**Journey Into Wholeness “*Seek peace and pursue it” Ps 34:14***

**Session 7: “CHANNELING THOUGHTS”**

***Overview: This session will discuss our thinking and how to channel thoughts in a healthy way.***

1. **TRANSFORMATION OF THE MIND**

***“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 12:2***

Transformation into Christlikeness and wholeness is directly dependent on being empowered to learn to channel the mind into truth, the will of God, and that which is good, acceptable, and perfect.

***“For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and a sound mind.” 2 Timothy 1:7***

We are not victims of our biology or of our past and negative thought patterns. God has given us the power to have a fruitful, healthy, and sound mind.

***“As a man thinks within himself, so he is.” Proverbs 23:7***

***“As we think, we change the physical nature of our brain. As we consciously direct our thinking, we can wire out toxic patterns of thinking and replace them with healthy thoughts. New thought networks grow. We increase our intelligence and bring healing to our brains, minds, and physical bodies.” Dr. Caroline Leaf, Switch On Your Brain, page 20.***

Thoughts of the mind are a part of the soul – the inner part of man that consists of the mind, will, emotions, and the personality of each person. Our thoughts affect our brain which is the central part of our body that controls everything. Just a short time ago, scientists considered the brain to be fixed and like a hardwired machine that doesn’t change. Issues in the brain, whether effects from a stroke, a brain injury, PTSD, OCD, depression, anxiety, Alzheimer’s, etc. where all thought to be permanent and irreversible.

**Today, science confirms what the Bible says - that the brain is not fixed, but can be changed and transformed even in the most challenging circumstances through the channeling of our thoughts.** Science shows that as we think, we change the physical nature of our brain. The brain has the quality of neuroplasticity which by definition means that the brain is malleable and adaptable.

***“God said, ‘Let there be light!’, and there was light.” Genesis 1:3***

God’s words created the physical earth! Thoughts, words, and speaking forth declarations have the power to change the structure of matter.We have the power, through intentional thought patterns, to rewrite and rewire our brains in healthy ways. As new thoughts patterns grow that are aligned with truth, then new networks are developed in the brain. Transformation of the brain comes from the transformation of our thoughts. We have the ability to think and choose who and what we want to be!

1. **THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS**

**Emotions are the feeling, and thoughts are the cognition** **– or the mental process of awareness, perception, reasoning, and judgment.** In most cases, emotions are primary and thoughts come as a way of dealing with the feelings we have.

When a baby is born, they do not have developed thought about their world. Babies are a bundle of feelings and felt needs. Parents focus on fulfilling the babies felt needs, because the baby isn’t capable yet and hasn’t learned to think in terms of how to deal with its own felt needs. Thinking develops over time from learning and experience. Thinking gradually develops as a way to manage our feelings and solve the problems that present themselves. Thinking is also developed as a way to activate or reactivate feelings we have experienced. Thoughts are a way to deal with emotions, but thoughts are also a means through which emotions arise. Emotions can result from situations or experiences, or from thoughts, perceptions, and constructs of the mind.

As we continue to grow and develop, we can be taught and programmed to focus more on thinking and less on emotions. As we discussed last session, in our Western culture, feelings often take a backseat to thinking and reasoning. Our focus can become – repress the emotions (especially negative ones) and think your way through life. We discussed the negative effects this approach has on our whole person – spirit, soul, and body.

**Our goal is to recognize the importance of both thoughts and emotions and to channel both in a positive and godly way together. Thus, both emotions and thoughts are to be valued, channeled, and unified.**

**Example:** You can think that you are loved, but if you never feel you are loved, because of a backlog of negative experiences and repressed emotions, then you are not going to get very far.

**Key:** We need to align our emotions with our thoughts for both to be in unity with the Spirit of God and truth.

1. **THE FOUR COMPONENTS OF THINKING AND FEELING**

According to psychology **Professor James Gross**, there are four components of feeling an emotion (the **Modal Model of Emotion, https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/dealing-emotions/202101/what-are-emotions**):

1. **The Situation** - The situation you are in (whatever is happening to you at that moment).
2. **Your Attention** - The details you pay attention to.
3. **Your Appraisal** - Your appraisal of what the situation means for you personally.
4. **Your Response** - Your response, including the physical changes (like blushing or shaking), and your behaviors (like shouting or crying).

You feel an emotion when something about the situation you are in draws your attention - you notice some aspect of the situation that is relevant to you (your goals or needs). If there's nothing happening that matters to you, you will not have any strong feelings.

Once the relevant part of the situation has drawn your attention, you interpret what this means for you – you make an appraisal of the meaning of what is happening.

Once you have appraised the situation's meaning, then you will have an emotional response to the situation. The type of response (feeling happy versus angry) depends on how you appraised the situation. For example, if you thought it was unfair, you might feel angry. If you thought your goals were being blocked, you might feel frustrated. If you thought there was a potential threat, you might feel anxious.

**The Appraisal step is key** – **How you think and appraise the situation will determine the emotional response.**

1. **NEGATIVE APPRAISALS**

Many of us struggle with inner appraisals (the inner voice/thoughts) that sabotage us and keep us bound to ungodly and false identities, negative emotions, and thought patterns. Take a step back from yourself and observe your own thinking and appraisal of yourself and circumstances. Do you see yourself in any one of these common personal appraisals?

1. **The Inner Tyrant** – Are you always living under a sense of do’s and don’ts and performance? The Tyrant mentality is all about rules and rigid expectations. It is a controlling and demanding voice in your mind and thoughts. **“You should! You must! You don’t measure up!”** The inner tyrant is developed by listening and appraising the demanding voices of those around us. If we are around parents, teachers, friends, or authority figures who have set rigid ideas in our mind about how we should and shouldn’t do things, then we learn to think about ourselves in a similar way.

The demanding and rigid voice is internalized. People can develop this inner appraisal to gain outside approval from others or God. This pattern of thinking can also be developed to help protect oneself from external tyrants or criticism. **“If I am my own tyrant, and I push myself, then I won’t hear it from others.”** It is like we have the resident, legalist Pharisee always hovering in our mind.

This system of thought believes and thinks that one’s acceptance, favor, and advancement in God is contingent upon good behavior, that God’s love is conditioned upon one’s performance. The emotional and spiritual fruit of this legalistic mentality is alienation from God, others, and ourselves.

**Reprogramming your mind** – I am loved and accepted based upon faith and God’s love in Christ. God loves me! God accepts Me! I am a favored son/daughter!

***“For by grace I have been saved (accepted) through faith; and this is not of myself (or my performance), it is God’s free gift to me in Jesus.” Ephesians 2:8***

1. **The Inner Rebel** – Does something rise up in you that resists rules, God, or things that you are told to do (even if the things that are good and right)? The inner rebel reacts in rebellion to authority or any type of instruction/controlling influence. This thinking pattern is often developed in response to pressures and demands from outside authorities from the past (parents, teachers, spiritual leaders, etc.).

When hurt from outside authority figures is internalized, our defense mechanism is to try and reject and avoid outside voices, and to insulate ourselves from people hurting us again. The inner rebel refuses to cooperate in the future, so that one’s autonomy and individuality can be preserved. The inner rebel cries, **“No way I am doing that! That isn’t for me! I don’t trust them! I want it my way!”**

The inner rebel expresses itself in an extreme and unhealthy way to defend one’s wants and needs and personhood. The fruit is a lack of trust of anything remotely controlling or authoritative, and results in rebelling against everyone and everything, even oneself.

A person might know that they need to lose weight and focus on health, but inwardly resist and instead go eat three pieces of cake. A person might have a very reasonable request from their boss, but become angry and resist doing what is asked. A person may feel the gentle tug from the Lord to address a particular area in life, but resist without even knowing why.

**Reprogramming your mind** – I trust you God, and I know that You have my best interest in mind all the time. You have put people in my life to help me and for my good; I will trust and receive.

***“Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.” Proverbs 3:5-6***

1. **The Inner Victim** – Do you often think you are helpless, like your world is completely out of your control, and that you are constantly being victimized by people, circumstances, or even God? Something is always interpreted as going wrong. This is the hopeless and rejected thought pattern. **“I can’t! Help me! It happened again! Life is so unfair!”**

This inner thought pattern is tied to thoughts that are disempowering. It is the thought that you are not responsible for yourselves and your life, but that your circumstances are beyond your power to achieve positive change. This person must look inside and stop blaming others and their circumstances, recognizing that we each have the power, grace, and resources to live the abundant life God has called us.

The inner victim often tries to enlist people around them to rescue them. Healing starts when we recognize we have the power in God to change our lives. Also, another side of the person with the inner victim thought pattern is that essentially they have not learned to care for themselves adequately (creating healthy boundaries and patterns), therefore they often spend their time helping and rescuing others. Do you see this thought pattern in yourself?

**Reprogramming your mind** – I am not a victim, for God has not given me a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and a sound mind. I have the power to change! God is with me for good! I can do it!

***“For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and a sound mind.” 2 Timothy 1:7***

1. **The Inner Rescuer** – Do you often think you need to be a caregiver for others in some form or fashion? Do you find it more comfortable to help others deal with their problems, then focusing on your own? Often times, this thought pattern focuses on others to the detriment of their own needs. The inner rescuer doesn’t know how to care for themselves rightly and so they try to fulfill their need for care in an indirect way that often leads to codependence and unhealthy relationships.

Someone with an inner rescuer mentality believes that others are weak or powerless and that they must get their help. The inner rescuer subconsciously says, **“I need a victim to care for. I am needed! My value is based on helping.”** Every person that has an inner rescuer mindset also has an inner victim.

On the extreme side, the inner rescuer develops a “martyr complex” and finds all of life’s meaning and purpose in saving others. At the core of this thought pattern can be the fear that others will abandon you. The fear is, **“If I don’t take care of other’s needs, they’ll leave me, and I’ll be all alone.”** The inner rescuer must come to see that they are really helping others for their own selfish needs – to appease their own thoughts and feelings of fear, rejection, and abandonment. The inner rescuer needs to get in touch with themselves and focus their attention on their own issues and healing. By the inner rescuer not being “the savior” to others, they actually are empowering the person to help themselves and take responsibility for their lives.

**Reprogramming your mind** – God has made me responsible for my life and health. I find my purpose and meaning in You, Lord, and not in helping others. You want to heal me. I am secure and loved. I trust You to help me and also to help others. I am free and a beloved son/daughter of God.

***“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.” 1 John 4:18***

1. **REWIRING YOUR BRAIN**

***“The Word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, even penetrating as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12***

The Word of God is living, active, and powerful to change and transform us. The Word is like a sword that can penetrate to the deepest places of our soul and mind and set us free and bring us into alignment with the Spirit of God and truth.

1. **We are given the authority and power to choose and control our thinking.** To be healthy and whole we need to learn to improve and apply right thinking and biblical thoughts and patterns.

***“Ridding yourselves of all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the Word implanted, which is able to save your souls.” James 1:21***

1. **We must intentionally focus on identifying and ridding ourselves of negative thoughts and patterns and align our thoughts with God’s truth.** God’s Word is to be received like a seed that is to be planted in the brain and soul, which in time (like a seed planted) will produce the right fruit.

The process of rewiring our brain and changing our thinking patterns does not happen overnight. Dr. Caroline Leaf says science supports that it takes 21 days of focused attention on changing your thinking for the cycling of all necessary protein changes in the brain to occur to create a positive rewiring of the brain (***Switch On Your Brain, page 128***).

***“As a man thinks within himself, so he is.” Proverbs 23:7***

We might say, ***“As a man continues to think within himself, so he is.”*** Change your pattern of thinking, and you will change your life. For now, ask the Holy Spirit to show you negative thought patterns you have and the attitudes, mindsets, appraisals that He wants to transform. In the next session, we will walk through in more detail the steps to help you get free and rewire your brain to be in alignment with truth and the Word of God.