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

**Session 8: “5 STEP PLAN TO REWIRE YOUR BRAIN”**

***Overview: This session will discuss our thinking and how to rewire our brain in a healthy and godly way.***

***“You have an extraordinary ability to determine, achieve, and maintain optimal levels of intelligence, mental health, peace, and happiness, as well as the prevention of disease in your body and mind. You can, through conscious effort, gain control of your thoughts and feelings, and in doing so, you can change the programming and chemistry of your brain.” Dr. Caroline Leaf, Switch On Your Brain: The Key to Peak Happiness, Thinking, and Health, page 13.***

***“This day, I have placed before you life and death, blessing and curse. So choose life in order that you may live.” Deuteronomy 30:19***

***“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not wage battle according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying arguments and all arrogance raised against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:3-5***

***“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***

The following 5 steps are discussed in more detail in Dr. Caroline Leaf’s book *Switch On Your Brain: The Key to Peak Happiness, Thinking, and Health.*

1. **STEP 1: GATHER**

The first step is to develop awareness of what we are thinking and allowing to enter our mind and thoughts.

***“The gather step is, therefore, all about becoming aware of all the signals that are coming into your mind from the external environment through the five senses and understanding the internal environment of your mind.” Dr. Caroline Leaf, page 157.***

According to Dr. Leaf, brain signals come from two sources: 1) the external five senses relaying signals from our environment, and 2) thoughts deep within the nonconscious metacognitive part of the mind, which we call memories.

The brain is amazing, and, as signals come into the brain through the five senses, they interact with existing memories and the incoming information moves from the nonconscious metacognitive level to the conscious cognitive level. The thought brought up to the surface also has an attached emotion that we feel. Overall, our attitude is the surfaced thought with the attached emotion, or the “state of mind” that we have and that which influences what we say and do.

***“If the attitude that is activated is negative, then the emotional response will naturally be a negative or stressful feeling. If the attitude is positive, the feeling will be peaceful. The truth is that your attitude will be revealed no matter how much you try to hide it.” Dr. Caroline Leaf, page 161***

Our brain responds to the attitude (thought and attached emotion) to help to establish a new memory. The hypothalamus part of the brain secretes hormones responsible for dealing with our attitudes – either positive or negative.

We want to begin to develop awareness about our attitudes towards situations in our environment and how we respond to situations related to our past (memories).

***What are we thinking? How are we feeling? Peaceful or worrying? What is our state of mind and attitude? How are we responding to situations?***

This is what we are trying to gather and become aware of. As we begin to understand the power that God has given us to control our minds and thoughts, then we can be proactive and choose life giving and godly thinking/attitudes.

**We can’t control circumstances, other people, or our environment all the time, but we can learn to control how things affect our brain.**

The fascinating and empowering thing is that incoming signals, when they first come in, are in a temporary state. We determine by our response whether a signal will be lodged into our memory and brain structure in a more permanent way. We can choose to accept or reject the activated thoughts from the five senses or past memories. We can take the signal response captive and bring it into obedience to Christ, not allowing the signal to be a toxic memory and response that gets imbedded into our brain.

This is where we need serious reflection on how we think and respond to the signals that come into our brain. **We need to recognize that toxic and ungodly thoughts are bad choices and that we can change those choices.**

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

1. **STEP 2: FOCUSED REFLECTION**

***“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.” Philippians 4:8***

After we have gathered awareness (Step 1) – and become attentive about what is coming into our mind and thoughts, we then need to focus on positive and godly truth as it relates to that particular signal or memory. We are primarily focused on undoing the negative toxic-thinking patterns that we all can fall into. This step is focused on changing your brain chemistry and connections and memories through focused attention and regulation of your responses and resultant thoughts.

The powerful news that science gives us is that when we think, we change. **Nothing is static, either thoughts/emotions/attitudes are reinforced or they are diminished and transformed.** You choose through your God-given gift of free will and self-determination. Each of us is responsible for who we are and how we think.

***“The memory cannot sink back as part of your attitude into your nonconscious mind without being changed in some way. This is marvelous news for you, but it also emphasizes the responsibility you need to take for your thought life. No thought is harmless, nor does it stay the same – it constantly changes. As I said in part 1, you are constantly changing the landscape of your brain moment by moment. You are a thinking, creative being – quite brilliant…This constant change means that the deeper you think, the more change you make. This change is real and happens via electromagnetic and quantum forces as well as neurotransmitters activating genetic expression and protein synthesis.” Dr. Caroline Leaf, page 174-5.***

If you can apply the tools you have learned in this class (biblical meditation, visualization, etc.) and intentionally think deeper, you can make huge strides in a short period of time.

***What toxic-thinking patterns do you need to reprogram? What is the godly truth and thought that needs to replace that lie or negative thought/response?***

Change can happen now, and you can choose to think differently and, therefore, be different. It might take some time, but the tools are at our disposal if we will intentionally give ourselves to transformation.

Again, science and research show that mental practice using visualization, biblical mediation, deep thought and the imagination produces the same physical changes in the brain as if you were physically carrying out the same action.

***“Nothing they have imagined they can do will be impossible for them.” Genesis 11:6***

We can tear down toxic and ungodly thought patterns by choosing to bring the thought/feeling into conscious awareness and then transforming it through replacing it with godly and biblical truth. We continue to keep building the new thought structure and memory through repeating the process and positive reinforcement.

1. **STEP 3: WRITE**

Our brain actually works and organizes itself in a kind of writing structure, called genetic expression. Connections in the brain are made in a tree branch like structure, so when we journal or write things down on paper or type in your computer, you are mirroring the brain process in a powerful way.

Writing down your thoughts is an important and valuable step in reprogramming your brain because writing consolidates the memory and adds clarity to your thoughts. It helps put down your thoughts in a visual way and reinforces the whole process in your brain.

***“I always encourage anyone who keeps a thought journal to be creative with their notes. I also encourage anyone moving through the process of detoxifying thoughts to be playful with their thought journal. Don’t limit yourself to writing in straight lines. If there are word associations or groupings that seem natural as you focus on information, group those on a page. Draw a picture or diagram to go along with that thought expression. Add color or texture. Pour out the impressions in your mind onto the page.” Page 183.***

***“Write down the vision and clearly inscribe it on tablets.” Habakkuk 2:2***

1. **STEP 4: REVISIT**

This step is focused on returning to what you have so far accomplished and to evaluate your progress - where you have come from and where you are going. You, basically, are taking inventory and working out solutions to move forward in the positive reprogramming of your mind, brain, and thoughts.

***“After you have gathered awareness and done your focused reflection and writing, you will have stimulated major neuroplastic activity, putting your brain in a highly active and dynamic state for marvelous and positive change. This is the perfect state to be in to rewire.” Dr. Caroline Leaf, page 187.***

In this stage we can look at the thought we are focused on and either change it, keep it, or make it even stronger. Additionally, you evaluate what you have written down and then continue to work out and design what you want the new healthy thought to be. This is a process of improvement and refinement and building upon what has gone before in the previous steps and progress that has been made.

You can’t expect to do all the needed work in one day. You revisit where you are at and make needed changes, reinforcing with visualization and other tools to build greater strength to the thought being transformed into conformity with truth and the Word of God.

***“By consciously becoming aware of your thought life you are retranscribing and changing your underlying neuronal networks.” Dr. Caroline Leaf, page 189.***

1. **STEP 5: ACTIVE REACH**

This final step is very important and essentially blows the doors down on the negative and toxic thinking pattern. After you have built a strong foundation by working through steps 1 to 4, this step are positive actions and exercises you take to make the new healthy thought automatized – like a good thinking habit.

***“It is the doing nature of the active reaches that results in ungluing the branches from your thought trees. Steps 1-4 have loosened and weakened the branches, but step 5 literally destroys the branches.” Dr. Caroline Leaf, page 193.***

This is the bringing together of thought, emotion, and positive confession. All of these things must work together authentically to have the power for change and transformation. You can’t think and feel something and then speak something different, for there will be a lack of congruence and integrity operating in the brain that will leave it stunted.

This active reach step is lining up the new godly thought with a positive confession of faith and truth.

***“Confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart.” Romans 10:9***

1. **BREAKDOWN OF THE 5 STEPS**

**Example of toxic/negative thought pattern:** I am afraid of what is going to happen in the future.

Goal is to break down the toxic thought and build up the healthy/godly thought. The 5 steps are worked through daily for 21 days on one specific toxic thought. It takes approximately seven to ten minutes to work through the 5 steps and then you actively reinforce with the active reach step throughout the day (5-7 times).

1. Gather (1-2 minutes)

Purpose: Bring negative thought into awareness/consciousness and immediately consider the positive truth that counteracts it

Example: I am aware that I have an irrational fear of what may happen in the future and that I need to live in God’s peace and affirm that I am secure and alright in the Lord.

1. Focused Reflection (1-2 minutes)

Purpose: Focused reflection on the positive godly truth that needs to be implanted in my mind and thoughts. Loosening up the branches of the brain.

Example: My future is in God’s hands, and I will reflect and think deeply about God’s promise of peace and security in His loving care.

***“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:7***

1. Writing (1-2 minutes)

Purpose: Writing down and journaling your thought process and also the positive solution/truth in the Word of God. Starting to shake the branches to loosen the glue that binds the thought in the brain.

Example: Being creative and writing in journal using the Metacog technique or whatever you feel at the time, focusing on overcoming the negative with the positive truth and thought.

1. Revisit (1-2 minutes)

Purpose: Evaluating your thought process and what adjustments need to be made, building strength in your positive thought process. Shifting the glue from the negative thought to the healthy branch.

Example: I am more than a conqueror, and God is with me for good. My future is in the Lord’s hands!

1. Active Reach (1-2 minutes)

Purpose: Actively declaring and confessing the positive truth throughout the day. Melting down the negative branches and strengthening the positive branches.

Example: “God is good and has my future in His hands. I am secure and at peace!”