

STUDY 41 – JUST LOOK AT YOUR LIFE

When you understand how the power of what and how you think affects your life and how God has designed you physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, it should cause you to recognize the incredible importance of taking responsibility for what and how you think.¹ I have said it often throughout this study, but I do not believe that God just gives you or me a green light to think any way that we choose. Everything that you do in your life begins with some thought that you have in your mind, with some neural pathway that you have developed as a way of thinking.

KEY PRINCIPLE 142: THOUGHTS ARE SO POWERFUL THAT THEY CREATE WORDS, ACTIONS, AND BEHAVIORS IN YOUR LIFE.²

So, if you want your life to be spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically healthy, then you have to make choices in your mind for that to happen. These kinds of things do not just simply happen.

Let us assume that you know that there are areas of your life that simply are not pleasing to God. It could be anything at any time. You have allowed your mind to accept thoughts that are wrong, ungodly, harmful to you and others, toxic, and unscriptural. At that point, you have to make a choice as to what you are going to do with each of those wrong thoughts or eventually, they will become strongholds in your life. Understanding that doing the right thing is simply a choice. I want you to understand it this way. **Choosing to do the right thing is thinking.** However, not choosing to think the right way is also thinking, and it always creates unpleasant and ungodly strongholds in your life. Now before we pick back up with the Scriptural concept of strongholds, I want to give you some Brain Facts to keep everything in perspective. These Brain Facts are vitally important because they help us to understand not only that we are, but how “**we are fearfully and wonderfully made**”. Everything about you - your physical, mental, and spiritual makeup - has been designed by God to work on your behalf and for His glory.

Brain Facts:

1. Right thinking demands that change in your life occurs by reinforcing the right godly thoughts in your mind, which will build godly neural pathways in your brain. If you have wrong thoughts, negative thoughts, and toxic thoughts, and you allow those thoughts to linger in your mind, then you are simply reinforcing and physically building all of that negativity into your brain.
2. If you determine that you cannot or will not do something that you know that you should do, then that thinking causes what is known as protein synthesis in your brain. The result is that an actual change develops in your brain to “I cannot” and “I will not”. It becomes a physical reality in your brain. This is why it is so important to “**bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ**” ([2 Corinthians 10:5](#)).³

¹ Leaf, Switch, 124.

² Leaf, Switch, 133-134.

³ Leaf, Switch, 175.

3. If you think about doing the right thing on a daily basis, neurological research has shown that within approximately two months your brain has permanently changed to accommodate that your new pattern of thinking. Why is that? It is because that new way of thinking in your mind is actually growing in your brain and in that time frame alone is able to overcome and override a neural pathway in your brain that has been very negative.⁴ The point is that you can change the way that you think from wrong to right and it is not that long of a time to do so. Two months goes by very quickly, so it is important to understand that what God may be asking you to do is not that complicated. Just choose to think like He thinks, and it will become your way of life.
4. If you approach a difficult situation with the right attitude rather than the wrong attitude, the blood vessels that surround your heart actually dilate causing increased blood flow to your brain. The increased blood flow provides increased oxygen levels in your brain which increases your cognitive abilities to resolve and overcome difficult issues. God has always said that you can be an “**overcomer**” if you will just think right. What happens is that there is a part of your brain called the hippocampus which has been designed by God to help you cope with difficult circumstances and to remain strong in the midst of adversity. However, if you have the wrong attitude, then the exact opposite takes place and your stress levels to resolve the difficult circumstances are greatly increased.⁵ Negative, ungodly thinking releases neurochemicals that destroy your ability to do the right thing.
5. The only thing that will ultimately change your brain is mind activity.⁶ Once again, this is how God has made you and that is why [Romans 12:2](#) is so important to your life. It should become a mindset that you are going to constantly be renewing your mind to God’s truth so that your life can be transformed. God literally implants truth into your mind through His Word, and then that truth gets physically built into your brain. This is beyond amazing.

Ro 12:2 (NKJV) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

6. While you are sleeping, your brain is creating new baby nerve cells for the next day. This happens every night in your life. These baby nerves are called “neurogenesis” and are God’s way to help you in the “**pulling down of strongholds**” and getting rid of toxic thoughts and replacing them with God’s thoughts. [Lamentations 3:23](#) says that “**the Lord mercies...are new every morning.**”⁷ I literally get chills thinking about incredibly amazing our bodies have been made by God. [Psalm 14:1](#) says that it is the fool that has said in his heart that there is no God.

Now, with all of that as a backdrop, I want to read [2 Corinthians 10:4](#) again just to remain refreshed relative to what God has provided every Christian. This is both spiritual and mental in nature because the battle with the world, yourself, and the devil is always taking place in your mind.

⁴ Leaf, Think, 45.

⁵ Leaf, Think, 95.

⁶ Leaf, Think, 176.

⁷ Leaf, Switch, 24.

2Co 10:4 (NKJV) **For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,**

The truth that you must embrace from this verse is that God has given you something very powerful, and probably much more powerful than you realize. He has given you spiritual “**weapons**” that are “**mighty**” for pulling down the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual “**strongholds**” that the enemy may have created in your life. That is God’s truth that you must believe. This is the neural pathway that you want to build into your brain – “*God has given me mighty weapons for the spiritual warfare that is always taking place in my mind*”. This is the kind of affirmation that you want to constantly be making, remembering, writing down, and reinforcing in your mind. This is God’s truth at work in your life.

You must remember that the more strongholds that you allow the enemy to create in your life, the more difficult it becomes to even know which ones to pull down and to work on. I mean, where do you start, which one’s are the most critical to attack, which ones are hurting your life the most? These are not easy questions to answer if you have allowed the enemy to develop a lot of these strongholds in your life. I would suggest that you need to actually **identify with a pen and paper** the areas of your life where you know that you are struggling the most. This may seem at first to be a little subjective, but it is really a very objective way to start. Let us see if we can identify just a few.

1. If you have a short fuse that leads you to becoming angry, that would be a great place to start.
2. If you are sharp with people and what you say to them when they frustrate you, that would be a great place to start.
3. If you are lazy and undisciplined, that would be a great place to start.
4. If you are always questioning God and why He allows things to happen in your life, that would be a great place to start.
5. If you always have to be in control of everything, that would be a great place to start.
6. If almost anything can make you anxious, that would be a great place to start.
7. If it is difficult for you to accept correction, that would be a great place to start.
8. If you have no interest in spending time in the Word of God, that would be a great place to start.
9. If you are knowingly doing something that you know is displeasing to God, that would be a great place to start.
10. If you are a negative, grumpy person, that would be a great place to start.

You must recognize that all of these kinds of things that may be going on in your life are the result of believing the devil’s lies and they have become mental, emotional, and spiritual “**strongholds**” that are defeating you and at times making life miserable for both you and others around you. Every stronghold that you have allowed the enemy to develop in your life ultimately hurts other people as well. You cannot enjoy the life that God has designed for you if you allow these silly strongholds to keep growing unattended. In ancient times, the strongholds were called “fortresses” because they were the strongest parts of the city. The more that you allow them to exist in both your mind and life, the more damage and heartache they will create in your life. You can literally change these things in two months. Listen very carefully. This is so super important.

KEY PRINCIPLE 143: THE DEVIL'S STRONGHOLDS ARE WHAT CREATE THE MOST DESTRUCTIVE EFFECTS ON YOUR LIFE.

His strongholds exercise a great power over your life that you may not even recognize. How is one way that you can know if you have these kinds of strongholds in your life? Well, it is really simple - **you never seek God for His answers to your struggles**. You just do your own thing. You keep trying to figure out what to do when something goes awry and gets twisted and crooked, and that may sound kind of “cool” and independent, but it will destroy your life. That is a terrible mindset, an egregious way of thinking. If you cannot believe and embrace a verse like [2 Corinthians 10:4](#), then you have no chance to win any of the spiritual battles that you face. The problem is simple.

The longer you believe and act on Satan's lies, the stronger those lies become built into your brain and the more difficult they are to remove.

The wrong neural pathways quickly become neural ditches if not dealt with. It is a well-known reality that the more someone lies to you, the easier their lie is to believe. So, the devil is relentless in lying to you. He is always lying to you, and the more he does, the more inclined you will be to believe his stupid lies. I love part of Paul's prayer in [Ephesians 1:19](#) when he spoke about the greatness of God's power when he talked about,

Eph 1:19 (NKJV) ...what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power

Here is what you should know. **You should know that there are always two distinct and opposite powers working in your life – the power of God's Word and the power of Satan's lies**. The power of God's truth in your life is much more powerful than you can imagine, but for the most part the devil has convinced most people that that is not true. There simply are thoughts that you have to refuse and reject because they are not from God and will only harm your life. If I can say it in a different way, you literally have to reprogram your mind because what you allow into your mind is what eventually comes out of your life. Once again, [Romans 12:2](#) calls this reprogramming of your mind as the “**the renewing of your mind**”. So, from the negative side, whatever you put into your mind that is wrong, untrue, and the opposite of God's Word, that is what will quickly come out of your life.

So, how can you know if you are headed down this path? It is so very simple, so listen carefully. **Just look at your life**. It is that simple. Does your life reflect God and how He thinks or does it reflect you and how you think? You tell me. Is it all about you, or is it much more about God? You have to make that choice. God is not going to make that choice for you. Yes, I understand that the fleshly drives are so very strong in many people that choosing God over themselves seems almost impossible – but that is not true. **Your flesh is not stronger than the Spirit of God who lives in you**. You must believe that. You must develop that neural pathway in your brain.

As an example, if someone thinks that it is okay to just simply speak their mind on every little issue that irritates them, then what that person will find is that their life will greatly suffer. Being reactionary to your circumstances is not what God wants for your life. So, in every situation that you find yourself, no matter how difficult or how challenging it may be, if you can simply control your tongue to refrain from saying what you may want to say, then God can use you – but not before.

Your usefulness to God is no better than how you talk to people.

In fact, I would encourage you to recognize that you can always tell to what depth someone is allowing God to work in their life simply by listening to what they say. The tongue is everyone's Achilles' heel. It is what makes them or breaks them. It is what reveals the reality of their Christian faith.

The words that you speak are the evidence of what you really believe about God, and your words will always expose you and uncover where you really are in your Christian life.

You have to make it a habit of your life to always be speaking edifying words to people that build them up, but so often the opposite is true. Rather than strengthening others by what people say, they are snarling at others, cursing at loved ones, almost reveling in how ugly their words can be, and then just dismissing their obvious ignorance of what God wants them to do. This next Key Principle is so intuitively obvious that it really needs no explanation.

KEY PRINCIPLE 144: BAD WORDS ALWAYS CREATE BAD RESULTS.

[James 1:19-20 and 26](#) say,

Jas 1:19 (NKJV) **So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; ²⁰ for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.**

Jas 1:26 (NKJV) **If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.**

So, one of the best ways that you can know whether or not you are making spiritual progress in your life is in how much self-control you exercise in what you say. You will find that your tongue is your testing ground. It is where you normally succeed or fail. It is one of the major strongholds where the enemy is constantly working to get you to say what he wants you to say and not what God wants you to say. If you can simply embrace the reality of what it means to exercise self-control in the most basic areas of your life, half of your battle with the enemy's strongholds will be won. The wisest and most spiritual people that I know personally are always reflecting God in what they say and how they actually say something.

KEY PRINCIPLE 145: WHEN YOU GUARD YOUR TONGUE, YOU GUARD YOUR LIFE.

I remember being in a public forum where someone that I really love said something about me that was very hurtful to me. I do not actually think that it was intentional, but it was just inappropriate and unnecessary. Immediately, I had to make a mental decision as to how I would react or respond. It took me about 5 seconds to decide that I would not say anything to anyone about the incident. I had great peace from God that I could easily absorb the hurt and continue to demonstrate great love for the individual – which I did. Thirty or forty years ago, that is probably not the path I would have chosen. I would have said something, spoken my mind, and let him know what I thought. I love my neural pathway today because I know that God has developed into my thinking and physically built into my brain the deep desire to exercise self-control that honors Him. That is the path that I will continue to

choose, and it produces much better fruit than becoming angry or indignant with someone because they may have been a little insensitive at some point in time.

KEY PRINCIPLE 146: WHAT AND HOW YOU THINK IS ALWAYS A CHOICE THAT YOU MUST LEARN TO MAKE.

There is great peace and much grace when you learn how to think like God thinks, and when you appropriate His thinking and His words into your life. You will really like the fruit of that decision much better than “*doing it my way*”. That might have been a nice song, but it is really bad theology.

Think of it this way. If you are to maintain a Christian mind and a Christian mindset, then there are things that you must understand that you cannot dwell on. There are thoughts that you must keep out of your mind. It will be a battle that some are not willing to fight. It is not an easy battle, nor should you think that it is. You simply have to keep replacing the wrong thoughts with God’s Word in your mind. When you have a wrong thought, as best as you know how, you replace it with God’s thoughts. Why is that? Why is this so important?

KEY PRINCIPLE 147: YOUR LIFE WILL NEVER RISE ABOVE YOUR THOUGHT LIFE.

Listen very carefully. There simply are areas of your life where you have to exercise mental and emotional self-control.

1. There are movies you can watch and movies you cannot watch.
2. There are things you can laugh at and things you cannot laugh at.
3. There are things you can say and things that you cannot say.
4. There are attitudes you can have and attitudes you cannot have.
5. There are good habits you can have and bad habits you cannot have.

All of these kinds of decisions about how you are going to live your life become the testing ground for your Christian life, and whether or not you are willing “**to deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow Christ**”. These kinds of decisions are the litmus test as to whether or not you even understand what it means to be a Christian. In my mind, it is a really important question to answer as to whether or not you are truly following Christ. I think that the issue is simpler than we often make it.

You must control what goes into your mind so that you can control what comes out of your life.

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