? Daniel Amen in his book, *Magnificent Mind at Any Age*, provides us with a detailed list of things a “stuck” person might say. For example, “I hate being divorced (eight years later). I have to have it my way. You hurt me years ago and I’ll

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60 Lawlis, *Retraining the Brain*, 13.
never forget …or forgive you; It will never be the same. I never hated anyone more than you. This will never change." 61

If you find yourself stuck, on a negative thought, Amen suggests you engage in one or more of the following things to distract your mind.

1. Distract yourself and come back to the problem or issue later. While away, make a list or think about all the things you could do to distract yourself. Other things may include: singing a favorite song, listening to music that makes you feel positive, taking a walk; doing a chore, play with a pet, or practice structured meditation” 62

2. Write out options and solutions. 63 Writing what you are worried about on paper helps your mind to deal with the issue in a rational way. For example, “I feel life is passing me by and that saddens me.” Make a list of what you can and what you cannot do about the worry.

3. Seek the counsel of others. 64 When you are not able to get relief from a negative thought or worry, it may be time to call a trusted friend to share your heart. Often times just discussing thoughts with someone will provide the emotional release you seek. Another person may suggest to you several options you had not previously considered. “If you don’t ask for advice, your plans will fail. With many advisors, they will succeed.” 65

Who are the people you are most likely to call when you are feeling, alone, hurt, angry, or misunderstood? I almost always call.

61 Amen, Magnificent Mind at Any Age, 186-187.
63 Ibid.,174.
64 Ibid.
65 The Holy Bible, Proverbs 15:22, ERV.
4. Memorize and recite the serenity prayer. Amen recommends one recite this prayer every time they are bothered by a repetitive negative thought.

God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.
--Attributed to Reinhold Niebuhr

In addition, this is a good time to repeat your memory verse until the thought dissipates. When it reoccurs, quote it again and again.

5. Don’t try to convince someone else who is stuck: take a break and come back later.

After many years of counseling, Amen concluded, “When another person is ‘stuck’ on a thought or behavior, logical reasoning usually will not work.” People are not able to listen when they are having cingulate problems. When you are stuck on the same ruminating thought, you tend to repeat the same point again and again without hearing or understanding the point of view of others. To disengage stuck people, make your point, then move on to another subject to distract them. This bit of knowledge can save your marriage and spare you the pain of two to three hours of heated arguments and rebuttals that neither party is listening to anyway.

Remember, that “A fool is right in his own eyes…”

Thought Starters:

1. Which of Amen’s getting “unstuck” strategies, do you think will work best for you the next time your brain is looping? I plan to employ step(s)....

66 Amen. Change Your Brain, 175.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid., 176.
69 The Holy Bible, Proverbs 12:15, NASB.
2. In times past, when your brain has been looping, what practices have you employed to get it unstuck? __________________________________________________________

3. Neurologically speaking, to engage in any one or more of the aforementioned exercises will prevent the brain from its continual looping because you disrupted its pattern of obsessing by engaging in another behavior.

Assignment:

1. Continue to memorize Philippians 4:6. Quote the verse to yourself, several times daily until you have it memorized. You have no new verses until week two. In week two you will begin memorizing Philippians 4:7. Carry the card with you everywhere you go. Perhaps you can make several cards and place one in your car, kitchen refrigerator, your computer screen at work, at home, and do not forget the bathroom.

2. Keep remembering the see saw illustration of the brain and balancing negative thoughts.

3. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to renew your mind and transform your thoughts as He empower you to do ALL the things entailed in this twenty-one day plan.

Week 2

Thought Management 201

A man’s mind may be likened to a garden, which may be intelligently cultivated or allowed to run wild; but whether cultivated or neglected it must and will bring forth.

James Allen

Day 1

Habits of the Mind: Why you do what you do and how you can change?

Welcome to Week two, day one of the twenty-one day plan. You have come a long way keep pressing. Know that there is always a blessing in the pressing. Beginning this week you are going to be taught how to identify and manage your thoughts. Having learned how your
thoughts change your brain. Today you will discover how the brain makes certain thoughts into habits good and bad, positive or negative.

Most of you can testify to the fact that it’s hard to break a bad habit. Try to stop smoking or biting your fingernails down to the quick, cursing, overeating, gossiping, gambling, or viewing pornography. Why you ask? Your brains are creatures of habits.

“Habits, scientists say, emerge because the brain is constantly looking for ways to save effort. Left to its own devices, the brain will try to make almost any routine into a habit, because habits allow your minds to ramp down more often.” Consequently, the brain will attempt to make any action whether good or bad into a habit. The basal ganglia is the portion of your brain where habits are formed.

According to Charles Duhigg, author of, *The Power of Habit: Why You Do What You Do In Life And Business*, the habit forming “process within our brains is a three-step [process] beginning with.” a cue, routine, reward; cue, routine, reward-[when it] becomes more and more automatic… a habit is born.”

Now apply this cue, routine, reward habit loop to a negative mental habit many people struggle with getting up in the morning with a positive attitude. The attitude you get up with in the morning has a tendency to set your emotional tone for the top half of the day, and sometimes

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the entire day. This is the morning routine for many who struggle to get out of bed. The cue is the morning alarm signaling it is time for you to awake. The routine is the negative thoughts you say to yourself before getting out of bed. Thoughts of “I hate getting up in the morning; I wish I did not have to go to work and I could sleep all day. I have not even gotten out of bed and I feel terrible. It is raining. The commute is going to be horrific.” After convincing yourself how terrible you feel and why you would like to stay in the bed, you hit the snooze button and reward yourself with fifteen more minutes of sleep. You are now behind schedule, so you jump out of bed in deep limbic mode. Your brain chemicals begin secreting large doses of cortisol (the stress hormone) and adrenaline as you rally the family to get out the house to catch the school bus and get to work on time. This is your cue, routine and reward (adrenaline rush). It now happens automatically because it has become a brain habit. You do it without even thinking about it.

The first step in rewiring your brain starts with a strong desire or craving to do so. Reexamine Duhigg’s brain habit and you will see it there in the center. If your craving is strong enough to want to change the way you wake up (dreading the start of a new day) and you prefer to set a more positive emotional tone when you arise, provide you with a new cue, routine and reward replacement strategy. Duhigg, insist that “habits cannot be eradicated—they must be replaced.” Imagine waking up in the morning to a new cue, routine and reward. Here is the H.E.L.P. you need.

Cue. The alarm clock is the cue signaling you it is time to wake up. Keep the cue. You only have change the routine.

Routine. First, you shut off your alarm and begin to yawn ten to twelve times. Do not say you cannot and that you do not feel like it. Yawning is one way of exercising the brain, similar

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73 Duhigg, The Power of Habits, 92.
to smiling, and has several neurological benefits. Yawning “lowers stress, improves cognitive (brain) functioning, stimulates alertness and concentration, optimizes brain activity, metabolism, relaxes every part of your body, and increases memory recall [and most importantly] enhances consciousness and introspection” to name just a few of the more pertinent benefits.

Second, when the negative thoughts begin to flood your mind, replace, and interrupt them by asking yourself four questions. The four thought provoking questions are designed to help you tap into the positive emotions that you need to start your day off with a positive attitude. To aid in recall, the word H.E.L.P will serve as an acrostic. As you lie in bed, after you have finished yawning, (or while you yawn) ask yourself, “What am I happy about in my life now? “ A possible answer to the question might be, I am happy about the fact that I have good health. Next, ask yourself, What am I excited about in my life now? Who loves me and who do I love right now? What am I most proud of in my life now? (You may add more such as, What am I grateful for in my life right now?) These questions serve a twofold purpose: first, they wake up your brain to tap into the positive emotions needed to help you have a positive attitude. Second, as you consistently practice the H.E.L.P. questions each morning, you are rewiring your brain to replace the old negative thoughts and emotions. In time your brain will do it automatically. It will at that time have become a habit. For the routine to become a habit, you must have a strong desire / craving to change. Your craving serves as a gateway to your reward.

Reward. Your days are starting off in a more positive manner and your reward is that you are becoming a more positive person and making it more pleasant to be around in the morning.

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74 Newberg and Waldman, How God Changes Your Brain, 158.

You are feeling less stressed and more relaxed because the yawning and H.E.L.P questions are serving to even your brain chemicals, lowering stress, and bringing about a calming homeostasis in your brain. By getting up a little earlier, you now have extra time, and time to do things like reading your Bible or other devotional material. By establishing these spiritual habits, your mind is being renewed, your thoughts transformed daily, and your entire self is being conforming to the image of Christ.

Now you know why you do what you do and how you can change. In tomorrow’s lesson, you will use what you learned today to begin to “cue” in on negative thoughts. The rest of the twenty-one day plan will be devoted to rewiring your brain to establish new mental habits via the cue, routine, and reward habit loop, and other methods.

**Thought Starters:**

Dr. Hart affirms, “We are not slaves to our minds, but we are slaves to the habits that control our minds. We weave patterns of thoughts out of ignorance and neglect. We let bad habits become dominant. The result is pain and unhappiness, self-defeat and self-destruction.” 76

1. Paraphrase what he said in your own words.__________________________________________

2. Seek to identify one or two negative thoughts or habits that you have either through ignorance or neglect formed? ____________________________________________

3. What role could scripture memory play in establishing new mental habits? ____________

**Assignment:**

1. Write *Philippians 4:7* on a 3 x 5 card (Topic, Reference, and Verse) and begin to memorize it. Review Phil. 4:6. Reread, “*How to Memorize a Verse Effectively*”

2. If you are one who struggles with a bevy of negative thoughts in the morning, make the decision to try the yawning exercise and H.E.L.P question for the next seven days.

3. Memorize the Habit Loop: **Cue, Routine, and Reward**. Examine some of your habits to see how they follow the Duhigg’s Habit Loop.

4. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to renew your mind and transform your thoughts as He empowers you to do ALL the things entailed in this twenty-one day plan.

**Week 2**

**Thought Management 201**

*It is hard to fight an enemy who has outposts in your head.*

*Sally Kempton*

**Day 2**

**The Filthy Five: Five Categories of Negative Thoughts**

Welcome to week two day two. Did you choose to do the yawning exercises and H.E.L.P. questions? You will need to experiment with it at least four days consecutively before your brain begins to adapt to it. Yesterday, you learned the importance of setting a positive emotional tone at the start of each day. Today you will be appraised of five negative thoughts that if you can consistently learn to avoid, you will be able to maintain a positive attitude all through the day. But be aware, they will inevitably pop into your head morning, afternoon and night. They are called the Filthy Five.

You are not the only one who struggles with negative toxic thoughts. In the Gospel of Mark, we observe Jesus ministering to a demon possessed man who is being tormented by his thoughts.

*When He [Jesus] got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him, and he had his dwelling among the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces, and*
no one was strong enough to subdue him. Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with stones.\footnote{The Holy Bible, Mark 5:2-5, NASB.}

The main reason the man was screaming and cutting himself with stones was that he was tormented by the demonic induced thoughts inside of his head. These destructive thoughts were promoting him to mutilate his body. Observe that his desire to harm himself emanated from his thought life. Consequently, after Jesus, cast out the tormenting spirits, which negatively affected his thoughts and emotions, the onlookers observed the man, “sitting down, clothed and in his right mind” (v. 15). The text underscores the calamity and devastation Satan can wreak in your life once he possesses control of your thoughts. Are you controlling your thoughts or are your thoughts controlling you?

**The Filthy Five**

Upon an in-depth review of the Scriptures, this researcher discovered five thought patterns that obstruct the anterior cingulate from properly balancing the frontal lobe and limbic system in the brain. It is the belief of this author that if Christians learn to avoid these five forms of “stinking thinking”, they will quantifiably reduce the number of negative thoughts they think in a given day. The first of the “Filthy Five” thoughts that believers are to avoid are regrets of the past.

**Filthy Five #1: Regrets of the Past**

The primary reason in scripture that you are cautioned against dwelling on regrets of the past is because Satan uses your past regrets as a chain to keep you mentally enslaved to depressing thoughts and negative mental images. These negative images are often filled with regret, disappointment, sorrow, anger and resentment. The thoughts may be, “If I had not made that misguided investment” or “If only, I had tried harder to save our marriage, or “If I had never
left my old job, I would not be struggling financially.” Parents often regret and hold themselves responsible for the decisions and behavior of their children. Now that she is pregnant and her boy friend has abandoned her, a teen ager regrets that she did not listen to her parent’s admonition to refrain from premarital sex. Keep in mind you are to learn from your past not live in it.

**Thought starter:**

1. With what regrets of the past are you struggling? _________________________________

2. What benefit is it to you to keep reflecting on these regrets of the past? ______________

Christ died for your past mistakes? Accept Christ forgiveness and learn from your past. Learn to forgive yourself and others and move forward. You past does not determine your destiny; however, your choices do.

**Filthy Five #2: Fears of the Future**

The second of the “Filthy Five” thoughts that believers are to avoid is the fear of the future. If you are mentally feeding upon fears about the future, they will keep your head spinning in a negative spin cycle and steal all the joy out of your life. Perhaps you are fretting over, how you are going to pay next month’s bills or how will you afford next month’s tuition? A father reasons, “What if I were to lose my job, I do not know how we would make it?” A wife ponders, “what if my spouse finds someone more attractive. I fear he will leave me.” Or you may be troubled about an upcoming medical procedure.

God wants His children to learn to live in the present. God wants you to live in the “now” because it is in the now that you have the most influence. Dwelling upon regrets of the past and living in fear of the future will create a major negative brain drain by releasing negative toxins into the blood stream.78

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Thought Starters:

1. Make a list of future events, and things, that are troubling you today. Write down the feeling those thoughts generate. ____________________________________________________________

2. According to Matthew 6: 25-35, what has Jesus promised to do for you if you are willing to trust Him ? ____________________________________________________________

Filthy Five #3: Unhealthy Comparisons

One word of caution, those who constantly compare themselves with others will find themselves on a never ending emotional seesaw. The ride goes up and down like this, when you compare yourself to those whom you feel greater than, your self-esteem rises. However, when you compare yourself to those whom you feel less than, your self-esteem plummets, taking you down emotionally. Satan, who desires believers to stay mired in negativity and feelings of insecurity, will be sure to keep you measuring yourself against others to enhance your feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. At the heart of unhealthy comparisons is a poor self-concept.

A classical biblical illustration of unhealthy comparison is found in the love hate relationship between King Saul and his army commander, David. King Saul’s unhealthy comparison between himself and David is evidenced in the following story:

It happened as they were coming, when David returned from killing the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy and with musical instruments. The women sang as they played and said, “Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands.” Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said, “They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?” Saul looked at David with suspicion from that day on.  

From that day forward, Saul became green with envy and looked upon David with extreme suspicion. Saul’s internal reaction to the women’s song displayed his unhealthy comparison to David. David may have killed ten thousands, but Saul was still the King of Israel. However,  

79 The Holy Bible, 1Samuel 18:6-8, NASB.
Saul’s thoughts, when he compared himself to David, made him feel inferior and inadequate.

Hence, he purposed in his heart to kill David, viewing him as a threat to the longevity of his kingship.

**Thought Starters:**

1. How do popular magazines like Better Homes and Gardens, GQ, Glamour, People’s the 100 most influential people of 2014 etc…foster, unhealthy comparisons.? ___________________

2. With whom do you most often compare yourself? Other people in your profession, peers, people of influence, actors, or athletes etc. _____________________________

3. To whom does God compare you?__________________________________________

**Filthy Five #4: Self-condemning thoughts**

Self-condemning thoughts (a negative form of self-talk) find their origin in a plethora of sources. They could be rooted in regrets of the past, unhealthy comparisons, or fear of inadequacies to face life’s vicissitudes. Self-condemning thoughts may be rooted in a critical condemning parent, authority figure, a divorce, a history of sexual, or emotional abuse, parental abandonment, loss of a job, or loss of one’s virginity, etc. Self-condemning thoughts may also stem from a series of bad decisions that have left people feeling broke, busted, and disgusted. Similar events were the basis of the self-condemning thoughts expressed by the “prodigal” or “lost” son described in Luke 15:11-24. Read the story and observe his self-deprecating comments, “I am no longer worthy to be called your son, make me as one of the hired men.”

Self-condemning thoughts, if left unchecked, will lead the Christian down a slippery slope in to

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80 The Holy Bible, Luke 15:18-19, NASB.
debasing self-talk, self-hatred, and negative self-labeling. Negative labeling is rooted in the limbic system.

**Thought Starters:**

1. The prodigal son labeled himself, unworthy, what kind of labels have you attached to yourself? __________________________________________________________

2. How long do you plan to continue wearing your labels? ______________________

3. Do you have a plan to deal with them? _____________________________________

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**The Filthy Five #5: Temptation**

The fifth of the “Filthy Five” is temptation. When overcome with negative emotions, you are more susceptible to succumb to temptation. The temptation may be to quit or throw in the towel, flee instead of fight, pout instead of praise, and retaliate rather than wait on God. Jesus, while in the Garden of Gethsemane, warned his melancholy and lethargic disciples to “Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

If Christians were to pray in times of temptation, they would have more strength to manage their thoughts and stand against the ebbs and flows of their vacillating emotions.

Consistently yielding to the temptation to give into anger, jealousy, rage, self-condemning thoughts, drug use, fears, and other negative behavioral proclivities can cause chemical imbalances in the brain that shut down the anterior cingulate because of an over stimulated amygdala. Toxic emotions like those listed above are all based in the limbic system.

**Thought Starter:**

1. Name some tempting thoughts that have your mind in a frenzied state? ________________

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81 The Holy Bible, *Mark 14:38; Matthew 26:41*, NASB.

Assignments:

2. Apply the H.E.L.P strategy questions in the morning each day this week.
3. From memory, write down the Filthy Five. You may use RUST F as a memory device.
4. Observe the number of times regrets of the past and fears of the future come to mind.

Week 2

Thought Management 201

*May we never let the things we can’t have, or don’t have, or shouldn’t have, spoil our enjoyment of the things we do have and can have.*

*Richard L. Evans*

Day 3

A Thought Management Paradigm

From a spiritual standpoint, daily you are exposed to two voices; the voice of your accuser Satan, and the voice of your advocate Jesus. Daily you must choose to which of the two voices you will listen. Your accuser, Satan has an entire arsenal of negative thinking styles at his disposal such as The Filthy Five and others that could easily overwhelm the mind of any believer. However, God has provided a way of escape through a thought management paradigm revealed in Scripture. This paradigm is comprised of four key words used to interrupt automatic negative thought patterns (ANT’s). The three words are as follows: Check, Challenge, and Change. Remember the cue, routine, and reward habit formation. The negative thought is the cue. The check, challenge, change, paradigm is to become your new routine. It works something like this, each time a negative thought pops into your head that is your cue signaling something is wrong. Instead of dwelling upon it (your old routine) replace it with a new routine: (CCC) and you will be rewarded with peace of mind and a more positive perspective.
This researcher created the CCC paradigm after examining Christ’s interaction with Satan in the wilderness, following his baptism. Satan spoke to Jesus (whether physically present, or mentally through his thoughts) three times seeking to tempt Christ to sin against God (as did the first Adam) by choosing to operate independently of God to meet his needs. However, in each trial Jesus used this checked, challenged and change (CCC) paradigm to rebuff Satan.

God has called Christians to renew their minds and to not be conformed to this world’s system. Hence, Satan wages spiritual warfare in Christians’ minds to keep them from renewing their minds to free them from bondage to their thoughts, emotions, and feelings. How often have you caught yourself saying, I don’t feel like it? The essence of spiritual warfare is learning to Check, Challenge, and Change all negative thoughts so that you end up doing what God tells you to do, rather than just what you feel like doing. Got it?

**Step One: Check It**

Whenever a negative thought comes to mind, you should check it. To check it means to recognize its origin. This is the essence of metacognition to think about what you are thinking about. Observe how Jesus immediately recognized the tempter’s voice. Satan says to Jesus, “If you are the Son of God…” (Matthew 4:4). Satan begins by attacking Christ identity. Satan through his questioning, seeks to disparage on the Son of God’s identity just as he attacks your spiritual identity. However, Jesus immediately recognized the tempter’s voice. This is what it means to check a thought. Like Christ, you need to check each thought to identify its source. Is it the voice of the accuser or the voice of your advocate. When a random negative thought pops into your head ask yourself any number of the following questions: Is this a godly or ungodly thought? Why might I be thinking this thought? Is it one of the Filthy Five? In whose voice is the thought? Is it the voice of a critical parent, a coach, a boss and ex-spouse or Satan.
By asking yourself these questions, you are interrupting negative thought patterns and obstructing mental strongholds from taking root neurologically. This is what it means “to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” After checking the thought, believers are to progress to step two.

**Step Two: Challenge It**

After checking the negative thought, the next and most demanding step is to challenge it. To challenge the negative thought involves a two step process: First, is to resist the thought. Second, reject the thought. Jesus challenged and rejected Satan’s evil thoughts and suggestions in the following illustration. Satan, knowing that Jesus had fasted forty days and was hungry, whispers three temptations in Jesus’ ear. The first of which is, Jesus, “Command that these stones become bread.” Jesus challenged and resisted the thought. His resistance is evidenced in the fact that he refused to turn the stones into bread, and refused to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple (Matt. 4:6) or to bow down and worship, Satan (Matt. 4:9). After Jesus resisted, he ultimately rejected all of Satan’s temptations because he knew the thoughts did not agree with God’s desire for his life. Consequently, Jesus rejects Satan’s solicitations to sin by rebuffing him three times saying, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written…” Resist it and reject it! Jesus resisted Satan three times, and Satan fled. The Scriptures inform, believers to, “Resist the Devil and he will flee from you.” If the thought disagrees with the word of God, challenge it—resist and reject it. This is perhaps the most challenging and difficult step in the paradigm.

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83 The Holy Bible, 2Corinthians 10:5, NASB.
84 The Holy Bible, Mark 4:3, NASB.
85 The Holy Bible, Mark 4:4, 7, 10, NASB.
86 The Holy Bible, Mark 4:7, NASB.
The key to stopping automatic negative thoughts (ANT’s) is to question them. It is that simple, yet difficult to do because it requires us to retrain our brains to form a new routine.

The new routine is as follows: whenever a thought pops into your head, remember to **T.H.I.N.K.** fast. Remember the acrostic and ask yourself these questions:

- **T**—is it true? (Of what God says about me and my situation?)
- **H**—is it helpful?
- **I**—is it inspiring?
- **N**—is it non-condemning?
- **K**—is it kind?

If the thought does not pass the T.H.I.N.K test, you are to resist and reject it.

**Step Three: Change It**

After you check and challenge your thoughts, the next step is to change it. Replace it! Change the negative thought and replace it with scripture or any other positive faith affirming, motivational, or empowering statement. For example, when Satan suggested to Jesus that He turn the stones into bread, Jesus checked it, challenged it, and changed it. He replaced it with Scripture. “MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.”  

87 To Satan’s suggestion that he throw himself from the top of the temple to draw attention to himself and force God to have to save him, Jesus changed it, replaced the thought with the following Scriptural retort, “YOU SHALL NOT TEMPT THE LORD YOUR GOD.”

88 To Satan’s entreaty that Jesus fall down and worship him, Jesus changed/replaced it with the following Scriptural injunction, “YOU SHALL WORSHIP

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87 The Holy Bible, Mark 4:3, NASB.
88 The Holy Bible, Mark 4:7, NASB.
THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.” 89 This is what “taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” means. Retraining your mind to overcome negative thoughts requires you to analyze or mentally filter your thoughts so you can filter out those thoughts that are toxic and harmful to your emotional and physical health.

By way of personal application, if you as a believer frequently find yourself feeling shame, guilt, and condemnation, after you have asked forgiveness, you need to change your thought and say to yourself, “There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” 90 In addition, if a thought enters your mind suggesting, God could never use you greatly because of your past, Change it and say, “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” 91 and repeat “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” 92 As a believer in Jesus Christ, you are to change the thought to agree and align with the word of God. Learn to challenge every negative and contrary thought. Remember to T.H.I.N.K. If the thought does not agree with what the Word of God says about you, check it, challenge it, and change it. For those Christians who struggle with painful memories in their past, they would be wise to learn to employ an additional change it step: reframe it.

**Step Four: Reframe It**

All too often, a negative event remains lodged in the amygdala’s emotional memory bank thus becoming an emotional drain on the brain. The goal in reframing a negative experience is to reflect upon the event with the goal to reevaluate it. Reevaluate it by learning to

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89 The Holy Bible, Mark 4:10, NASB.
90 The Holy Bible, Romans 8:1, NASB.
91 The Holy Bible, Psalms 103:12, NASB.
92 The Holy Bible, Ephesians 2:10, NASB.
extract from that negative experience whatever positive aspects you can conjure up now. In other words, find an “at least” or a purpose in the pain. Reframe it by looking for some positive aspects or angles, for if one fails to do so, the negative experience will forever evoke dark and sinister thoughts resulting in pessimistic and melancholy feelings.

The writer of Hebrews, show us how Jesus reframed the gory events of Calvary, with these words, “Who for the joy set before him (Jesus) he endured the cross and despised the shame…” From Jesus vantage point, the joy of seeing lost mankind redeemed forgiven and adapted into the Family of God, gave purpose to the horrors he endured on the cross. Jesus reframed the experience; extracting from it the good mankind’s redemption.

The ability to reframe past, present, and future painful events is indispensable if you desire to keep your mind free from negative painful memories which lodge themselves in your emotional memory bank and release toxic emotions and deadly emissions into your heart, mind and body. The concept of re framing, finding a purpose in your pain or finding an “at least” is a principle rooted in Scripture “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God to those who are called according to His purpose.” Finding some positive in every negative experience is critical in overcoming emotional pain for it serves to rid the mind of a great deal of negative mental clutter and in so doing helps to strengthen the anterior cingulate so it can maintain a healthy balance between the frontal lobe and limbic system.

In order for you to grow spiritually and live victoriously, it is essential that you learn thought regulation and metacognition as a means of guarding your mind against all forms of

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91 The Holy Bible, Hebrews 12:2, NASB.
93 The Holy Bible, Romans 8:28, NASB.
94 Newberg and Waldman, How God Changes Your Brain, 126.
negative thinking that functions as a frontal spiritual attack on your mind. Satan’s goal is to seize control of your mind. He knows that if he can control your thoughts, he can affect your emotions, your attitude, and in the end control your behavior. If you are to win the spiritual battle, you will be wise to follow the example of Jesus and learn to F.O.C.U.S. (Fight Opposition Constantly Using Scripture).

Thought Starter

1. Begin thinking about the one or two negative events that have evoked a lot of negative emotions and reframe the experience to find an “at least.” ________________________________

2. Fill in the words to the four step thought management paradigm

Step One: C__________it –to recognize it

Step Two: C____________it –to resist & reject it

Step Three: C____________it –to replace it

Step Four: R____________it –to reevaluate it

Assignments:


2. Employ the CCCR paradigm when any of the Filthy Five pop into your head. To remember the Filthy Five you may use RUST F as a memory device.

3. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to supply the grace and power to self-regulate your thoughts today and continue to renew your mind and transform your thoughts as you work through the twenty-one day plan. Jesus said, “Ask and you shall receive…”

97 The Holy Bible, Matthew 7:7, NASB.
Week 2

Thought Management 201

*There is no greater disaster in the spiritual life than to be immersed in unreality.*

_Thomas Merton_

Day 4

**Mind Games: A game winning strategy for defeating the Filthy Five. Part 1**

Welcome to week two day four. Thank God for supplying you with everything you needed to make it this far. Congratulations! Give yourself a pat on the back if you can. Today’s lesson is designed to be very practical in nature. It will use the information you learned about the check, challenge, change, and reframe thought management paradigm (CCCR) and demonstrate how to use it against the Filthy Five (regrets of the past, fear of the future, unhealthy comparison, self-condemning thoughts and temptations). The next two days are designed to be practice sessions. Speaking of practice, have you seen the Tampa Bay Buccaneers’ football stadium? The stadium has high towering bleachers and well manicured practice fields. The summer temperatures in Tampa can reach as high as 100 degrees or more. The Tampa Bucs football players and aspiring Bucs players have to practice outside in the summer heat several days a week. The goal of the would-be Bucs is to make the roster of an NFL team. Believers, if you are going to make the cut and win the Mind Games, you are going to have to get serious about renewing your mind and transforming your thoughts, and you are going to have to practice, practice and practice some more, even if you do not feel like it. Begin now by practicing how to apply the CCCR paradigm to the Filthy Five. Start with examining your thoughts concerning regrets of the past.

**Regrets of the Past**

(Check, Challenge, Change, and Reframe)
Imagine you are watching television and you see a scene that triggers a regret of the past. Automatically, as you ruminate upon it, the thalamus (the part of your brain that makes you conscience of your thoughts) directs the thought to your amygdala (that part of the brain responsible for ascribing feeling and emotions to your thoughts. The amygdala goes into your emotional memory bank and attaches that thought to the negative emotion you have stored up in your emotional library. The more you ruminate upon that regret of the past, the more emotional coloring it takes on adding vivid reds, violates and darker colors. The longer you reflect upon the experience, you begin to feel more remorseful, melancholy and depressed. Hence, the faster you attend to your negative thoughts, the less emotional impact they will have on your feelings.

By way of review, the way you interrupt automatic negative thoughts (ANT’s) is to ask yourself a question. It is just that simple. Step 1: You check the thought by asking any number of questions for example, “Where did this thought originate? Is it a godly or ungodly thought? Why might I be thinking this thought? In whose voice is this thought, my voice, my parent’s voice, the voice of a coach, my spouse, boss, co-worker or Satan etc? This is what it means to check it and recognize it. Identify the thought. This disrupts the brain’s habit forming process. Remember Duhigg’s cue, routine, reward? The brain seeks to make anything into a habit whether good or bad.

How many of you are old enough to remember the old 45 black vinyl records and larger LP’s. Upon scrutiny, the vinyl record has a series of circular grooves into which the needle sits. When the needle is placed in that groove as the record spins, you can hear the music. However, every now and then the record would get a scratch on it and much to the chagrin of all listening ears, when the needle got to that part of the record where it was scratched, the record would skip. Your only recourse, was to buy another record you could not fix a scratch. In like manner, your
thoughts and emotional memories run groves and continue to spin (neurologically speaking) around and around and around again. This is how a mental habit is formed. Checking your thoughts by asking questions is equivalent to scratching a 45 record. From a neurological standpoint, that is what the (CCCR) paradigm is designed to do. When you check, challenge, change, and reframe a thought, you are scratching your mental recording. In essence, you are breaking your brain’s mental flow and forcing it to have to deal with additional data. Remember, your brain is a creature of habit and always looking for ways to amp down brain activity, by creating habits of any kind positive or negative. When you employ the CCCR you are disrupting the old mental habit and if done consistently, through deliberate practice you will rewire your brain to creating a new mental habit; one that is positive, beneficial and God honoring.

After checking the negative thought, you next appropriate **Step 2: Challenge it;** resist and reject the thought. Keep in mind why you are doing this. You are interrupting your brain from automatically dwelling on negative thoughts ANT’s. The primary reason you are cautioned against dwelling on regrets of the past is because Satan uses your past regrets as a means to keep you mentally enslaved to depressing thoughts and negative mental images filled with regret, sorry and disappointment. Thoughts such as, “If I had not made that misguided investment”, or “If only, I had tried harder to save our marriage, or “If I had never left my old job, I would not be struggling financially.” Such thoughts will keep one in the doldrums. Since we cannot change our or redo our past mistakes, we can at best try to make amends but no erasing the past) what benefit is there to dwelling on them. They serve to only generate negativity. The best thing one can do is to learn from them and move forward. Dealing with regrets of the past can be extremely challenging, but here are some things you can tell yourself to bring some solace. “If God had intended it to last (a job, relationship, an opportunity
squandered) it would have. I made the best decision based on the information I had at the time. If I knew better, I would have done better.” Next, we come to Step 3: Change it. Replace it.

After you check and challenge your thoughts, the next step is to change it and replace it! Change the negative thought and replace it with scripture or any other positive faith affirming, motivational or empowering statement.

Observe the changed mindset of the Apostle Paul. Paul was one who had many negative things in his past primarily persecuting the early church and consenting to the death of Stephen (Acts 7:54-58; 8:1-3) and other Christians. However, concerning his past indiscretions, his prideful arrogance as Pharisee, and boasting of self-righteousness, he writes, “Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Paul refused to be beleaguered by regrets of the past choosing instead to look ahead to the marvelous things God had in store for his future.

Step 4: Reframe it and re-evaluate it.

The goal in reframing a negative experience is to reflect upon the event with the goal to re-evaluate it. Re-evaluate it by learning to extract from that negative experience (a painful divorce, death of a loved one, a failed business enterprise, an unjust firing or your name being besmirched by accusations and lies) positives aspects one can find. In other words, find an “at least” or a purpose in the pain. Reframe it by looking for some positive aspects or angles, for if one fails to do so, the negative experience will forever evoke dark and sinister thoughts resulting in pessimistic and melancholy feelings.

The ability to reframe past, present and future painful events is indispensable if believers desire to keep their minds free from negative painful memories which lodge themselves in their

98 The Holy Bible, Philippians 3:13b-14, NASB.
emotional memory banks and release toxic emotions and deadly emissions into their hearts, minds and bodies.\(^{99}\) The concept of reframing, finding a purpose in one’s pain or finding an “at least” is a principle that is rooted in Scripture “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God to those who are called according to His purpose.” \(^{100}\)

Finding some positive in every negative experience is critical in overcoming emotional pain for it serves to rid the mind of a great deal of negative mental clutter and in so doing helps to strengthen the anterior cingulated so it can maintain a healthy balance between the frontal lobe and limbic system.\(^{101}\)

A classic example of reframing an event by finding a purpose in the pain is graphically illustrated by Joseph in the Book of Genesis 44-45. Joseph, as a youth, is betrayed by his jealous brothers and sold into slavery, as a slave, he is accused of raping his master’s wife, but rather than being executed, he is thrown to prison to languish for many years. However, instead of languishing in prison Joseph flourishes there and becomes overseer of the prison and ministers to his fellow inmates. By a miraculous superintendence of God, he interprets a fellow inmates dream and two years later is granted an audience before Pharaoh to interpret Pharaoh’s dream. Upon doing so, Joseph is elevated to Prime Minister of Egypt second only to Pharaoh.

As an adult now probably in his mid-thirties, Joseph is reunited with his brothers who have come to Egypt to purchase food in a the midst of a worldwide famine. Joseph recognizes them and arranges a private audience with his brothers. At which time he reveals his true identity. His brothers, fearing the worst are mortally frightened, thinking their brother Joseph


\(^{100}\) The Holy Bible, Romans 5:28, NASB.

\(^{101}\) Newberg and Waldman, \textit{How God Changes Your Brain}. 126.
will avenge himself and perhaps kill them. Instead, Joseph reframes the entire gut wrenching ordeal in his mind, and says to his brothers,

Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.\(^{102}\)

Joseph reframes the negative event and finds a positive purpose in the pain. Joseph reasons to his brothers, you may have thought it for evil, selling me into slavery, but God meant it for my good your good and the promised nation that is to come. The ability to reframe past, present and future painful events is indispensable if one wants to keep their minds free from negative painful memories which log themselves in ones emotional memory banks and release toxic emotions and deadly emissions into their hearts, minds and bodies.

**Thought Starters**

1. Name several things Joseph did to keep himself from becoming bitter? Explain __________
2. What regrets of your past are still troubling you? Explain _________________________
3. What would it take for you to change your present attitude and replace it with the attitude of the Apostle Paul described in Philippians 3:13-14. Explain _________________________

**Assignments:**

2. Employ the CCCR paradigm when any of the Filthy Five pop into your head. To remember The Filthy Five you may use *RUST F* as a memory device.
3. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to supply the grace an power to self-regulate your thoughts today and continue to renew your mind and transform your thoughts as you work through the

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\(^{102}\) The Holy Bible, Genesis 45:5-8, NASB.
Twenty-one day plan. Jesus said, “Ask and you shall receive…” 103

4. Pray to Jesus and ask him to strengthen your mind to win your “Mind Games” today.

**Week 2**

**Thought Management 201**

*I have set the Lord continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore, my heart is glad… Psalm 16:8-9a*

**Day 5**

**Mind Games: A winning strategy for defeating the Filthy Five. Pt. II**

**Fear of the Future**

(Check. Challenge. Change. Reframe)

Welcome to day twelve of the twenty-one day plan. You are more than half way through. Keep pressing and you will change the way you think forever. Today we continue apply the (CCCR) thought management paradigm to the Filthy Five. Today’s is called Mind Games. It is so entitled because, this world, Satan, or senses and our sinful natures with its propensity toward negativity are fighting to control your thoughts. However, Jesus has provided for us a game winning strategy to be victorious in the Mind Games. In yesterday’s lesson, we learned how to be victorious in the Mind Games when struggling with regrets of the past. Today you how to win over fear of the future and unhealthy comparisons. If you do not guard you mind against fear of the future thoughts you will be pulled quickly into a negative spin cycle as your ponder an fret over how am I going to pay my bills? How will I afford next month’s tuition. What if the church board decides to fire me? What if I do not pass my state boards? What if they spread all kinds of rumors about me around the office? When troubled by fears of the future, remember to step 1) Check it. Identify the thought. The way you interrupt an automatic

103 The Holy Bible, Matthew 7:7, NASB.
negative thought (ANT’s) is to ask yourself one or more of the following questions: What is the origin of this thought? Is it a godly or ungodly thought? Why might I be thinking this thought now? In whose voice is this thought? Etc…

After you check the negative thought, you next appropriate **Step 2: Challenge it.** Resist and reject the thought. Whenever a thought pops into your head, remember to **T.H.I.N.K.** fast. Remember the acrostic and ask yourself these questions: Is this thought…

- **T**—is it true? (of what God says about me and my situation?)
- **H**—is it helpful?
- **I**—is it inspiring?
- **N**—is it non-condemning?
- **K**—is it kind?

If the thought does not pass the T.H.I.N.K. test, you are to resist and reject it.

After you check and challenge your thoughts, the next step is to change it; Replace it! Change the automatic negative thought (ANT’s) and replace it with a spiritual automatic thoughts (SAT’s). In addition, you could also use any self-affirming, motivational or empowering statement. Concerning tomorrows cares, Jesus emphatically and boldly proclaims, “Do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

Jesus is encouraging believers to trust him to meet tomorrow’s needs tomorrow. Do not worry about tomorrow’s needs today. Live in the now. Remind yourself, today, I have food. Today, I have shelter. Today, I have my needs met. Observe Jesus promises in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, by reading Matthew 6:25-33. Be sure to highlight any additional promises that you may find. _____________________________

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104 The Holy Bible, Matthew 6:34, NASB.
Thought starters

1. What fears about tomorrow, are robbing you of God’s peace today? ____________________

2. If the thoughts produce anxiety and fear, we know they are from whom? ________________

3. If the thoughts produce peace, we know they are from whom? ________________

4. Read Psalm 23, and jot down any phrases or verses that you could quote to yourself, to change an ANT into a SAT. ________________________________

Unhealthy Comparisons

(Check—Challenge—Change)

The third of the Filthy Five thoughts are unhealthy comparison. Concerning unhealthy comparisons, I once heard Dr. Hendricks, of Dallas Theological Seminary, “You were born an original, don’t die a copy cat.” Engaging in unhealthy comparisons can be harmful to your self-esteem.

For illustrative purposes, I would like to draw your attention to King Rehoboam. Rehoboam was Solomon’s Son and successor to his father’s throne. However, engaging in an unhealthy comparison between himself and his father Solomon, proved to be his undoing.

After Solomon’s death, the people come to Rehoboam to plead for tax relief. King Rehoboam tells the people to come back in a couple of days and he will render a final decision. Rehoboam confers with his counselors,

So he said to them, “What counsel do you give that we may answer this people who have spoken to me, saying, ‘Lighten the yoke which your father put on us’?…” The young men who grew up with him spoke to him, saying, “Thus you shall say to this people who spoke to you, saying, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, now you make it lighter for us!’ But you shall speak to them, ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s loins! Whereas my father loaded you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.’”

105 The Holy Bible, 1Kings 12:11-13, NASB.
Because of King Rehoboam decision to increase their taxes, his united kingdom was divided. Ten of the twelve tribes broke away and joined Rehoboam’s rival Jeroboam. Leaving Rehoboam in charge of only two tribes Judah and Benjamin. When we engage in unhealthy comparison, like Rehoboam we lose. We lose more of our self esteem, more of our oneness and intimacy with God. We lose more potentially enduring friendships because our insecurities cause us to distance ourselves from others who could enrich our lives. You are unique. God compares you to no one.

Hence, whenever you are tempted by the thought to compare yourself against others, Step 1: Check it; identify the thought. Ask yourself one or more of the following questions: What is the origin of this thought? Is it a godly or ungodly thought? Why might I be thinking this thought now? In who’s voice is this thought? Etc…

After you check the negative thought, you next appropriate Step 2: Challenge it. Resist and reject the thought. Whenever a thought pops into your head, remember to T.H.I.N.K. fast. (Try to repeat the acrostic from memory, if having difficult look above.) Satan who desires you stay mired in negative thoughts and feelings of insecurity will be sure to keep tempting you to measuring yourself against others to enhance your feeling of inadequacy. At the heart of unhealthy comparisons is a poor self-concept/self esteem. The concept of self-esteem will be addressed in subsequent lessons.

After you check and challenge your thoughts, the next step is to change it. Replace it! Change the automatic negative thoughts (ANT’s) and replace it with a spiritual automatic thoughts (SAT’s). When tempted to compare yourself to others, say to yourself, “I will give
thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Thy works and my soul knows it very well.”

**Thought Starters**

1. When you compare yourself with others, do you at times feel angry with God for not making you more like the person(s) with whom you are comparing yourself? _____________________

2. Do you believe that other person has inherent strengths and weakness just as you do or do you perceive them to have it made? ________________________________

**Assignment:**

1. Continue memorizing Philippians 4:6-7
2. Throughout the day self-regulate your thoughts by categorizing them and applying CCCR to refute all negative thoughts.
3. Memorize the T.H.I.N.K test and use it during the day, as thoughts arise.
4. Pray to Jesus and ask him to strengthen your mind to win your “Mind Games” today.

**Week 2**

**Thought Management 201**

*Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

*Ephesus 6:11-12*

**Day 6**

**Mind Games: A Winning Strategy for Defeating the Filthy Five. Pt. 3**

**Self-condemning thoughts**

(Check—Challenge—Change)

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106 The Holy Bible, Psalm 139:14, NASB.
By now, you probably have the CCCR paradigm down cold as well as the Filthy Five. Tomorrow, we move on to another thought provoking topic. One of the byproducts of consistently engaging in unhealthy comparisons is that it can lead one down the slippery slope to self-condemning thoughts.

In addition, we may at times find ourselves engaging in self-condemning thoughts as a result of a perceived failure, a derogatory comment by someone, failure to meet an expectation of others or yourself, or the aftermath of a tragic event. Such was the case with King David’s daughter Tamar, after she was raped by her half-brother Amnon. You may read her tragic tale in 2Samuel 13. As a result of this terrible incident in her life, the scripture records her reaction, “So Tamar, a broken woman, lived in her brother Absalom’s house.” One can just image the torrent of self-condemning thoughts she dwelt with on a daily basis. “I am such a fool, I should have known better.” “I am damaged goods. No man will ever want me.” I am cursed of God. I feel so ashamed. I will never be seen again in public. Self-condemning thoughts if left unchecked, will lead the Christian down a slippery slope into debasing self-talk, self-hatred and perhaps labeling oneself a fool, a loser or a stupid jerk. Such labeling is rooted in the limbic system.

Hence, when a self-condemning thought pops into you head, you must immediately challenge it; resist and reject it. Whenever self-condemning thoughts pop into your head T.H.I.N.K. fast. Ask you self these questions:

**T**—is it true? (of what God says about me and my situation?)

**H**—is it helpful?

**I**—is it inspiring?

**N**—is it non-condemning?

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107 The Holy Bible, 2Samuel 13:20, CEB.
**K—is it kind?**

If the thought does not pass the T.H.I.N.K test, you are to resist and reject it. Or be quick about it and say what Jesus said to the devil “Be gone, Satan” (Matthew 4:4). Do not waste time going to through the T.H.I.N.K. acrostic, by the time you have finished Satan would have convince you the self-condemning thought is true. I’m being a bit facetious but my point is deal with it fast and quick. Whenever a blood washed child of God, operating from their limbic system, labels themselves, stupid, lazy, a failure, a half-whit, not the sharpest knife in the drawer, ugly, a homosexual, a fornicator, a liar etc… He is condemning himself and believing a lie of the enemy. The Bible refers to Satan as the “Father of lies.”

The healthy rational thinking person avoids labels.

After you check and challenge your thoughts, the next step is to change it; Replace it! Change the automatic negative thoughts (ANT’s) and replace it with a spiritual automatic thoughts (SAT’s). Replace the lie with the truth of God’s word. Our heavenly Father pronounces, “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Before God, all believers are free from all condemnation, whether satanically inspired condemning thoughts or self-condemning words uttered from the lips of believers deriving from the limbic center of their brain. The Apostle Paul dares to ask? “Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ?”

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108 The Holy Bible, John 8:44, NASB.

109 The Holy Bible, Romans 8:1, NASB.

110 The Holy Bible, Romans 8:33-35, NASB.
Instead of self-condemning words, God call us his children, more than conquerors (Romans 8:37), over-comers (1John 5:4), victors and not victims (1Cor. 15:57), favored of God (Psalm 5:12), the righteousness of God (2Cor. 2:21), a chosen race, a royal priesthood and a holy nation (1Peter 2:9).

Thought Starters

1. Why is it always helpful to avoid all self-condemning thoughts? _______________________
2. After what incidents, are you most vulnerable to self-condemning thoughts? __________

Temptations

(Check—Challenge—Change)

Lastly, we shall apply the CCCR paradigm to that area we all struggle with and serves as a conduit though which all forms on negative thinking flows and if tempting thoughts are not checked, they will lead to sinful behaviors. When overcome with negative emotions, we are more susceptible to succumb to temptation. The temptation to quit or throw in the towel, flee instead of fight, pout instead of praise. Jesus, while in the Garden of Gethsemane, warned his melancholy and lethargic disciples to “Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”\(^\text{111}\) If we would learn to pray in times of temptation, we would have the strength to manage our thoughts and so stand against the ebbs and flows of our vacillating emotions.

While God may test Believers to purify their faith and produce greater patience, Satan, on the other hand, tempts Believers in order to bring their minds, will and emotions under his evil control that he might persuade them to sin against the commands of God. The following verses illustrate diverse ways in which Satan manipulates the thoughts and minds of believers and non-

\(^{111}\) The Holy Bible, Mark 14:38; Matthew 26:41, NASB.
believers alike. For example, Satan manipulated Judas to betray Christ. “During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him.” 112 In addition, Satan beguiled Ananias to lie to Peter and church elders, “Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land?” 113 At the beginning of Jesus earthly ministry, God lead Christ, into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil… And the tempter came and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.’” 114 The demoniac, name Legion, in Mark 5:1-13, was influenced by evil spirits. In the same way, Satan influenced Cain to kill his brother Abel. God said to Cain, “sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.” 115 Mastering tempting thoughts is an essential element of being victorious in spiritual warfare. Cain instead of controlling his thoughts of jealousy and unhealthy comparisons, killed his brother Abel. “The devil comes to steal, kill and to destroy.” 116 Consistently yielding to the temptation of anger, jealousy, rage, self-condemning thoughts, fears will destroy the chemical brain balance by shutting down the anterior cingulated because of an over stimulated amygdala.

Believers must resist the temptation to allow their thoughts to be over taken by the emotionally laden limbic system. Hence, when a tempting thought enters our frontal lobe, we must immediately check it; recognize it that it is from Satan. Next, you have to challenge it; resist and reject it. Whenever a tempting thought pop into your head, T.H.I.I.N.K. fast.

112 The Holy Bible, John 13:2; Luke 22:3-4, NASB.
113 The Holy Bible, Acts 5:3, NASB.
114 The Holy Bible, Matthew 4:1-4. NASB.
115 The Holy Bible, Genesis 4:7. NASB.
116 The Holy Bible, John 10:10, NASB.
Step three, is to change it; replace the lie with the truth of God’s word. Speak back to the Devil and remind him what the word of God says. No matter what you and I may be tempted to succumb to, the Bible assures us that we have both the strength to resist and the power to endure. “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”

Temptation begins with a thought. If that thought is not brought into subjection to the will of God, it will result in negative behavior, and sometimes fatal consequences. Believers, keep this thought in mind, “the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation.”

The secret to resisting temptation lies in regulation and submission of all thoughts to the word of God. As God told Cain, “sin is crouching at the door…but you must master it.”

**Thought Starters**

1. In what area are you being tempted to worry, fear, seek revenge, quit etc.? _________

2. What are some ways you have learned to counter or stand against the enemy’s attacks? __________________________________________________________

**Assignment:**

1. Continue memorizing Philippians 4:6-7
2. Keep using the yawning exercises and H.E.L.P. questions.
3. Throughout the day self –regulate your thoughts by categorizing them and applying CCCR to refute all negative thoughts.
4. Memorize the T.H.I.N.K test and use it during the day, as thoughts arise.
5. Pray to Jesus and ask him to strengthen your mind to win your “Mind Games” today.

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117 The Holy Bible, 1Corinthians 10:1, NASB.

118 The Holy Bible, 2 Peter 2:9, NASB.

119 The Holy Bible, Genesis 4:7, NASB.
Week 2

Thought Management 201

*Self-talk changes the picture—it changes the programming, which creates the belief, which develops the attitude, which creates the feelings, which controls the behavior.*

*Shad Helmestter, PhD*

Day 7

**Self-talk: Your Internal Dialog-Its Source and its Consequences  Pt. 1**

The telephone rings. On the other end is a frantic wife in a frenzied state of mind, calling her Pastor for help. Pastor, can you meet me at the hospital. My husband is in the ICU on a life support. What happened? Well, Pastor, remember how my husband use to always tell you that he had something to tell you and would make appointments to see you, but would always cancel out at the last minute. Well, what he was afraid to tell you was he was a drug addict. He is addicted to some form of cocaine. After I left for work, he stayed home to get high. While high on cocaine, he heard a little voice inside of his head, repeatedly telling him to go to the garage and drink some anti-freeze. Listening to the voice, he drank the anti-freeze. After drinking the anti-freeze, he came to his senses. Called me to tell me what he had done. I told him to go to the emergency room immediately. Shocked, dazed and frightened, he started walking to the hospital emergency room, but collapsed on the street blocks from the hospital. Someone found him, called the ambulance and they brought him to the emergency room. I am now at the hospital, staring at him through the ICU window. They think he is brain dead. Pastor, can you come to the hospital immediately?

Truth be told, we all have an internal voice that speaks to us constantly. Social scientist refer to it as our internal dialog and it is one of the primary sources of our thoughts. My research reveals that our thoughts emanate from seven sources. (This is by no means an exhaustive list,
but an over simplification of the myriad of sources of one’s thought.) Those principal sources are classified in the following seven categories: science (the brain’s anatomy 12-55K thoughts per day,\textsuperscript{120} sensory mechanisms (the five senses), specific events (both positive and negative) spiritual factors (God, Satan, the flesh, our sinful heart), secularism (world view), our social contacts/interactions, and lastly, self-talk (things we have experienced, and believe to be true). It is this latter category to which today’s lesson will discuss.

Self-talk has to do with the running internal dialogue that we encounter on a daily basis. Self-talk plays a defining role in the thoughts we experience on a daily bases and contributes to how we perceive ourselves. For example, if as a child you grew up hearing repeatedly that you were unwanted, unloved and worthless, over a period of time, subconsciously and consciously, you would begin to believe it to be true. You would then develop and internal dialog which says, “I am worthless” and I am unworthy of love.” Wright refers to these thoughts as automatic thoughts. “Automatic thoughts are learned. We listen to others and what they say about us, and we believe the statements. And what is more, we tend to become what we believe.”\textsuperscript{121} This is why the Bible affirms, “For as he [a man] thinks within himself, so he is.”\textsuperscript{122} Hence, it makes sense, if one’s self-talk is negative, it will generate negative thoughts and feelings, conversely, if one’s self-talk is positive, it will generated positive thoughts and feelings.

The Origin of your Self-talk

Your self-talk is rooted in your core beliefs. Core beliefs are those beliefs we hold to be true about life, about God, others and ourselves. Your “core beliefs have been shaped since

\textsuperscript{120} “National Science Foundation.” National Science Foundation. accessed December 16, 2013. \url{http://www.nsf.gov/}

\textsuperscript{121} Amen, \textit{Magnificent Mind At Any Age}, 29.

\textsuperscript{122} The Holy Bible, Proverbs 23:7, NASB.
childhood by a vast array of family relationships, family patterns and family rules and influence(s). Those play a major role in our thought life. Your family instilled in you a pattern of thoughts, as well as expressions and behaviors.” 123 Some of those thoughts, expressions and behaviors were positive while others were negative. In light of the fact that none of us were raised by perfect parents, in a perfect environment, coupled with our inherent sinful nature, it is easy to see why we have a proclivity toward negativity.

Keep in mind the things you have learned about the brain. Things which we heard as a child, throughout adolescence, and into adulthood, create “grooves” or neurological pathway in our brains and become the essence of how we perceive ourselves. In time they become our core beliefs and continue to influence our thoughts throughout life. “For as a man thinks, so he will become.” 124 So just as we have learned to check, challenge and change our thoughts, we must also learn to check, challenge, and change our self-talk. For if left unchallenged, it will continue to shape our self perception throughout life. 125 Do you know what your core beliefs are?

**Thought Starters**

By way of personal application, I shall now lead you into an exploration of your personal core values. Many times one’s core values may be hard to ascertain, hence, over the next five mornings, I want you to ask yourself a series of CBT questions designed by Dr. Norman Wright. 126 By engaging in this process, you will be able to access which core beliefs are prompting your thoughts.

1. What I believe about myself: (Write down whatever comes to mind.)

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124 The Holy Bible, Proverbs 23:7, LMT.
126 Ibid., 66-67.
I am _______________  I am _______________  I am _______________

This belief came from:___________________________________________

2. What I believe about other people: ____________________________

This belief came from:___________________________________________

3. What I believe about God: ____________________________

This belief came from:___________________________________________

After identifying your core beliefs, you now have to learn to challenge them to assess whether they are true or not or whether you are engaging in a form of distorted thinking.

Recognize that core beliefs do not change overnight. As you have already learned, the brain is a creature of habit, and so any new information that is introduced, it will push back against, but you must learn to push back on the push back. Since your core beliefs are rooted deeply in your brain, it will take a concerted effort, over a period of time to dislodge certain forms of distorted thinking, but change is possible.

One of the best ways to uproot a distorted negative core belief is to look for hard evidence that contradicts the deeply held belief. For example, you have been told repeatedly that you are an underachiever and therefore will never reach your full potential for success. Because you were told this repeatedly, you now believe it to be true. Hence, you tend to underperform in certain areas. Notice, I did not say in ALL areas. Here is the good news; your brain responds to evidence. Hence, in order to uproot and change that core belief, you have to present your brain evidence, which contradicts your core belief that you are an underachiever. Your job now is to work like a detective and uncover any evidence, big or small, where you over achieved and were recognized or praised for your achievement. As you search the corridors of your mind looking for evidence, you remember the time you won a first place ribbon for an exhibit you entered in
the science fair in elementary school. In addition, as a high school athlete you set a track and field record that lasted for over twenty-five years before it was broken. As you continue to look for evidence, your boss reminds you that you were selected over thirty candidates for the position you now hold. Your parents remind you that despite their doubts, that you were the first in your family to graduate from college. Empowered with this new information, you are prepared to check, challenge and change, and reframe the negative core belief that you are an under achiever. Thus, the next time your negative self-talk surfaces, you can check and challenge it with your new evidence. You can talk back to your negative critical self-talk and present the aforementioned evidence to quiet your inner critic. Your inner critic may very well respond, that was all in the past. But you continue to underachieve in such and such. To which you respond, I may under achieve in some areas of my life, but the areas in which I am interested I excel. I am capable of achieving as much success as I put my mind to because I am a capable and talented individual. God’s word tells me, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

As you repeatedly and consistently challenge negative self-talk based on evidence, you accomplish dual outcomes: first, you loosen the mental stronghold (an ingrained pattern of thinking) thus quelling the voice of the inner critic; second, you begin to forge a new neurological pathway in the brain as you consistently practice and repeat your new core value. Your new core belief being: I am an over achiever, not an under achiever. I can achieve as much success as I want to because I am a capable and talented individual. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

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127 The Holy Bible, Philippians 4:13, NASB.

128 The Holy Bible, Philippians 4:13, NASB.
To enhance the brain's capacity to embrace your new core value, write your new core belief down on a 3x5 card and repeat it out loud to yourself every time your inner critic speaks. Wright suggests, “to really cement the change, read the list out loud. Remember, you need to hear the words to reinforce the truth and have it impact your brain in a more forceful way. This will help you really believe the evidence.” As you learn to talk back to yourself and employ the CCCR it will help to curtail a plethora of negative thoughts.

Having identified several of your core beliefs and trace it to the corresponding negative self-talk. Put on your detective cap and look for evidence to refute the self-talk and write out your response on a 3x5 card. Throughout the day, read your rebuttal aloud to yourself when ever your inner critic opens its mouth. The more times you say, the more impact it has on your brain. The more you say it, the faster you will experience neurological changes.

Assignment:

1. Continue memorizing Philippians 4:6-7
2. Using the yawning exercises and H.E.L.P. questions continue to do so.
3. Throughout the day self–regulate your thoughts by categorizing them and applying CCCR to refute all negative thoughts.
4. Memorize the T.H.I.N.K test and use it during the day, as thoughts arise.
5. Continue to refute negative self-talk using CCCR

Week 3

Thought Management 201

Next to a knowledge of God, a knowledge of who you are is by far the most important truth you can possess.

Neil T. Anderson

Day 1

129 Wright, A Better Way to Think, 69.
Building a Healthy Self-Concept

Congratulations! You have made it to week three day one. Today’s lesson will focus on building a healthy self-concept, what you think about yourself. This definition is based on the Apostles admonition, “I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment…” Paul cautions you to not think you are more significant than you are and at the same time to not think of yourself as being less significant than God deems you.

Have you ever been on the verge of accomplishing something great, but somewhere from within you whispered, you can’t do this. You will not succeed. Who are you kidding? You failed last time and you will fail again. As a result, you backed down, drew back, froze up, gave up, and walked away from that state certification exam, that marriage, that church plant, or that career opportunity. A poor self-concept will cause you to flee instead of fight when facing a challenge. You may have heard it said, “those who believe they can and those who believe they can’t are both right.”

You are not the only one who struggles with your self-concept; the children of Israel were faced with a major faith challenge as recorded in Numbers 13-14. They were on the brink of accomplishing something big after God miraculously delivered them from the hand of Pharaoh and from a life of 400 years of slavery. The children of Israel were now standing on the precipice of entering into the promise land the land that flowed with milk and honey. Moses sent 12 spies into the land (one from each tribe) on a secret co-operative mission to spy out the land. They were to spy on the inhabitants of the land, gather fruit, and return within 40 days with a report to share with Moses and the congregation of over one million emancipated slaves. Upon their return, Moses gathered them together before the great assembly of people to request them to

130 The Holy Bible, Romans 12:3, NASB.
report their findings, Numbers 13-14. Read the story for yourself. As you read the story, be sure to observe the state of mind of the spies as well as the congregation to see who was operating in their frontal lobe versus those who were operating in full limbic mode.

Now that you have read the story, read it again. This time notice that the report of the twelve spies mirrored how they perceived themselves. The reason we need to work on building a positive self-image is a poor self-image affects our perception of God, ourselves, and the world around us. The ten spies’ poor self-image affected their interpretation of their circumstances. The ten concluded, “we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.” Their poor self-image caused them to perceive themselves as grasshoppers, mere insects, that their enemies could easily squash.

You may believe that possessing a healthy self-image is beneficial, yet it is not necessary because self image does not significantly impact perspective, thoughts, emotions, attitudes, or behaviors. However, you are mistaken. Your self-image is like a cruise control in a car. Once set, it will lock your car into a set speed, however, based on the roads terrain it may surpass the set speed or fall below the set speed, but not for very long. The cruise control will bring it back into conformity of the locked in speed. In like manner, our self-image may at times run a somewhat higher depending on our successes and achievements, but eventually it will recalibrate to its normal setting due in large part to our core beliefs, self-talk, negative labels, and our self-image.

God’s desire is for you to think and see yourself as He sees you no more and no less. Concerning the children of Israel, only two of them, Caleb and Joshua, were willing to cast aside their former slave mentality and think of themselves as God thought of them. They were the

131 The Holy Bible, Numbers 13:33, NASB.
only two to say, “We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it.”

The other ten spies refuted Caleb saying, “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us.” The remainder of the adult congregation, agreed with the naysayers and chose to retain rather than replace their old labels (helpless, slaves, and weak) etched in their minds. They chose not to forget it. They behaved like most circus elephants.

Have you ever visited a circus and pondered in amazement how a massive four ton elephant could be held captive by a chain around its ankle attached to a twelve inch stake in the ground? Human intellect knows that an ankle bracelet cannot hold an elephant at bay. Yet, it does. How is it possible? It has been said that elephants do not forget. Hence, when the elephant is young and very impressionable, its trainer ties it to a reinforced peg in the ground. The peg is so reinforced that the young elephant cannot up root or pull it up. As a youngster, he pulls and pulls on the chain, but to no avail. Hence, the young elephant concludes that the chain and peg are stronger than he is and he never forgets it. As he becomes a full grown adult with the strength to easily uproot the peg, he is held captive by his own thoughts of the past. It is not the chain that is holding him, but his memory of the chain’s power.

You may have been held captive to memories or labels that were attached to you as a child or adolescent, but continue to hold you captive even as an adult. Your trainers may have told you some of the following things. “You are unlovable. You will not accomplish much in life. You are just like your father; he could not keep his marriage together and neither will you. You had a child out of wedlock; now, no man will ever marry you. God is punishing you because of your past sin. You will never be able to lose that weight: you have no will power.” Yet, today, God is calling you to pull up those mental pegs, which have held you captive.

132 The Holy Bible, Numbers 13:33, NASB.

133 The Holy Bible, Numbers 13:31, NASB.
Be just like the elephant that learned accidentally that the peg can no longer hold him. Imagine seeing him wondering around the circus dragging his chain, walking with a freedom he’s never known before and never again to be held in bondage to a twelve inch peg. Running behind him is his frantic handler trying to control him, knowing that what he used before to hold him will no longer secure the elephant.

Satan much like that frantic owner, does not want you be set free from the life changing truths discovered in this twenty-one day plan. He wants to keep you captive to your unhealthy self-concept. He wants you to see yourself as he sees you, a captive. However, Jesus wants you to break free and N.O.W. M.O.V.E. F.O.R.W.A.R.D in the direction of your new healthy self-identity based on the Word of God. Imitate Caleb and Joshua and be willing to see it, say it, and seize it.

Say to yourself…

**I AM…**Significant. Why? Because God loves me and sent his Son to die upon the cross for my sins, and adopted me into his family and has given me a new name. I am a born again Christian, “fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of God.”

And because of who I am, I can **N.O.W M.O.V.E F.O.R.W.A.R.D.** to build a healthy self-image.

**I Am a…**

- New creation in Christ Jesus (2Cor. 5:17)
- Ordained and called by God to fulfill His purpose for my life. (Jeremiah 1:5,29:11)
- Whole heatedly in love with Jesus and I walk in the power of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18)

Transition: And because I walk in the power of the Holy Spirit…

**I Am…**

- More than a conqueror (Romans 8:37)

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134 The Holy Bible, Psalm 139:14, NASB.
Overcomer (1 John 5:4)
Victor not a victim (1 Cor. 15:57-58)
Eternally loved (Romans 8:35, 38-39)

I Am…

Favored of God (Psalm 5:12)

Oh so bold, confident and courageous (Ps. 28:1; 2 Tim. 1:7)

Reconciled to be a reconciler (2 Cor. 5:18-20)

Well protected (Isaiah 54:17; Psalm 23:4-6)

Assured of success (Psalm 1:3; Nehemiah 2:20; Joshua 1:8)

Righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet 2:9)

Destined to win if I do not quit (2 Cor. 2:14; Romans 8:31; Isa. 41:9-10; 43:1-4)

Concerning your identify in Christ, Neil T. Anderson, author of Piercing the Darkness, affirms, “Because you are in Christ, everyone of those characteristics is completely true of you, and there’s nothing you can do to make them more true. But you can make these traits more meaningful and productive in your life by simply choosing to believe what God has said about you.”  

Thought Starters

1. In order to build a healthy self-concept, name some mental pegs that you are going to have to pull up, in order to think of yourself as God sees you? I have accepted the label of ___________.

2. Which of these I Am mantras do you find the most encouraging or enlightening? ___________.

3. How does maintaining a negative self-image impact you neurologically? ______________

Assignment

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1. Continue memorizing Philippians 4: 6-7, but now add verse 8.

2. Write the I am significant **N.O.W M.O.V.E. F.O.R.W.A.R.D.** mantra on a 3x5 card and repeat to yourself seven times a day. State it in the first person (I am) and then stand in front a mirror and state it in the second person (You are). DO NOT try to memorize the whole thing at once this week. Take it in segments of the course of this week and well beyond the 21 day plan. Start memorizing why I am significant; next move on to the N.O.W. once you have that memorized move on to the M.O.V.E and eventually on to F.O.R.W.A.R.D. As you are learning to memorize it, you will distract your mind from thinking negative thoughts.

3. Optional: If this is an area you would like to explore on a deeper level, purchase a copy of Josh McDowell’s book Building Your Self-Image.

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**Week 3**  
**Thought Management 201**

*A healthy self-image is seeing yourself as God sees you—no more and no less.*

*Josh McDowell*

**Day 2**

**Building a Healthy Self-concept Part 2**

Because your self-perception plays a critical role in generating either positive or negative thoughts, two lessons are included to building a healthy self-concept. There was a beautiful young woman, in her mid thirties, who confided in her pastor that only recently, she had purchased a mirror for her home. Observing her pastor’s cryptic expression, she went on to explain her protracted battle with a debilitating drug addiction. She said, during those days, “I could not stand to look at myself, so I removed all the mirrors, including the bathroom mirror, from my house. Then she smiled and with a twinkle in her eye said,” but I like me now.” What you think, see, and feel about yourself plays a critical role in the kind of thoughts you think.
For clarity, the researcher will employ and define three frequently used interchangeable terms: self-image, self-concept, and self-esteem. The term self-image will refer to how you see yourself; self-concept refers to what you think about yourself, and self-esteem is how you feel about yourself. Some people have the idea that having a healthy self-concept does not significantly affect their lives. On the contrary, how you see yourself is more important than you might think. John DeVines author of How Much Are You Worth?, states the following:

The answer to how much I am worth determines whether I am happy or sad, excited or depressed, in love with life, or thinking about suicide. If I think that I am valuable—worth a lot—I will function well at my job, get along better with my spouse, and have a tremendous sense of well-being. But if I think I am worthless, I lack motivation for work, and am convinced that everything I do will fail.  

Faced with this summation, it is vitally important that we learn to see ourselves in a positive healthy way. Unless you have forgotten recent lessons, remember, a negative self-image will perpetuate negative self-talk, which will generate more negative thoughts and over stimulate the limbic system, causing your glands to release chemicals that produce toxic emotions which negatively impact your overall physical, emotional, and yes your spiritual health.

For a sundry of different reasons, some Christians are squeamish with the concept of having a healthy self-image thinking it leads to pride, arrogance, and other sinful attitudes. However, upon a cursory review of Scripture, you are told to love yourself at least five times (Lev. 19:18; Matt.19:19; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9). The Apostle Paul told husbands “to love their wives as they love themselves.” In the Scriptures, a natural self-love is affirmed. The Scriptures never tell you to hate yourself, just as it never commands you to love yourself, it just assumes that you will care for yourself and have a concern for your own well-

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137 The Holy Bible, Ephesians 5: 28-29, NASB.
being. Possessing “self worth is to have a conviction that you have fundamental value because you were created by God in His image and because Jesus died for your sin.”  

If your creator says you are valuable and worthwhile, who are you to refute his assessment?

For Christians who are skeptical and leery of talk about self-image, read Josh McDowell’s definition; it may set your heart at ease. McDowell in his book Building Your Self-Image, defines a healthy self-image as “seeing yourself as God sees you, no more and no less.”

Stop and read that three more times. Remember, the goal of the twenty-one day plan is to help you renew your mind and transform your thoughts. The essence of Biblical mind renewal is best defined by noted televangelist, Creflo Dollar, on a telecast aired on December 21, 2013. Dollar defined Biblical mind renewal as, “exchanging your thoughts, opinions, and beliefs for God’s thoughts, opinions, and beliefs.” What you think about yourself either grieves the heart of God or delights him.

According to Josh McDowell, matter how confident and together others may appear, we all struggle with self-image issues in varying degrees. Listed below are opinions, beliefs and attitudes characteristic of people suffering with low self-esteem:

(1) Pessimistic outlook on life; (2) Extreme sensitivity to the opinions of other people; (3) Self-consciousness about appearance, performance, or status; (4) Striving to become something or somebody instead of relaxing and enjoying who they are; (5) Fear of God or belief that He is uninterested or angry with them; (6) A problem in believing or accepting God’s love or the love of another person.

Thought starters

1. How many of the aforementioned perspectives, resonated with you? A few, some or many?

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139 Ibid., 39.

140 Ibid., 53.

141 Ibid., 53-54.
2. Based on #5 and #6, how might a poor self-image negatively impact one’s spiritual life? ____

3. Make note of a few perspectives that you plan to begin working on today. I plan to build up my self-image by changing the way I ____________________________

   Next, try to present evidence that disputes the believe or practice. For example, I do not feel God loves me. However, when I read the Bible, I observe such passages as John 3:16, Romans 8:35, 38-39, Romans 5:8 and Jeremiah 31:3 affirming that He does love me. My parent from the time I was a child always told me that Jesus loved me. My pastor preaches weekly about the love of God. At certain times in my life I have felt God’s love, but now I do not. Despite the evidence, I still feel unloved. Why? Keep digging. Here are some examples of what you may discover, I began to feel God did not love me after I lost a parent, God failed to answer an important prayer request, I stopped reading my Bible and going to church, etc. Perhaps you may conclude, I never felt an emotional connection to God. We will address this in tomorrow’s lesson. As you continue to look for evidence, you may discover that one reason you need not feel loved and accepted by God is because you have not learned to love and accept yourself.

4. Can you honestly thank God for making you the way you are? ______________

   Until, we can learn to love ourselves, strengths, weaknesses, warts, and all, as God loves us, we will be dogged by a lot of negative self condemning thoughts. “Satan will try to convince you that you are an unworthy, unacceptable, sin-sick person who will never amount to anything in God’s eyes.” 142 Loving and accepting one’s self, plays an integral part in feeling loved and accepted by God.

142 Anderson, Victory over the Darkness, 56.
David Eckman, said, “When God looks at His Son in heaven, He sees us. When He looks at us on earth, He sees the Son.”

5. What point was he trying to make? ______________________

Having probed into sensitive self-image issues, now it is time to turn your attention to building up your self-image. McDowell provides a series of practical habits to develop to enhance one’s self-image:

1. Do not label yourself negatively (“I am clumsy” and so on). You tend to become the label you give yourself; (2) Behave assertively (but not aggressively) even in threatening situations, particularly when you don’t feel like doing so; (3) When you fail, admit or confess it to God your Father, and then refuse to condemn yourself. “Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” Remember, you are in the process of becoming like Christ. Growth takes time. Be as kind to yourself as you would be (or would hope to be) to any other person; (4) Do not compare yourself with others. You are a unique person. God enjoys you in your uniqueness; have a similar attitude toward yourself; (5) Be positive (Phil. 4:8) See how long you can go without saying something negative about (yourself) another person or situation.

**Thought Starters**

1. The Apostle Paul said, “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.” How might this verse serve to encourage you as you seek with God’s help to improve you self-concept? _________

A word of caution, a poor self-image is not the sole cause of all these factors. There may be many other causes such as unconfessed sin or rebellion etc...

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144 The Holy Bible, Romans 8:1, NASB.


146 The Holy Bible, Philippians 1:6, NASB.
2. How does McDowell’s definition of self-image “seeing yourself as God sees you—no more and no less.”\textsuperscript{147} square with the Apostle Paul’s words, “I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment…”\textsuperscript{148} Do the two statements complement each other or contradict each other? ______

Assignment

1. Continue memorizing Philippians 4: 6-8
2. Write down and repeat the I am significant N.O.W  M.O.V.E  F.O.R.W.A.R.D. mantra on a 3x5 card and repeat at least seven times today. State it in the first person (I am) and then stand in front a mirror and state it in the second person (You are).

Week 3

Thought Management 201

\textit{In thy presence is fullness of joy; In thy right hand there are pleasures forever…keep me as the apple of [Thy] eye. Psalm 16:11;17:8}

Day 3

God’s Love: How to Feel it

Welcome to day seventeen, the end is in sight. Today, you are going to examine in detail the love of God. However, today’s lesson will not be a litany of verses affirming God’s love. It is given that the scriptures are replete with verses that speak to the love of God. The question in the minds of some if not many believers is why don’t they feel God loves them. Some may question whether God even likes them. Have you ever felt that way? Truth be told, you know you have felt that way on more than one occasion. It is a normal human response to doubt or disappointment. Are you familiar with the Four Spiritual Laws tract? Do you remember the little train and caboose illustration? The first engineer car was labeled fact and the last, the

\textsuperscript{147} McDowell, \textit{Building Your Self-Image}, 39.

\textsuperscript{148} The Holy Bible, Romans 12:3, NASB.
caboose was labeled feeling. The point being, you are saved based on the facts (Christ death, burial, and resurrection) and not on your feelings. While that is true, your feelings give support to the facts that you are saved. It may be through your intellect that you come to know God, but it is through your feelings and emotions that you come to experience the love of God.

**If God Loves Me, Why Don’t I Feel Loved**

Today’s lesson is designed to help you discover reasons you may not feel God’s love (barring outright sin and rebellion) and what you can do from a neurological standpoint to help foster the feeling you desire. Keep in mind the fact that just because you may not feel loved, does not mean you are not loved. Dr. David Eckman personally wrestled with not feeling loved by God, happened upon the following discovery; he discovered that the more dysfunctional your home life is, the less you feel God loves you. Eckman, a professor at Western Seminary and former Campus for Christ staffer, in working with thousands of college students for several years, discovered that family back ground plays a major role in determining whether you feel God loves you. To assess which Christians feel God loves them in contrast to those who do not feel God loves them, Eckman has discovered that Christians fall in to three categories according to their family of origin.

Family Group One (healthy family background). These individuals grew up in homes in which they experienced love and affection on a consistent basis. “They felt loved and accepted whether they performed well or not.”\(^{149}\) The result, they felt an emotional connection with their parents and they transferred those emotional feelings to God. Hence, they felt loved by God.

Family Group Two (confused family background). They are labeled the confused group because they were given confusing signals growing up. They have positive memories of

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\(^{149}\) Eckman, *Becoming Who God Intended*, 123.
growing up, felt love, and affection was meted out freely, but as time went on they felt they had to earn their parents love and affection by their performance. This Eckman labels the “yo-yo of affection.”

Family Group Three (dysfunctional family background). “Rarely have they experienced pure, undeserved affection.” They were denied the proper love and affection as children and as adults therefore have a low level suspicion of trusting God and often feel little to no emotion. Eckman cautions, if you are in this third group, emotional feeling toward God will be harder to come by. However, they can be cultivated by exerting more effort than those who fall in to family groups one and two. For those coming out a dysfunctional back ground, the extra work you have to do has to do with the use of your imagination. To get the loving feelings you desire, you have to meditate upon new pictures of God’s love. Because these pictures were not in your home, you are going to have to invoke them mentally. By way of example, if your earthly father was verbally unaffirming, picture yourself, in the place of Christ at his baptism. See in your mind’s eye, and hear God the Father saying of you, “This is my beloved Son (insert your name) in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17) Or you can imagine God holding your hand and looking into your eyes as you both stand on the edge of the sea shore getting ready to walk in and He says to you, “When you pass through the waters I will be with you; and through the rivers they will not overflow you” (Isaiah 43:2). Because we live in a fallen world filled with imperfect people, the only one guaranteed to love and accept you unconditionally is God Himself.

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150 Eckman, *Becoming Who God Intended*, 123.
151 Ibid., 124.
152 Ibid., 126.
In order for some to feel God’s love, it is going to require more than the ingestion of knowledge. Christians are weekly presented with truthful information, but observe very little change in their thought lives, emotions, attitudes, or behaviors. Why? It is important to be able to distinguish between gaining new information versus integrating that new information to bring about change in our thought life, emotions, attitudes, and our behaviors. Eckman, underscores the critical difference between information and integration. “With information, the conscious mind has simply placed data into the memory. With integration, the conscious mind has taken a picture formed in the imagination and placed it in the subconscious, where it will affect emotions.” He contends it is for this reason the Bible is ineffective in the lives of many Christians. Eckman argues, as you begin to create new Bible-centered mental images of yourself, God, and others, in place of the negative images derived from childhood, adolescence and negative experiences as adults, your emotions will begin to change and you will begin to feel the positive emotions as you meditate upon new mental pictures.

All of us, to one degree or another, need to use our imaginations to emotionally feel God’s rich love for us. In the Bible, God has painted many pictures to serve as mental images and snap shots to illustrate His love for us. Use these mental pictures as you grapple with the truth that God loves you and delights in you. As an example of integration, read the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15. Envision yourself as the returning prodigal son, having rejected, and spurned your father’s love, spent his money, soiled his name in the broader community, and shamed him in your local community, but now you need him. You are penniless, foul, soiled by the world, broken homeless, loveless, and starving. While at your very worst, despite all of the wrong you have done, you know there is a chance that your loving father will still take you back. Hence, you swallow your pride, pick up your worn and tattered shoes, and knapsack, and head in

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the direction of your father’s house. The journey is long. You are bone tired, feet blistered, and
crusty. Yet, you press forward in the direction of home, the place you spent fun evenings with
you father and brother. Yes, home is the place where you worked and socialized with your
friends. It is the place where you were loved, accepted, and respected. As you approach the far
western boarder of your father’s farm you see someone from a distance, an older man who
appears to be looking for something. Who is he and what is he doing on your father’s property?
As you approach, it appears as though the man has ended his search and is now jumping up and
down frantically waving his arms in the air. As you continue to walk, the animated stranger
appears to be headed in your direction. You think, am I in danger? Your heart begins to
palpitate. He is still too far away for you to recognize, you would turn away, but he stands
between you and your father’s house. The animated stranger is still running towards you, but he
will not stop you from reaching your destination. Hence, you decide to run toward him in an
attempt to scare him off. You are running at him and he is now running toward you with even
increased velocity. Who is he? What does he want? Why is he running toward you? You must
get to your father’s house. You have nothing and you have no one. Therefore, you will not stop
until you arrive home. The stranger is now hollering and shouting, What is he saying? Who is
he calling? It sounds as though he is saying Sam, no he’s saying son. It’s your father. It’s dad.
He’s coming to meet you. He loves you! He loves you still! Despite all you have done; he
loves you still! You embrace, fall down, weep, stand up, and walk back home together hand in
hand and in step together. You hear yourself promising, your father that you will never leave
home again. You hear the father telling you that His love for you is more than you will ever
know.
For those of you from dysfunctional homes, you have to work a slightly harder. Go outside the Bible and look for expressions of love that mirror God’s love for you. When you see a father affectionately, carrying his tired children in his arms after a long day at a theme park, take that image, play around with it and say, “That is what God is like.” You need to feel these emotionally rich truths. Listen to a love song and imagine God is singing the song to you. Barry White years ago wrote and recorded a song entitled, I’m Never Ever Going to Give You Up. Whenever, you mess up and feel like God is disappointed with you, hear Jesus singing, I’m Never Ever Going to Give You Up. When you can learn to love yourself, weaknesses, warts, and all, just as God loves you, you will stop being so hard on yourself. Bear in mind, spiritual transformation is a process; you will be at it until Jesus carries you away. Since Jesus he has not grown tired of you and thrown in the towel, what gives you the right to quit on Him? Learn to laugh at yourself, pick yourself up, and run to Jesus. Whenever little children are hurting, they run to their parents. You can learn to do the same. Visualize Jesus in the place of your mother or father and learn to run to Him when you are hurting, scared, or just need to feel loved. God loves us whether we feel like He does or not.

Neurologically, the imagination is powerful. “The imagination has the power of making the things we picture real and effective.” It is the power of our imagination. If we want to learn to feel God’s love on a more consistent basis, we need to practice the integration of God’s word on a consistent basis. Remember what we learned about the brain? “The brain will try to make almost any routine into a habit, because habits allow our minds to ramp down more often.”

Your brain the hardest working organ in your body is trying to get some down time. In order

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to get its rest, it seeks to turn any behavior good or bad into a habit. The brain is not
discriminatory about the kind of information positive or negative. It will take whatever data you
give it consistently and make it into a habit. Not only will it make it into a habit, it will create its
very own neurological craving to perpetuate the habit.  

Have you ever wondered why David loved and desired the Lord so much? He tells us how he
became a man after God’s own heart, “… his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he
meditates day and night.”  

How did Joshua, cultivate a heart for God? He tells us, “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that
you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it: for then you will make your way
prosperous, and then you will have success.”  

These men were not born super men as you might suspect. They were people of flesh and bone like you. What differentiated them from you were their mental habits. Neurologically speaking, they inundated their minds with the Word of
God by meditating upon it first in small portions. Their brains responded to their actions by
creating it into a mental habit. The more they spent time in the word, their brains created their
own neurological craving, which caused their brain to crave Bible meditation more and more.  

Newberg, “The longer you focus on your goal, the more real it begins to feel and if you stay
focused long enough you’ll alter the neural circuitry in your brain. The same is true for any
principle in life. Focus on God long enough and God becomes neurologically real. Focus on
peace and your body becomes relaxed and serene.” 

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157 The Holy Bible, Psalm 1:2, NASB.

158 The Holy Bible, Joshua 1:8, NASB.


Neuro-researcher, Dr. Tancredi, proved, “Patterns that are repeated over time become wired in the brain and body\textsuperscript{161} substantiating the fact that the human brain is forever changing growing an adapting to new stimuli and information. The brain changes, adapts because of the development of new circuitry, and induces more and more of the… behavior.”\textsuperscript{162} Have you ever envied another’s believers walk with God and wondered how they became so spiritual? The answer, brain plasticity. They started out consistently spending a little time reading, pondering, and obeying the word. Over time, (twenty-one days) their brains sought to make a habit out of their routine. Once the habit was established the brains neurological craving kicked in and induced more and more of a craving for that behavior to be repeated. Neurologically that is how it happens. The more time we spend in the presence of God, the more we will desire to spend time with God. A secondary goal of the twenty-one day plan is to help you to establish a consistent time that you meet with God, so that your brain will turn it into a habit. The more we focus in on feeling God’s love through the integration of God’s word, the more we will feel His love. We just have to do it consistently. Go through the motion and the e-motion will follow.

**Thought Starter**

The following questions are taken from The Bible in Counseling workbook.\textsuperscript{163}

1. List five people who you believe love you and one way each person has demonstrated his love for you.________

2. What would God have to do to prove to you that He loves you?_______________________

3. What has God done to show you that He loves you? (Romans 5:8: 1John 4:9-10)_______
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\textsuperscript{162} Tancredi, *Hardwired Behavior* 43.

4. What is the greatest act of love a person can do? (John 15:13)_______________

5. Do you love anyone that much?_____ 

6. Who loves you that much?_______________

7. God loves you that much! Read John 3:16; Romans 5:8 and 1John 4:9-10. In your own words state what God did to show His great love?___________________________

8. What did you do to deserve God’s love? _________________

9. How much does God love you? (John 17:23)__________________

Assignment

1. Continue memorizing Philippians 4: 6-8

2. Write and repeat the I am significant N.O.W M.O.V.E mantra on a 3x5 card and repeat at least seven times today. State it in the first person (I am) and then stand in from a mirror and state it in the second person (You are)

3. Continue to daily review all your 3x5 cards (Scripture, T.H.I.N.K, H.E.LP., RUST F, CCCR)

Week 3
Thought Management 201

There is very little difference in people.
But that little difference makes a big difference.
The little difference is attitude.
The big difference is whether it is positive or negative.
W. Clement Stone

Day 4
Eight Brain Exercises

Welcome. You are on the home stretch. Only five lesson to go. Just as your physical body needs exercise to help it perform on an optimal level and keep it healthy, your brain is no exception. Newberg and Waldman, authors of How God Changes Your Brain, based on their research, have discovered the eight most effective neuroplasticity brain exercises. Some are
bound to surprise you. You may equally be surprised as to what did not make their top eight. Get ready for the countdown.

Starting from the least to the greatest. The eighth best brain exercise is to smile.\textsuperscript{164} Research indicates that “smiling repetitively helps to interrupt mood disorders and strengthen the brain’s neural ability to maintain a positive outlook on life.”\textsuperscript{165} In addition, smiling helps you appear more compassionate and empathic. It also causes others to feel at peace and calmer when they see a smiling face. Playing happy music will many times evoke a smile which can help to change your mood and disposition.\textsuperscript{166}

The seventh best way to exercise your brain is to “stay intellectual active.”\textsuperscript{167} You have heard the expression, “If you do not use it, you will lose it.” It is an adage also associated with the brain. “Intellectual and cognitive stimulation strengthens the neural connections throughout the frontal lobe, and this in turn, improves your ability to communicate, solve problems, and make rational decisions concerning your behavior.”\textsuperscript{168} Watching the science channel, playing chess, reading books, going back to school, visiting the museum, listening to books on tape or engaging in other forms of intellectual activity keep neurons and dendrites well connected as does engaging in difficult challenges.\textsuperscript{169}

Engaging in religious and spiritual issues and problems will also stimulate brain function. Reading scriptures, reflecting on their meaning, connecting with friends, and seriously discussing

\textsuperscript{164} Newberg and Waldman, \textit{How God Changes Your Brain}, 151.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid., 152.
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., 153.
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid., 153-154.
the deepest issues facing humanity are outstanding ways of activating complex circuits in your brain. 170

The sixth best brain exercise is to “consciously relax.” 171 Resting relaxes the body and “It interrupts the brain’s release of stress-stimulating neurochemicals, and stress is the number one killer in America.” 172 Some activities that help to relax the body include, listening to calming music, knitting, counting rosaries beads, and engaging in relaxing forms of religious behavior release stress and anxiety and calm the mind.

The fifth best way to exercise the brain is to yawn. 173 Yawning to exercise the brain may seem like an oxymoron since yawning is often associated with fatigue. However, yawning rushes oxygen to the brain and to achieve the maximum benefits, one has to yawn from ten to twelve times consecutively.

The fourth-best brain exercise is meditation. 174 “Even ten to fifteen minutes of meditation appears to have significantly positive effects on cognition, relaxation, and psychological health, and it has been shown to reduce smoking and binge-drinking behavior.” 175 Silent meditation on God’s goodness, love, and Scriptural promises are examples of meditation with positive effects.


171 Ibid., 155.

172 Ibid.

173 Ibid.

174 Ibid., 159.

175 Ibid.
The third best way to exercise the brain is through aerobic exercise.\textsuperscript{176} The more vigorous the better, yet, “all forms of exercise enhance neural performance and rebuild damaged circuits caused by brain lesions and strokes.”\textsuperscript{177} The benefits of aerobic exercise are numerous including improved cognitive and academic performance and enhanced brain plasticity.\textsuperscript{178} Newman points out that this list is not exhaustive and that yoga is also beneficial as exercise.

The second best way to exercise your brain is through dialogue with others.\textsuperscript{179} This may on the onset sound a bit odd. Yet Newberg states, but “if we don’t exercise our language skills, large portions of the brain will not effectively interconnect with other neural structures. Dialogue requires social interaction, and the more social ties we have, the less our cognitive abilities will decline.”\textsuperscript{180} However, foolish talking, gossiping are more surface in nature and do not engage the brain enough. Talking about the newest shoe store in town or the latests video do not qualify as meaning dialogue; Newman insists the brain becomes engaged when we talk about deep contemplative subjects such as theology, how to solve world problems such as poverty, famine, hunger, global warming, and positive talks about God that do not degenerate into ideological slugfests. Such types of negative discussions are damaging to your brain. From a Biblical perspective this agrees with Hebrews 10: 24 and James 5:16. Read them to identify the connection.

\textsuperscript{176} Newberg and Waldman, \textit{How God Changes Your Brain}, 160.
\textsuperscript{177} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid., 62.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid., 152.
The number one best way to exercise your brain is through exercising faith. Newberg defines faith as intrepid trust in your beliefs. It is imperative that believers trust their beliefs. To have doubt puts the brain in a very precarious state of mind. “Faith is equivalent with hope, optimism, and the belief that a positive future awaits the believer. Faith can also be defined as the ability to trust beliefs, even when there is no proof that such beliefs are accurate or true.” Concerning the importance of faith, psychiatrist, Victor E. Frankl, who was a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp, made the following observation, “The prisoner who had lost his faith in the future, his future was doomed. With his loss of belief in the future, he also lost his spiritual hold; he let himself decline and became subject to mental and physical decay.

Perhaps this is why the writer of Hebrews declares, “…without faith it is impossible to please God.” Jesus, the Son of God, said,

Have faith in God. Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, be taken up and cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it shall be granted him. Therefore, I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them and they shall be granted you.

According to Newberg, doubt and fear of the future put the human brain in an unstable, insecure, shaky, and unsafe state of mind. If the brain is to function healthily, it needs to be secured to a steady belief in a promising future secured by a belief in a promise keeping God.

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182 Ibid., 164.
184 The Holy Bible, Hebrews 11:6, NASB.
185 The Holy Bible, Mark 11:22-24, NASB.
Speaking of a promising future, God declares, “For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you; plans to give you hope and a future.” 186 But you cannot be double minded “But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf on the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man expect that he will receive ANYTHING from the Lord.” 187 Newberg, goes on to say, “Faith in an optimistic future may be a placebo, but it’s important to remember that placebos can cure, on average, 30 percent of most physical and emotional disease.” 188 Does positive thinking work? The answer is an emphatic, yes. A study conducted by the famed Mayo Clinic on the importance of optimistic thinking for maintaining optimal health discovered that positive thinking had the following effects on the body.

“(1) It decreases stress (2) It helps you resist catching the common cold; (3) It reduces the risk of coronary artery disease; (4) It eases breathing if you have certain respiratory diseases; (5) It improves your coping skills during hardships; (6) It reduces the stress-eliciting cortisol levels in your body.” 189

Pessimistic people on the other hand tend to experience more of the following:

“(1) More at risk to depression; (2) More anxious; (3) More sleeping problems; (4) More obsessive –compulsive behaviors; (5) Impaired social functioning; (6) Shorter life span; (7) Poorer mental functioning.” 190

186 The Holy Bible, Jeremiah 29:11, NIV.

187 The Holy Bible, James 1:6-7, NASB.

188 Newberg and Waldman, How God Changes Your Brain, 164.


190 Newberg and Waldman, How God Changes the Brain, 169.
Despite our propensity toward negativity, the human brain has a “bias toward optimism…if not we would be prone to increased anxiety and depression.”¹⁻¹ It is interesting that the Bible says, “God has given to each a measure of faith.”¹⁻² Newberg’s research confirms that, faith is essential for maintaining a healthy brain, exercise, and companionship, which are also vital for a healthy brain and body. Thus, scientific evidence, affirms what the Scriptures teach in places like Hebrews 10:24 and James 5:16.

No matter how faith filled and optimistic you might be, inevitably a tinge of doubt is bound to creep back in to undermine your resolve. What should you do with the doubt? Newberg addresses it in the following manner,

Truth can only be approximated by the brain. Instead what the brain does best is calculate the odds of success. Here is where faith kicks in because it is essential to remain optimistic about your chance of reaching your goal. So what do you do when all of the subtle, and not so subtle, self-doubt kicks in? You can do several things suppress them, evaluate them, or ruminate on them. Neurologically, it’s actually easier to suppress them, because the more you keep your mind focused on your optimistic belief of success, the more you will inhibit the functioning of the limbic system, which generates doubt and fear. Ruminating, unfortunately, strengthens the neural circuits that generate anxiety and embed the information into long term memory banks.¹⁻³

If over the past two weeks, doubt has crept into your mind, and the effectiveness of the twenty-one day plan in reducing the influx of negative thoughts seems to be waning, perhaps you have begun to waver. Please realize, that your lack of faith in the process is a negative thought that you need to check, challenge and change. It is a tempting negative thought to get you to quit. According to Newberg, you need to suppress such negative thoughts and not ruminate on them because they will activate your limbic system and cause more doubt.


¹⁻² The Holy Bible, Romans 12:3, NASB.

¹⁻³ Newberg and Waldman, How God Changes Your Brain, 166.
Thought Starters

1. In Mark 9:22, a desperate dad brings his mentally deranged son to Jesus to be healed. However, his faith is weak and so he says to Jesus “…If You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!” Jesus confronts the father’s unbelief and says, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” In light of what you have learned about doubt and how it affects the brain, what do you think was the message Jesus sought to convey to this desperate dad? I believe Jesus sought to communicate ________________________________

2. Which of the eight brain exercises do you feel would be the most helpful and natural to you? Explain __________________________________________________________

3. According to Newberg, why is faith the number one brain exercise? ____________________

4. How will applying your faith to reducing your negative thinking impact you? ________

5. Why is doubt so destructive to your brain? ________________________________

6. What in your present situation has you optimistic about your future? ______________

Assignment:

1. Continue memorizing Philippians 4:6-8
2. If you are using the yawning exercises and H.E.L.P. questions continue to do so.
3. Throughout the day self–regulate your thoughts by categorizing them and applying CCCR to refute all negative thoughts.
4. Apply the T.H.I.N.K test to your negative thoughts as they arise during the day.
5. Continue to memorize the I Am significant mantra. N.O.W. M.O.V.E, F.O.R.W.A.R.D.

194 The Holy Bible, Mark 9:22, NASB.
195 The Holy Bible, Mark 9:23, NASB.
Week 3

Thought Management 201

*If error is corrected whenever it is recognized as such, the path of error is the path of truth.*

*Hans Reichenbach*

Day 5

10 Forms of Distorted Thinking Part 1

Welcome back! It is refreshing to know that you decided to make this twenty-one day plan a part of your day. By now, hopefully, you know that all negative emotions, attitudes, and behavior emanate from negative distorted thinking on some level. This stated truth is the philosophical underpinning of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Cognitive “actually refers to [thoughts] beliefs, perceptions, and mental attitudes, and how you interpret events.”196 Dr. Aaron Beck is considered the founder of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. CBT rose to national prominence in the early 1960’s.197 Beck is a psychiatrist, trained in the Freudian theory,198 but is unlike Sigmund Freud who believed the cause of depression “was anger turned on the self.”199 Beck concluded through his research in 1963 that it was not “repressed anger” that was the cause of depression, but rather systematic distorted patterns in the thinking processes.”200 Beck “generated a typology of cognitive distortions to describe these systematic errors. Years later, Dr. David Burns, a disciple of Beck, embraced and popularized Beck’s unhealthy thinking styles

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196 Colbert, *Deadly Emotions*, 156.


198 Colbert, *Deadly Emotions*, 78.


and added several of his own to bring it to a grand total of ten types of twisted thinking.\footnote{Colbert, \textit{Deadly Emotions}, 156-158.} Being cognizant of and avoiding the use of these ten unhealthy thinking styles have proven to be most effective in eliminating toxic thoughts. Since some Christians are not privy to these ten unhealthy thinking styles and their correlation to fostering negative thought patterns, the goal of the next two sessions is to review and evaluate the ten unhealthy thinking styles.\footnote{Ibid.}

The first of the unhealthy thinking styles is as follows:

1. **All-or-nothing thinking**\footnote{David Burns, \textit{The Feeling Good Handbook}. (New York: Penguin Group. 1999), 8.}

   This person sees things in black-or-white categories. “No shades of gray are possible. Perfectionists see their work as either perfect or worthless.”\footnote{Colbert, \textit{Deadly Emotions}, 156.} This person thinks if they cannot do something perfectly they have failed. For example, a young woman had vowed to stop eating sweets, but one day eats a piece of chocolate. The thought comes to her mind, “I’ve blown my commitment to stop eating sweets completely.” This thought so upsets her that she goes and buys a 32oz box of chocolates’ and gorges herself. She reasons, if I cannot do it perfectly, I would rather not do it at all.

   Dr. Henry Cloud, contends that, “All-or-nothing thinking keeps people stuck in destructive ruts.”\footnote{Henry Cloud, \textit{9 Things You Simply Must Do to Succeed in Love and Life}, (Brentwood, TN: Integrity Publisher, 2004), 129.} Because it seeks to circumvent the necessary process, it takes to achieve any goal. Cloud explains a goal is achieved through a succession of smaller daily steps in pursuit of a larger goal. According to Cloud, All-or-nothing thinking is a sister to, “I want it all now!” He
concludes, “Wanting it now keeps you from having it.” All-or-nothing thinking is twisted unhealthy thinking because it fails to take into consideration any positive progress one has made and leaves one feeling like a failure.

**Thought Starter**

1. For a Biblical example of all-or-nothing thinking read Jonah 1:1-3; 4:1-11: Jonah’s rebellion.

2. Do you struggle with perfectionism? ______________________________

3. What is the origin of it? __________________________________________________________________

4. Can you see why such thinking is distorted? Explain ________________

5. What are a few things that you have not been willing to compromise on and feel it must be done your way or else? ________________

6. Are there any dreams you quit on because you thought it was taking too long? __________

7. Are you able to see now, how distorted your thought process was at the time or now presently?

2. **Overgeneralization**

The person who engages in this form of twisted thinking will see a single negative event, such as a romantic rejection or a career reversal, as a never-ending pattern of defeat by using such words as ‘always’ or ‘never’ when you think about it.” One’s twisted thinking causes one to draw across-the-board conclusions from very little evidence. For example, a young man shows romantic interest in a young girl and is given the cold shoulder. He concludes, “I’m always being rejected. I will never find a girl who will love and accept me.” A healthy thinking person will draw a conclusion only after weighing all the evidence.

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208 Ibid.

209 Colbert, *Deadly Emotions*, 156.
Thought Starter

1. For a Biblical example of overgeneralization read David’s remarks in Psalm 116:11.

2. In what situations are you most tempted to engage in this form of twisted thinking?

3. Why do you think this type of thinking generate such a plethora of negative emotions?

3. **(Negative) Mental filter**  

Those who engage in this form of unhealthy thinking will “pick out a single negative detail and dwell on it exclusively, so that [his] vision of all of reality becomes darkened, like the drop of ink that discolors a beaker of water.”  

For example, if a woman makes a presentation at school and her classmates complement her and extol the virtues of her presentation, but one classmate comments on the poor quality of one slide, she would filter out all the positive affirming praise worthy feedback and obsess on that one negative comment for days. She hears only criticism. She sees only the negative and ignores anything that may be construed as positive.  

This person notices her failures but not her successes.  

The healthy thinking person will hear both compliments and criticism and appraise her failures as well as her successes.  

Thought Starters

1. For a Biblical example of negative mental filtering read Numbers 13: The ten spies report.

2. This type of thinking appears to be rooted in insecurity.

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211 Ibid.

212 Amen, *Magnificent Mind At Any Age*, 172.

213 [http://media.psychology.tools/Worksheets/English/Unhelpful_Thinking_Styles.pdf](http://media.psychology.tools/Worksheets/English/Unhelpful_Thinking_Styles.pdf)

214 Colbert, *Deadly Emotions*, 157.
3. Can you see yourself engaging in this form of twisted thinking and under what set of circumstances did it manifest itself?

4. **Discounting the positive**

   One rejects positive experiences by insisting they “don’t count.” If one does a good job, one may think it wasn’t good enough or that anyone could have done as well.” ²¹⁵ For example, “A person who is given a promotion may say, ‘I don’t deserve this. They are just feeling sorry for me because I’m really such a loser.’ The healthy thinking person receives compliments and praise, and uses them to validate his own self-esteem.”²¹⁶

**Thought Starters**

1. A biblical example of discounting the positive, read Judges 6:11-16—Gideon
2. How might discounting the positive undermine one’s self-esteem?
3. How might this form of thinking rob God of the praise due Him?
4. How can one such person keep himself motivated and encouraged?

5. **Jumping to conclusion**²¹⁷

   This individual has the tendency to construe things in a negative light even when there are no facts to support their conclusions.²¹⁸ There are two types of jumping to conclusions: Mind reading and Fortune telling.²¹⁹

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²¹⁶ Colbert, *Deadly Emotions*, 157.


²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ [http://media.psychology.tools/Worksheets/English/Unhelpful_Thinking_Styles.pdf](http://media.psychology.tools/Worksheets/English/Unhelpful_Thinking_Styles.pdf)
Mind reading: “Arbitrarily believing you know what another person thinks, even though they have not told you.” 220 A mind reader may feel with 100% accuracy that they know what another person thinks about them. For example, after the job interview, the interviewee felt that he probably would not be called back for a second interview because; he felt the interviewer did not like him. Minder readers do a lot of assuming. When asked why, they just did not speak up and ask, they will often respond, “I thought…It looked to me that… or I just assumed.”

**Thought Starters**

1. For a biblical example of mind reading, read Matthew 16:22-23: Peter assumed Jesus would accept his rebuke.

2. On a scale form one to ten, ten being the highest, how often do you engage in mind reading?

3. Does it cause a lot of frustration for you and the other person with whom you are trying to communicate?

Fortune telling: “Predicting the future in a negative way.”221 For example, you predict you are going to fail your driver’s test. You tell yourself before you go, “I’m going to blow it.” The healthy thinking person knows that he cannot know what another person is thinking unless he first ask him nor does he think they can predict the future with 100% accuracy.

**Thought Starters**

1. For a biblical example of fortune telling read Exodus 34:1-10: Moses sent to Pharaoh

2. What are some things that you may be feeling pessimistic about? Explain

3. Could fortune telling be a way of guarding your heart against disappointment?

4. Based on Moses response, how much does fear of failure factor into the predicting of negative outcomes? Explain

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220 Amen, *Magnificent Mind At Any Age*, 172.

221 Ibid.
Assignment:

1. Continue memorizing Philippians 4:6-8
2. Be on the alert as you guard against the aforementioned forms of twisted thinking.

Week 3

Thought Management 201

*Life teaches us to be less harsh with ourselves and with others*

--- *Goethe*

Day 6

10 Forms of Distorted Thinking Part 2

Were you able to check, challenge and change your thoughts when you observed yourself thinking or attempting to reason through yesterday’s five distorted/twisted thinking styles? Remember them, all-or-nothing thinking, overgeneralization, *(negative)* mental filtering, discounting the positive, and jumping to conclusions. These ten forms of distorted thinking are the byproduct of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Several Christian counselors are CBT therapists or use CBT techniques. CBT has gained wide acceptance among Christian counseling for two primary reasons; (1) CBT proves that if one changes their thoughts, they can change their feelings and ultimately their behavior. ²²² (2) CBT dovetails well with the teaching of Proverbs 23:7 “As he [a man] thinks so is he.” Because of its analogous presumptions, Christian therapists have adapted CBT and rebranded it as Religious Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (RCBT). Having discussed the first five distorted thinking styles, attention will now be given to the remaining five.

6. Magnification *(catastrophising)* & Minimization

Those who engage in this form of twisted thinking, tend to magnify or exaggerate their

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problems and shortcomings, while minimizing or down playing their positive and desirable qualities. The healthy thinking person will be mindful to magnify his strengths or good points and minimize his weaknesses or negative points. The concept of magnification, when extrapolated in a broader context includes, “Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophising) or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important.” For example, a controlling man may slap his wife for disobeying him by violating one of his cardinal rules (magnification), but thinks to himself, “Well, I only hit her once, and it was only a open handed slap (minimization) versus a closed fist, it probably did not hurt all that much”. A healthy-thinking person will strive to maintain his emotional composure, by not emoting and blowing things out of proportion; nor will he attempt to minimize things to justify any negative consequences brought about by his behavior.

**Thought Starters**

1. For a Biblical example of magnification read 1Samuel 25:1-11: Nabal offends David
2. For a Biblical example of minimization read Numbers 14:39-45: Children of Israel defeated
3. Which of your negative qualities do you tend to magnify beyond what is reasonable?
4. Which positive qualities of your personality do you tend to minimize and not give yourself enough credit?

7. **Emotional reasoning**

   This person assumes their negative emotions reflect reality. They think with their

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224 Colbert, *Deadly Emotions*, 157.

225 [http://media.psychology.tools/Worksheets/English/Unhelpful_Thinking_Styles.pdf](http://media.psychology.tools/Worksheets/English/Unhelpful_Thinking_Styles.pdf)

feelings and assume them to be accurate; hence, they fail to question them. For example, a person is feeling hopeless about an exam, so he does not show up to take it. A person reasons, “I feel stupid, so I must be stupid” or “I feel like a loser, so I must be a loser.” I feel forsaken and abandoned by God, so God must have forsaken me.” A healthy thinking person knows that his feelings are not necessarily a true reflection of reality and feelings, like the weather, are subject to change.

**Thought Starters**

1. For a Biblical example of emotional reasoning read 1Kings 19:1-9,11-15: Elijah fears Jezebel
2. Certain people tend to be more emotionally (moved by their feelings) versus other who are more thinking oriented.
3. Based on the opinion of those who know you best, have they told you that you are more emotional then rational, the thinking reasoning type? Would you tend to agree or disagree?
4. How might extreme emotional reasoning adversely affect one’s parenting style?

8. **Should statements**

   By using should or must statements, you are setting yourself up for disappointment should you not follow through. Burns maintains, “Many people try to motivate themselves with should [sic] and should not’s…this usually doesn’t work because all these shoulds and musts make them feel rebellious and they get the urge to do just the opposite.” For example, a man tells himself, I should not eat that donut, but he ends up feeling more tempted to do so. Burns

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227 Amen, *Magnificent Mind At Any Age*, 172.

228 Colbert, *Deadly Emotions*, 157.

229 [http://media.psychology.tools/Worksheets/English/Unhelpful_Thinking_Styles.pdf](http://media.psychology.tools/Worksheets/English/Unhelpful_Thinking_Styles.pdf)


231 Ibid.
goes on to say, “Using critical words like ‘should’, ‘must’, or ‘ought’ can make one feel guilty, or like one has already failed. If people apply ‘shoulds’ to other people, the result is often frustration.

A healthy thinking person knows that life is filled with surprises and very unpredictable. People do not always do what you expect them to do, and there are very few hard-and-fast rules in life.

**Thought Starters**

1. For a Biblical example should statements read Matthew 9:11;12:2;23:2: Pharisees legalism
2. Have you found that using should, must and ought statements when applied to yourself, make you feel more guilty if you do not follow through? In its place you could say, “it would be to my benefit if I were to…. “. Would that work for you? Are you willing to try it for one week to see if it works for you?
3. In your opinion, did the Ten Commandments cause the OT people to sin less or more?

9. **Labeling**

   Labeling is “attaching a negative label to self or others.” According to Burns, “labels are just useless abstractions that lead to anger, anxiety, frustration, and low self-esteem.”

   When people label others, they need to know that the problem is not with others, it is probably with their thinking, brought on by certain expectations that they held.

   The healthy thinking person avoids labels. You may have failed, but you are not a failure. A healthy minded person knows to separate their “who” from their “do”. You are not the same as what you do. You may have at times labeled yourself a fool, a loser, or a jerk, but you are neither. Know that you are significant because God loves you and sent His Son to die

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upon the cross for your sins, adopted you into His family, and has given you a new name. You are a Born-Again Christian fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of God. (Psalm 139:14).

**Thought Starters**

1. For a Biblical example labeling read Luke 15:19; Number 13:33: The Prodigal Son
2. As a child, what were some of the labels ascribed to you?
3. Name some of the people who labeled you?
4. Was it a parent, a coach, an enemy, or close friend?
5. As an adult, what labels have you ascribed to yourself?
6. Have any of your childhood labels stuck with you into adulthood? If not when did you shed them?
7. Do you feel God labeled you? If so what and why?

**10. Personalization and Blame**

Personalization, much like labeling can induce grave feelings of self-condemnation. According to Burns, “Personalization occurs when a person holds self personally responsible for an event that isn’t entirely under their control…personalization leads to guilt, shame, and feelings of inadequacy.”

For example, a working mother blames herself for her child’s disruptive behavior in school or a wife blames herself for why she is a victim of domestic abuse.

On the other hand, people who blame others for their circumstances and problems in life overlook the ways that they may have contributed to their own problems. For example, a man cannot pay his mortgage because he lost his job because he refused to grow with the job by failing to up-grade his computer skills. He blames his employer, but he is to blame because he failed to be proactive. A healthy thinking person will not accept full responsibility for things that

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he cannot control and nor will he blame others for those things he may have failed to do and is now experiencing the consequences.

**Thought Starters**

1. For a Biblical example of personalization read John 18:10-11: Peter defends Jesus with a sword.

2. For a Biblical example of blame read Genesis 3:12-13: Adam and Eve’s play the blame game

3. What area of your life are you shouldering responsibility for things that you should not? Is it on the job, in your home, or in church? Explain. __________________________________________

4. What are some things that are your personal responsibilities that you are blaming on others?

   __________________________________________________________

5. Are there any grudges or offenses that you may be holding on to because you blame someone else for hurting you? __________________________________________________________

6. How do you feel about your ex-spouse, ex-boss or ex-friend for that matter? __________

**Assignment**

1. Continue memorizing Philippians 4:6-8

2. Monitor your thoughts to see whether you are engaging in the 10 forms of Twisted/Unhealthy Thinking Styles

   **Week 3**

   **Thought Management 201**

   *The mind is its own place, and in itself can make heaven of Hell, a hell of Heaven*

   *Milton*

   **Day 7**

   I Think Myself Happy!
Congratulations, you made it! Wow! However, there is one last thing that you will need to do before you are 100% finished. You need to take a post assessment to measure the progress you have made in your thought life over the past twenty-one days. Please take the time to complete it. Thank you. I trust the experience was helpful and that you gained key insight into your thought life and learned that you never have to think the same old way again. You are now wiser because you have learned how to change your thoughts rather than having your thoughts change you.

God has so designed you that your life is primarily shaped by your thoughts. Either you proactively shape your thoughts or your thoughts will passively shape you. The choice is up to you. The Bible teaches, “For as a man thinks so he will become.”

Take a moment to wrestle with the profundity of that statement. In other words, you are creating your life by your thoughts. If you are a miserable person right now, you are miserable not because of your circumstances. You are miserable because of the thoughts you continue to dwell to think. If you are an angry person right now, you are angry because of the thoughts you continue to think. If you are a fearful person right now, you are fearful because of the thoughts you continue to think. The more you realize the connection between your thinking and the life you have, the sooner you will get to the point where you realize that the best way to change your life is to change your thinking.

If you do not like the way you perceive yourself, the Bible says, “be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” That means that if you are going to change your life, you do not change your life by simply changing your environment. You may not have the power to change

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235 The Holy Bible, Proverbs 23:7, NASB.

236 The Holy Bible, Romans 12:2, NASB.
your environment. You may still have to go to work with those same folks who tap dance on your last nerve. Also, your power to change the circumstances in your life may be limited. I may need God to do some recovery work in my environment. Although, you may not have the power to change your environment and circumstances presently, the one thing you can change immediately is how you think about it. God has so designed us that our lives are in large part shaped by our thoughts. Hence, you can be happy in most every situation if you so choose. The Apostle Paul graphically illustrated this for in the Bible. The Jews had him arrested for preaching the Gospel. Paul had to stand before King Agrippa, who possessed the power to lock him up for life or put him to death. However, Paul refused to allow his circumstances to rob him of his joy. Scrutinize Paul’s profoundly optimistic statement he utters, “I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because today I shall answer for myself before you concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews.”237 Say that three times. “I think myself happy, I think myself happy. I think myself happy.” How was Paul able to be happy in such a life threatening situation? Paul do you not know that you are in shackles and chains and you could be killed or permanently incarcerated. What do you mean, “I think myself happy.” Paul could think himself happy because he chose to think on good thoughts. He was operating from his frontal lobe and not his limbic system. Paul made the rational decision to pray and ask God to help him control his thoughts rather than have his thoughts control him. Are your thoughts shaping you or are you shaping your thoughts? If you are not in control of your thoughts, who is? God through this twenty-one day plan wants to help you to learn to live a well balanced thought and emotionally controlled life with a healthy brain. Jesus wants the days of the constant seesaw, up and down thoughts and emotions to cease. Decide for yourself to rejoice always. Why worship and worry too? Choose to think yourself happy all the time.

237 The Holy Bible, Acts 26:2, NASB.
In order to think yourself happy, you must choose to do the following:

Dwell on God’s power instead of your problems. Paul says, “Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand…” Like Paul dwell on the fact that Almighty God is on your side (Romans 8:31), God has promised to fight your battles for you (2Chronicles 20:15), and No weapon formed against you can prosper (Isaiah 54:17).

If you start thinking these kinds of thoughts, you will be filled with faith, confidence, and hope.

In order to think yourself happy, you must choose to dwell on God’s purposes instead of your pain.

For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come— that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.”

Paul realized that his personal pain had a greater purpose in the overall plan of God. God’s plan for Paul’s life was to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, but in order for Paul to do that he was going to suffer persecution at the hands of his Jews. Paul knew that if the Jewish leaders had persecuted Jesus, than he knew he could expect no less. His suffering was to bring glory to God and bring the Gospel to the Gentiles. If you have yet to find God’s purpose in your pain, consider the notion that God uses painful trials to bring you closer to Him (Philippians 3:8-10) to strengthen your faith for tough times ahead, to refine your character (Romans 5:3-5), and to bring good out of a bad situation (Romans 8:28). If you start thinking these kinds of thoughts, you will be filled with faith, confidence and hope.

In order to think yourself happy, you must choose to dwell on God’s provision instead of your (perceived) lack.

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238 The Holy Bible, Acts 26:22a, NASB.

239 The Holy Bible, Acts 26:21-23, NASB.
When he (Paul) had said these things, the king stood up, as well as the governor and Bernice and those who sat with them; and when they had gone aside, they talked among themselves, saying, “This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains” Then Agrippa said to Festus, “This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

God provided Paul a stay of execution, protection from the Jews, food, and shelter, as well as an all expense paid trip to Rome. Sure Paul may have lacked his freedom, his close friends, and his livelihood, but Paul did not focus on what he lacked. He focused on God’s provision. 

God has also has provided you with precious promises: such as, “My God shall supply all your needs…”241, “No good thing will he withhold from him who walks uprightly.”242, and “Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.”243

God has provided you health, strength, a home in which to sleep, salvation, and heaven as your new home, food, and a job with which to pay your bills. In every situation, if you look long and hard enough you can find something good.

**Thought Starters**

Yes you can…

Think yourself healthy

Think yourself successful.

Think yourself out of worry and anxiety.

Think yourself out of bitterness and resentment.

Think yourself into forgiving.

Think yourself in control of your emotions.

240 The Holy Bible, Acts 26:30-32, NASB.

241 The Holy Bible, Philippians 4:19, NASB.

242 The Holy Bible, Psalm 84:11, NASB.

243 The Holy Bible, Psalm 37:4, NASB.
Think yourself out of stress.

Think yourself happy.

Which do you find the hardest to do?__________

Assignment

1. Go to the website and complete your **POST ASSESSMENT**. Please take the assessment now. It will not take you longer than ten minutes.

2. Also give your feedback on the 21 Day plan both positive, negative, and any suggestions for improvement or topics you would like to see included.

Thank you for participating in the twenty-one day plan. The plan is a condensed version of a much longer mind renewal process this researcher is developing. For those who would like to read more on the subject, I would whole heartedly recommend reading Norman Wright’s book, A Better Way to Think, Josh McDowell’s, Building Your Self-Image and Samuel C. Verghese, Brain Power: How to Fine-Tune Your Brain Naturally. Verghese is a medical doctor and does an excellent job explaining all the neurological intricacies of the thought management processes of the brain. The process of renewing your mind is a lifelong process. The prayer of this researcher is that the lessons presented in this plan have served to assist you in the process of changing your life by renewing your mind and transforming your thoughts. God bless you.
Chapter 4

Summary and Conclusion

Purpose of Thesis

This thesis project was designed to equip Christians with the skills to learn how to identify, control, and eliminate the five primary negative thoughts: Regrets of the past, fear of the future, unhealthy comparisons, self-condemning thoughts, and temptations of lustful thoughts of all kinds. Once identified, these unhealthy thoughts were replaced with a plethora of healthy self empowering thoughts resulting in a renewed Christ centered mindset. The research for this plan was based on the Holy Scriptures, neuroscience (brain research), and cognitive behavior therapy (CBT). Pre and post-assessment surveys were given to all participants to measure the effectiveness of this project in changing their thought lives. The goal of this project was to renew the mind one thought at a time.

Outline of the Project

Chapter 1 included the Introduction, Statement of the Problem, Statement of Limitations, Theoretical Basis for this Project, Statement of Methodology, Review of Related Literature, and Scriptural References in the Old and New Testaments that support the thesis.

Chapter 2 Thought Chemistry 101 is designed to provide readers with a better understanding of the thinking process. Secondly, it asked and answered four questions: What is a thought? Are thoughts real? Are thoughts harmless? How many thoughts per day? In addition, the thesis project identified seven sources of our thoughts: science, sensory mechanisms (five senses), self-talk, specific events, spiritual factors, and secularism (world-view).
Chapter 3 Thought Management 201 introduced The 21 Day Plan which comprised a three week study.

Week 1: Thought Chemistry 101 ................................................................. 43
Week 2: Thought Management 201............................................................. 75
Week 3: Thought Builders 301 ................................................................. 114

Chapter 4 Summary and Conclusion summarized and reviewed the overall purpose and findings of the thesis. It revealed the research findings and how the research was done. Additionally, the researcher provided the readers with a final challenge to erect the necessary mental walls to extinguish toxic negative thoughts.

**Major Findings**

The research for the 21 Day Plan took the form of an internet Bible study. A website designer built the Think Right Live Right website as the host site of the 21 Day Plan. Participants went to the website to participate in the plan. Before they could participate, they had to read and sign a consent form and take an online self-administered pre assessment Depression Inventory. After the participants completed the pre-assessment, within 24 hours the researcher sent an email to them to begin day one of the plan. For the following 20 days, the participants received an email with a link to each daily lesson to complete for that day. On the average, the daily lessons took between six to 10 minutes to complete. The participants had to read the lesson, answer the thought starter reflection questions, read and memorize Scriptures, and check, challenge, and change their negative thoughts. After completing the 21 Day Plan, participants completed a post-assessment to assess whether there had been any improvement in regulating their negative thoughts. The levels of depressive symptom ranges were 1- normal up and downs, 2 -mild mood imbalance, 3-near clinical depression, and 4-moderate clinical depression. The results of the findings were as follows:
Finding 1

Of the 53 participants that completed the consent form and pre-assessment forms, nine of them did not complete their lessons and five more were not included in the final analysis of the data because they did not complete the post assessment.

Finding 2

The majority of participant characteristics were as follows: 58% were women, 67% were ages 31-55, and 70% had one or more college degrees.

What is your gender?

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<td>55+</td>
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Finding 3

Of the remaining participants who completed the consent form, pre and post assessments, and the 21 Day Plan, 92.3% improved one level or more on their post assessment. The other 3.85% of the participants stayed at level 1 which was normal up and downs with no depressive symptoms. However, one of those participant’s scored within level 1 improved by two points. Two participants’ scores dropped by two points within level 1 (3.85%). All of the participants who scored in the moderate clinical depression levels on the pre-assessment improved 2 to 3 levels on their post assessments.

Conclusion
Finding 4

The participants with the highest pre-assessment scores were women between the ages of 31 to 40 who scored on level 3, the moderate clinical depression range. Although these women had the highest pre-assessment scores, their post assessments scores revealed a significant improvement. All of them scored on the level 1, normal up and downs.

Conclusion

Since the mind is the spiritual battlefield upon which Satan wages spiritual warfare, it is imperative that believers have a solid defense against his attacks. Believers are cautioned to put on certain spiritual warfare to protect them against the enemy’s attack. One such defensive armor the believer is to put on is the “helmet of salvation.”¹ The “helmet of salvation” is designed to protect the soldiers head from injury. Since the mind is the spiritual battlefield upon which Satan wages spiritual warfare, it is of vital importance that Christians protect, fortify, and strengthen their minds. Erecting the four mental walls of praise, patience, prayer, and positive thoughts will fortify the mind against the onslaught of negative thoughts which threaten to establish strongholds in the brain. The four mental walls each believer is responsible to erect are taken from the Book of Philippians 4:4-8. The goal in erecting these mental walls is to insure that the believer will have the mental toughness to withstand the waves of negativity that crash against the mental shores of their minds.

¹ The Holy Bible, Ephesians 6:17, NASB.
The Wall of Praise

Paul affirms, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!" The book of Philippians is one of four letters that Paul wrote while imprisoned. If anyone had reason to be anxious, it was the Apostle Paul. He knew not whether the Roman magistrates would convict him as a traitor, beat him with thirty-nine lashes, or sentence him to death. Yet, despite Paul’s circumstances, chains, and critics, he was joyful. The theme of the book of Philippians is joy. “Joy (chara) is used four times (Phil. 1:4, 25; 2:2; 4:1); rejoice (chairo) occurs eight times (1:8; 2:17-18; 3:1; 4:4).”

It was Paul’s deep abiding love for Jesus that proved to be the vital source of his joy. “The key New Testament term (chairo) indicates both a state of joy, and that which brings us joy.” Paul was not encouraging believers to rejoice in their vacillating circumstances. Contrary to the thought, Dr. Robert Lightner, in his commentary on the book of Philippians, writes, “Surely there are many circumstances in which Christians cannot be happy. However, they can always rejoice in the Lord and delight in Him. Paul was an excellent example of one who had inner joy when external circumstances—such as persecutions, imprisonments, and the threat of death—were against him.” Paul made a choice to rejoice in the Lord. He engaged his frontal lobe and despite his imprisonment, chose to rejoice in the Lord’s goodness.

As creatures made in the image of God, we are so designed by our Creator that our thoughts, whether positive or negative conversely, affect our bodies in a negative or positive

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2 The Holy Bible, Philippians 4:4, NASB.


5 Walvoord and Zuck, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, 663.
way. This is why Christians are to rejoice in the Lord. Neurologically speaking, praise and thanksgiving have the capacity to change mental states of mind. Compare Dr. Amen’s approach to ridding the mind of negative thoughts to the erecting mental walls principles extracted from Philippians 4:4-8.

As previously mentioned, Dr. Amen, a psychiatrist, advises that when people are caught in a negative rut, in order to break free from the negative thought pattern, they should participate in any of the following activities: (1) Sing a favorite song. [The Wall of Praise] (2) Listen to music that makes you feel positive [The Wall of Positive Thoughts] (3) Memorize and recite the serenity prayer. [The Wall of Prayer] (4) Do structured meditation [The Wall of Positive Thoughts], and Focus on a word and do not allow any other thoughts to enter your mind [The Wall of Patience].

When troubled by negative thoughts, Christians have been given the power to break those negative thought patterns and strengthen their anterior cingulate by choosing to engage their frontal lobe to rejoice in the Lord and singing praises to Him for His goodness to them.

The Wall of Patience

Paul asserts, “Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.”

The Greek word (Epieikes) translated gentle spirit by the New American Standard has a dual meaning which also includes meaning to be patient, forbearing, and longsuffering. Hence, instead of becoming frustrated when disappointed with people and situations, Christians need to erect the wall of patience. Patience is vitally important in the life of the believer and is necessary to grow spiritually and live free from the power of toxic thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Mentally erecting the wall of patience is critical in the Holy Spirit’s work of conforming
Christians into the image of Christ. Patience is listed as a fruit of the Spirit in (Galatians 5:22).

In the area of thought management, the ability to maintain patience is fundamentally significant because of the way in which God works. In perusing the Scriptures, it becomes relatively clear that God often waits until the proverbial “last minute” before He intervenes on behalf of His people. Pastor Craig Walker, author of Last Minute God, cogently makes the argument that God is a last minute God. He cites Apostle Peter’s last minute deliverance from jail (Acts 12:9-17) to illustrate his point.  

Believers need to erect the wall of patience because exercising patience helps the anterior cingulate to balance the frontal lobe and limbic system. Impatience and its accompanying emotions of fear, anxiety, and worry, over stimulate the amygdala which floods the emotionally charged limbic system resulting in shutting down the anterior cingulate and frontal lobe. Erecting the wall of patience is germane to keeping a healthy chemical balance in the brain as does erecting the wall of prayer.

**The Wall of Prayer**

One of Satan’s greatest weapons is fear. It’s been said that the words “fear not” are recorded 365 times in the Bible, one for every day of the week. While this researcher cannot attest to the veracity of the statement, what is true is Satan likes to use the fear of calamity, fear of poverty, fear of abandonment, fear of failure, fear of success, fear of rejection, fear of harm, and fear of death to incite the people of God to function from their emotionally laden limbic system rather than their sober minded frontal lobe. He knows that as long as their brains are emotionally charged, the thought manager, the anterior cingulate, will be stymied in its efforts to bring a balanced equilibrium between their frontal lobe and limbic system. Satan seeks to breach the believer’s mental walls.

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However, Philippians 4:6-7 states how believers can keep their mental walls from being contravened. Examine Paul’s prescription to regulate uncontrolled emotions of fear, anxiety, and worry. “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”  

By choosing to pray, rather than becoming anxious, the believer will not over activate the amygdala that would over stimulate the limbic system that has the capacity to impede or totally disengage the anterior cingulate that balances the believer’s rational and emotional states. Instead of “catastrophising” their situation by becoming caught up in a whirlwind of emotions, believers are to erect the wall of prayer to stimulate their frontal lobe to think and pray calmly about what is troubling them. Furthermore, Paul commands Christians while praying, also to give God praise and thanksgiving as they rejoice in the goodness, presence, and precious promises of God. Choosing to pray and give thanks, rather than emoting, suppresses the limbic system. Thus, God’s Holy Spirit will release His divine incomprehensible peace that eradicates fear and protects the believer’s heart and mind from being overrun with anxiety.

Concerning anxiety and worry, Bible commentator, Warren Wiersbe, explains,

The Greek word translated “anxious” (careful) in Philippians 4:6 means “to be pulled in different directions.” Our hopes pulls us in one direction; our fears pull us in the opposite direction; and we are pulled apart! The Old English root from which we get our word “worry” means “to strangle.” If you have ever really worried, you know how it does strangle a person! In fact, worry has definite physical consequences: headaches, neck pains, ulcers, even back pain. Worry affects our thinking, our digestion, and even our coordination. From a spiritual point of view, worry is wrong thinking (the mind) and wrong feeling (the heart) about circumstances, people and things. Worry is the greatest thief of joy.

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11 The Holy Bible, Philippians 4:6-7, NASB.

It is not enough to tell believers to stop worrying, they have to erect specific mental walls to protect them from worrying. A parallel verse on prayer reads as follows, “I will keep him in perfect peace whose thoughts are fixed on me.”13 For Christians, the key to overcoming negative thoughts is to keep their thoughts God centered. CBT has shown that thoughts affect emotions, which affect attitudes, and ultimately behavior. Consequently, if believers desire to change their emotions, then they need to change their thoughts.

The word of God promises believers as they fix their thoughts on God, rather than their circumstances, their anxiety will be replaced with His peace. “The peace of God” stands guard over the two areas that create worry—the heart (wrong feeling) and the mind (wrong thinking).”14 Paul knew much about erecting mental walls that were impenetrable to fear and worry. The last wall is the wall of positive thoughts.

**The Wall of Positive Thoughts**

In building a mental fortress to protect the mind against satanic attack, the erected walls thus far are the Wall of Praise, the Wall of Patience, and the Wall of Prayer. The last, but not least, is the Wall of Positive Thoughts. The research studies in neuroscience and brain plasticity presented in this project have confirmed that the catalyst to retraining the brain is to overcome negative thoughts by resisting the temptation to dwell upon negative thoughts. Self-discipline in thought regulation with the help of the Holy Spirit to stop thinking about negative thoughts causes negative thoughts to begin to die in the brain. The actual dendrites begin to deteriorate and die. People literally have the power to starve a thought to death.15

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13 The Holy Bible, Isaiah 26:3, NASB.

14 Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 95.

Be aware. It is not enough simply to stop thinking negative thoughts; believers have to replace those negative thoughts with the positive thoughts expressed in the following verse, “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.”\textsuperscript{16} In the preceding verse, Paul delineates a series of positive replacement thoughts to substitute for the prior negative thoughts.

Christians are to replace unlovely, unkind thoughts with thoughts that are kind, loving and positive. Why? What is the inherent benefit? Choosing to meditate on “positive thoughts strengthens positive reaction chains and releases biochemicals, such as endorphins and serotonin, from the brain’s natural pharmacy. Bathed in these positive environments, intellect flourishes and with it mental and physical health.”\textsuperscript{17} In essence, Paul is explaining the process of mind renewal.

Thought regulation is the responsibility of all believers regardless of their level of maturity. If believers hope to grow spiritually and live victoriously, they will need to learn to regulate their thoughts in order to experience biblical mind renewal. The neuroscience on the subject of brain plasticity, the social science of cognitive behavior therapy, the spiritual teachings of the Bible on mind renewal and thought regulation techniques, and the research findings of the 21 Mind Renewal Plan presented in this project confirms the truth that humans are transformed by the renewing of their minds. When believers habitually meditate on and apply the truths of Philippians 4:4-8, they will experience life transformation by simply making the decision to alter and manage their thoughts, then their emotions, attitude, and behavior will follow suit. By

\textsuperscript{16} The Holy Bible, Philippians 4:8, NASB.

\textsuperscript{17} McMinn, \textit{Cognitive Therapy}, 23.
doing so, they will reap the life changing benefits of a healthy brain that the Bible, CBT, and neuroscientist promulgate for a sound mind. The project confirms what neuroscience has discovered that prayer, praise, and meditation on positive thoughts are effective ways to replace negative thoughts, increase positive thoughts, and develop new neural circuits in the brain.
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APPENDIX A GLOSSARY

Amygdala: “The amygdala is that portion of the brain responsible for processing emotional memories as well as storing them in the long-term memory.”¹

Anterior cingulate: Is part of the cingulate (surrounding system of the brain) and “acts as a kind of fulcrum that controls and balances the activity between the frontal lobes and limbic system.”²

ANTS: “Automatic Negative Thoughts”³

Attitude: “Is a state of mind that influences our choices and what we say and do as a result of our choices.”⁴

Axon: “Is part of a nerve cell (also call a neuron) that transfers information to other nerve cells.”⁵

Brain looping: Refers to the brain being stuck on an obsessive negative thought.⁶

Brain plasticity: Refers to the brain’s ability to adapt and change. “When the brain comes to an impasse, it can literally grow alternate routes.”⁷

Brain Scans: Scans are performed to monitor brain activity, observe blood flow to certain parts of the brain, and see 3-D images of the brain, neuroscientist avail themselves to a number of highly specialized brain-imaging technology: The Computerized Axial Tomography (CAT), Positron-Emission Tomography (PET) and the most popular being the Magnetic Resonance


² Newberg and Waldman, How God Changes Your Brain, 125.

³ Amen, Change Your Brain, Change Your Life, 56.

⁴ Leaf, Who Switched Off My Brain?, 52.

⁵ Ashwell, The Brain Book, 76.

⁶ Lawlis, Retraining the Brain, 13.

⁷ Ibid., 29.
Imaging (MRI) “MRI provides a real-time image of the blood flow patterns, revealing what parts of the brain are activated during particular tasks.”

Cerebral cortex: “The folded, outer layer of the cerebral hemispheres. The cortex is made up of an outer layer of gray matter and underlying white matter.”

Cingulate system: Consist primarily of the anterior cingulate cortex, and the cingulate gyrus is located just below the cerebral cortex and is responsible to provide the brain with the necessary cognitive flexibility to shift attention, and adjust to anything it encounters without getting stuck.

Conventional Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CCBT): Refers to a therapy that “… encourages clients to understand the links between thoughts, emotions, and behaviors…challenging automatic negative thoughts to help patients identify problematic behaviors.”

Dendrite: “Tree-like branches where memories are stored. They send and receive electrochemical impulses from nerve cells at synaptic contacts from the axons of other nerve cells.”

Endocrine system: “Is a collection of glands and organs that mostly produce and regulate your hormones.”

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10 Amen, *Change Your Brain, Change Your Life*, 150.


**Frontal lobe:** The front part of the cerebral cortex. It is considered the command center of the brain. It controls problem solving, decision making, organizing and planning. “It also creates our personalities, sharpens our attention, and keeps us focused on goals.”  

**Hippocampus:** The folded structure in the temporal lobe that plays a critical role in laying down new memories. “Usually while we are asleep, it converts temporary thoughts into permanent thoughts becoming a part of who we are.”

**Hypothalamus:** It controls, how we function emotionally and intellectually, determines our heart rate, level of anger and aggression, while controlling our thirst, hunger and sex drive.

The hypothalamus determines the amount of chemicals that are to be released in your body based on how positive or negative the thought is.

**Limbic system:** The part of the forebrain that is concerned with emotions and memory.

**Lobe:** “The brain is divided into anatomical lobes or regions: Prefrontal lobe, Frontal lobe, Temporal lobe, Parietal lobe, Occipital lobe and Cerebellum.”

**Long-term memory:** Memory that last for more than a few minutes. It requires the storage of memorized information in diverse parts of the cerebral cortex.

**Mental state:** “Is composed of a cluster of neural firing patterns that embed within them a certain behavior, a feeling, tone, and access to particular memories. A state of mind makes the

15 Readers Digest, *No More Brain Drain*, 24


18 Readers Digest, *No More Brain Drain*, 27.


22 Ashwell, *The Brain Book*, 338
brain work more efficiently, tying together relevant (and sometimes widely separated) functions with ’neural glue’ that links them in the moment.” 23

**Mind:** “The understanding, reasoning, and intellectual faculties of the conscious person considered as a whole.” 24

**Nerve cell/neuron:** “A cell type adapted for the processing and transmission of information. Also called a neuron.” 25 “Nerve cells have unique features: dendrites to collect information and an axon to transfer information to other nerve cells.” 26

**Neurogenesis:** Refers to the brain’s ability to create new neural connections with in its self when a behavior is consistently practiced. 27

**Neuroplasticity:** Refers to “the ability of neurons at the synapses to forge new connections, thereby essentially bringing about a rewiring of the brain.” 28

**Neuropathways:** Refers to the brain’s ability to create new neurological pathways when confronted with new information and or new realities. 29

**Neuroscience:** Refers to the study of the brain. 30

**Neurotransmitter:** “Are chemicals made by one nerve cell to act on other nerve cells usually at a chemical synapse-(messenger chemicals)” 31

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25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., 74.

27 Lawlis, *Retraining the Brain*, 43.


29 Lawlis, *Retraining the Brain*, 8.

**Papez circuit:** “A brain circuit that connects components of the limbic system. It plays a key role in laying down new declarative memories.” 32

**Parietal lobe:** “Enhances our brains ability to focus our attention a skill needed to look within ourselves and contemplate such things as joy, peace, God and the world around us.” 33

**Pituitary gland:** “A master gland of the endocrine system that controls diverse functions and glands throughout the body by it hormones. It is directly influenced by the hypothalamus.” 34

**Plasticity:** “The ability of the nervous system to change its connections in response to environmental influences, particularly during early life.” 35

**Prefrontal cortex/lobe:** “The part of the frontal lobe that holds all our short-term memories. It is referred to as our working memory and briefly remembers such things as telephone numbers, license plate numbers or addresses.” 36

**Religious Cognitive Behavior (RCB):** “Follows the same process described for CCBT, except that the subject’s religious beliefs are utilized to stimulate changes in thought and behavior. RCBT teaches patients to use their own religious teachings, doctrines, and behaviors to help change maladaptive beliefs, values, and behaviors.” 37

**Self-talk:** consist of the things we tell ourselves. 38

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35 Ibid.

36 Readers Digest, *No More Brain Drain*, 24


38 Wright, *A Betty Way to Think*, 16.
**Stress storm:** “…happens when your brain circuits (or neurocircuits) go overload, causing signals to get crossed and spiral out of control.” 39 When in such a state “one will find themselves unable to talk themselves out of a mindset they know is irrational.” 40

**Temporal lobe:** “Primarily responsible for auditory processing (hearing), comprehension of words, and emotional affect in context with language. People with low-functioning temporal lobes also exhibit memory problems.” 41

**Thoughts:** “Are basically electrical impulses, chemicals, and neurons.” 42

**Thought forms:** Are believed to be tiny, subtle thoughts, invisible to the eye, but emanating from each individual communicating their desires, intentions, and ideas out into the universe and perceived by others who think as you think. 43

**Thalamus:** “The large group of nerve cells in the center of the brain that relays information between the cerebral cortex and the brainstem and spinal cord.” 44 In addition, it “signals the hypothalamus to chemically prepare a response to your thoughts.” 45

**Toxic thoughts:** “Are thoughts that trigger negative and anxious emotions, which produce biochemicals that cause the body stress. They are stored in your mind, as well as in the cells in your body.” 46

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39 Lawlis, *Retraining the Brain*, 4.

40 Ibid., 13.

41 Ibid., 20.


43 Moyle, *Think Your Way to the Life You Want*, 4-5.


Working memory: “Short-term memory that is used over a period of few minutes to complete immediate motor task.”

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47 Readers Digest, No More Brain Drain, 24.
Abstract

- The Bible commands Christians to be transformed by renewing their minds with the Word of God. This project proposes a biblical mind transformation plan targeting men specifically, as well as the broader body of Christ.

- The plan equips Christians with the skills to learn how to identify, control, and eliminate the five primary negative thoughts. Once identified, these unhealthy thoughts will be
Abstract Con’t.

- replaced with a plethora of healthy self empowering thoughts resulting in a renewed Christ centered mindset.

- The research for this plan will be based on the Holy Scriptures, neuroscience (brain research), and cognitive behavior therapy (CBT). Pre and post-assessment surveys will be given to all participants to measure the effectiveness of this project in changing their thought lives.

Abstract Con’t.

- Men who wish to be delivered and set free mentally from harassing thoughts such as, regrets of the past, fear of the future, unhealthy comparisons, self-condemning thoughts, and temptations of lustful thoughts of all kinds, this research project is their deliverance. The goal is to renew the mind one thought at a time.
Oral Defense

☐ 1. Why I choose the topic?

☐ 2. What I learned from my research?

☐ 3. How the finding impacted me personally and my ministry?

☐ 4. How I plan to utilize the information?

Over View

☐ Chapter I: Introduction

☐ Chapter II: Thought Chemistry 101
Understanding Thinking
  ☐ What is a Thought?
  ☐ Are Thoughts Real?
  ☐ Are Thoughts Harmless?
  ☐ How Many Thoughts Per Day?
  ☐ The Five Primary Negative Thoughts
Over View

Con’t.

- **Chapter II**: Thought Chemistry 101
  - The Seven Sources of Our Thoughts
    - Science
    - Sensory Mechanisms (5 Senses)
    - Self-Talk
    - Specific Events
    - Spiritual Factors
    - Secularism (World-view)
    - Social Interactions

- **Chapter III**: Thought Management 201
  - The Twenty-One Day Plan
    - Week 1: Thought Chemistry 101
    - Week 2: Thought Management 201
    - Week 3: Thought Builders 301

- **Chapter IV**: Summary and Conclusions
Chapter III: Thought Management 201

The Filthy Five

- Regrets of the Past
- Fear of the Future
- Temptations
- Unhealthy Comparisons
- Self-condemning thoughts

Chapter III: Thought Management

- 2Corrianthians 10:4-5c (NASB)

  4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds…

  5c “…We are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”
Chapter II: Thought Chemistry 101

- *Thoughts is important because they influence our…*
  - Spiritual lives
  - Brains
  - Body (immune system)
  - Shape Character
  - Change Emotions
  - Influence Attitudes
  - Effects our Behavior

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Chapter II: Thought Chemistry 101

- “Research indicates that as much as 75% of everything we think is *negative*, and *counterproductive*, and works *against us*.”

  Dr. H. Norman Wright
Chapter II: Thought Chemistry 101

- Research shows that around 87% of all illnesses can be attributed to our thought life, 13% to diet, genetics and environment.
  
  Dr. Caroline Leaf

Toxic Thoughts & Emotions may cause

- Migraines
- Hypertension
- Strokes
- Cancer
- Skin problems
- Diabetes
- Heart & Vascular problems
Chapter III: Thought Management

- 2Corrianthians 10:5 (NASB)
- We are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

- Metacognition – is to think about what you are thinking about.

Chapter III: Thought Management

T.E.A.=B.

“Renewing your mind, one thought at a time.”
Chapter III: Thought Management 201

- **Resist** Negative Thoughts
  - **Check**
  - **Challenge**
  - **Change**

Chapter III: Thought Management 201

- **Check It**
  - **Recognize It**

- **The Voice of:**
  - **Accuser**
  - **Advocate**
Chapter III: Thought Management 201

□ **Check It**
  - **Recognize It**

□ **Satan** says to Jesus, “*If you are the Son of God…*” (Matt. 4:4).

Chapter III: Thought Management 201

□ **Challenge It**
  - **Resist It**
    &
  - **Reject It**
Chapter III: Thought Management 201

- **Challenge It**

- “Be gone, Satan! For…”
- “It is written…” (Matt. 4:4,7,10)

Chapter III: Thought Management 201

- **Challenge It**
  - Ask yourself is it…
  - True
  - Helpful
  - Inspiring
  - Non-condemning
  - Kind
Chapter III: Thought Management 201

Change It

Replace It

“MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE… (Matt. 4:4).

“YOU SHALL NOT TEMPT THE LORD YOUR GOD” (Matt. 4:7).

“YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY” (Matt. 4:10).
Chapter III: Thought Management 201

- **Replace It**

- 8 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. (Phil. 4:8 ESV)

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Chapter III: Thought Management 201

- **Hebrews 12:15 (NASB)**

- See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled…
Chapter III: Thought Management 201

- **Hebrews 12:15 (NASB)**

- See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled…

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Chapter III: Thought Management

Amygdala the Emotional Library
Chapter III: Thought Management 201

- **Replace**—negative thoughts with positive thoughts.

- Learn to starve your negative thoughts to death.

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Chapter III: Thought Management 201

- **Replace**

  8 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. (Phil. 4:8 ESV)
Chapter III: Thought Management

Brain Plasticity

- As we change our thinking, some branches go away, new ones form, the strength of the connections change, and the memories network with other thoughts.

- What an incredible capacity of the brain to change and rewire and grow! Spiritually, this in renewing the mind.

Chapter III: Thought Management

**Brain Plasticity**

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- What and incredible capacity of the brain to change and rewire and grow! Spiritually, this is renewing the mind.


Chapter III: Thought Management

**Brain Plasticity**

- **Rewire** —the brain to form new thoughts and mental habits.

Chapter III: Thought Management

**Basal Ganglia / Habit formation**
Chapter III: Thought Management
Basal Ganglia / Habit formation
Chapter III: Thought Management  
Basal Ganglia / Habit formation

Chapter 4:  
SUMMARY and CONCLUSION

- **Finding 1**

- Of the **53 participants** that completed the consent form and pre-assessment forms, nine of them did not complete their lessons and five more were not included in the final analysis of the data because they did not complete the post assessment.
Chapter 4:
SUMMARY and CONCLUSION

Finding 3

Of the remaining participants who completed the consent form, pre and post assessments, and the 21 Day Plan, **92.3% improved one level or more on their post assessment.** The other 3.85% of the participants stayed at level 1 which was normal up and downs with no depressive symptoms.

Chapter 4:
SUMMARY and CONCLUSION

Conclusion

- **92.3%**
- **3.85%**
Chapter III: Thought Management

The 21 Day Plan consist of ....

- **Six Thought Management Paradigms**
  - 1. **Retain** a balanced mindset (AC)
  - 2. **Resist** negative thoughts—CCC
  - 3. **Reframe** negative experiences
  - 4. **Replace** negative thoughts with positive
  - 5. **Rewire** the brain with positive neuropathways
  - 6. **Reconstruct** mental walls for protection
APPROVAL

July 25, 2014

Paul Chipman

IRB Exemption 1913.072514: Retraining Your Mind to Overcome Negative Thoughts: A Twenty-One Day Plan

Dear Paul,
The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and that no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101 (b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and that any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption, or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D. Professor, IRB Chair Counseling (434) 592-4054

Liberty University Training Champions for Christ since 1971