

BY DALE FLETCHER, M.S.

Faith and HEALTH connection

“Think Spiritual Thoughts/Renew Your Mind... A Spiritual Exercise for a Healthier Life”

I'm not sure most of us really recognize the importance of our thought life and the impact that it has on our emotions and our bodies. One of the most important spiritual exercises that we can put into practice for improved health is to monitor our thought life and to adjust our thinking so that it is 'healthy' or spiritual. By doing this and by incorporating the practice of renewing our minds, many people could enjoy improved emotional and physical. Here is a very brief summary of how our thoughts affect our bodies. For every event in our life, we quickly apply the filters of our beliefs and attitudes, which are based on our life experiences, and then we have automatic thoughts. Our thoughts lead us quickly to emotions and from that our body reacts. Our brain secretes chemicals called neuropeptides and other glands of our body release hormones. Positive emotions cause our body to release helpful chemicals. Negative emotions cause the release of harmful chemicals.

What the Research Says: Don Colbert, M.D. author of *Deadly Emotions: Understand the Mind-Body-Spirit Connection That Can Heal or Destroy You*, writes “I've worked with countless people who have discovered that once they made a sincere effort to tackle their dysfunctional thought patterns, they had fewer bouts of depression, anxiety, anger, grief, shame, jealousy, and all other toxic emotions. It isn't difficult to replace lies with God's truth. It just takes intentional and consistent effort... It takes the time and energy to find statements of God's truth and apply them to life's lies. Jesus promised, “If you abide in my Word, you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:31-32).”

What the Bible Says: We are reminded of the importance of dwelling on positive thoughts. “And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.” (Philippians 4:8) In the book of Romans, Paul urges us to change the way we think because it can transform us. “Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.” (Romans 12:2) Finally, the writer of Proverbs 14:30 says “A peaceful heart leads to a healthy body; jealousy is like cancer in the bones.” The effect of thinking thoughts that are positive can lead to a heart at peace, which is good for the body.

What You Can Do: The key to a healthy thought life is to minimize the negative/unhealthy thinking that we have and the corresponding negative emotions and have more positive thinking which will lead to having more positive emotions. Take another look at the scriptures above to be reminded of the Biblical approach and benefit of this spiritual exercise. Christians can ask God to help them through the power His Holy Spirit provides. He can help you change your thought life. Know that your true identity is in Jesus Christ, not in what others may have told you or what the Devil may be trying to tell you through his lies. A person who does not have a relationship with Jesus can practice the same behavior mentioned below,

*Physical exercise has some value,
but spiritual exercise is much more
important for it promises a reward
in both this life and the next*

—1 Timothy 4:8 NLT

but according to scripture (John 14:17) he does not have the benefit of help from God's Spirit.

Do you dwell on past hurts and pains? Is the deep resentment you keep towards another person eating at you deep in your heart? Do memories of past negative events float up into your mind frequently? Make a conscious choice to forgive that person and/or let go of that past hurt and give it to God and ask Him to take it, along with the associated emotional pain. Replace these negative thoughts with thoughts that are spiritual, pure and positive. Be deliberate in your decision to monitor your thinking. Monitor what you put into your mind. What kind of music do you listen to? Are the TV shows you watch healthy for you? What do you read? Are the internet sites you frequent consistent with your desire to have spiritually healthy thoughts? When we fill our minds with messages that are 'unhealthy,' by what we read and listen to, it influences what we will think about. The more you read the Bible and understand and believe the truths you find there, the easier it will be to renew your mind and to think on spiritual and 'healthy' thoughts. According to Warren Wiersbe, knowing God and His truths better is the first key in living an abundant, (and I would say healthy) life.

An excellent resource to help you learn how to change your thinking patterns is the book, *With All My Mind, God's Design for Mental Wellness*, written by James P. Porowski and published by Life Way. In this book, Porowski writes, “I find that unsuccessful attempts at changing thought patterns result from an unwillingness to change them. We enjoy our misery or woundedness or lustfulness or pride more than we desire Godliness. Unless our motivation is to please God, our attempts at thought control will have limited success. The Holy Spirit empowers our change process when we are truly repentant and wanting His control.”

As you renew your mind by thinking more about God and His nature and truth and less about untruths and negative thoughts it will likely improve your day-to-day attitude and corresponding emotions as well as your disposition on life. This then may well impact in a positive way on your emotional and physical health.

Secrets of Living an ABUNDANT LIFE

*The secret of living is fruitbearing.
The secret of fruitbearing is abiding in God.
The secret of abiding is obeying God.
The secret of obeying is loving God.
The secret of loving is knowing God.*

Adapted from *5 Secrets of Living* by Warren W. Wiersbe

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