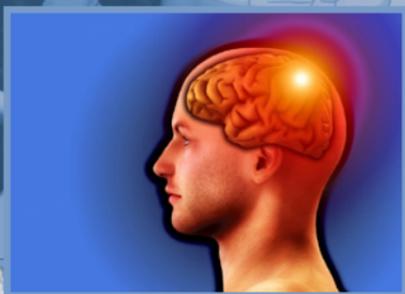


Your Thoughts

by Angela Poch, NC

**CHOICES
CIRCUMSTANCES
CHANGE**



**CAN YOU CHANGE
YOUR THINKING?
HOW DO YOU AVOID
WRONG THOUGHTS?**

*Keeping the mind
under your control
and improving
brain function...*

*You'll want to learn
how you can choose
your state of mind.*

Your Thoughts

The Bible says: “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.” Pr 23:7 “A Merry Heart doeth good like a medicine.” Pr 14:22 An active relationship with God is the most important thing we can do to have good mental health. There is a loving Creator who wants a relationship with everyone, but he will not force. Each person must ask for strength to fight temptations and guidance to the right path.

Prayer time and personal devotion are the keys to unlock the great treasures of life. A meaningful prayer life is important to good spiritual health.

P - Praise God for blessings

R - Repent of wrong doing

A - Ask for your needs

Y - Yield to God’s will

E - Entreat the Holy Spirit

R - Repeat through the day

The first step in a good prayer life is to praise God for all the things you are thankful for. This gets you in the right frame of mind and gets rid of many wrong thoughts.

Repenting of wrongs you’ve done and forgiving others. That’s right, even if they don’t deserve it, you need to forgive them. And I do mean NEED! Our bodies use chemical and electronic messengers in our brain, and thinking bad thoughts (harboring unforgiveness) is harmful to our brains.

Ask for your needs. God knows every need, want, and desire. He doesn’t need someone to tell Him because He doesn’t know, He wants people to communicate.

Surrender to God’s will for your life. When God’s will is not what we want, we need to rely on the Holy Spirit for strength to see us through and we need to choose to say no. “I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.” Phil 4:13.

Entreat means to diligently ask for. The Holy Spirit has the power to help us overcome and deal with anything that can possibly arise on this earth.

Repeat often. Turn your heart to the Lord throughout the day. Sometimes we get so busy we forget God is there to help us. Talk to Him throughout the day.

Devotions and study time are also important in building a relationship with God. Do you have personal worship each morning?

ABC’s of thinking:

NOW, let’s get a little bit into how your mind works in regard to thoughts. Thoughts come in many ways: You can make up your own thoughts, you can get temptations from Satan, and of course God sends you suggestions too. As your walk with God gets closer, you will learn how to tell the difference between those different thoughts.

When negative thoughts come to us we don’t have to keep thinking them. We can choose what to think about. We can’t choose what happens to us, but we can choose how we react to it. Here are some ABC’s to thinking.

A - Action and Activity - something happens or a thought comes to mind.

B - Belief and Basics - what you believe forms the basis for your feelings.

C - Consequences and Conscience - there are consequences, good or bad, to your belief and you need to listen to your conscience about your thoughts.

D - Decide and Disagree or Determine - decide if you find what you believed was right or wrong, and disagree with that thought if it is wrong.

What does that all mean? Let's use a dog story as an example.

A - Action and Activity - something happens or a thought takes action in your mind. You are riding your bike and a dog runs out from a neighbors driveway, you begin to make thoughts about what is going to happen. This is the 'action'.

B - Belief and Basis - what you believe forms the basis for your feelings. Your beliefs are made up of the things you choose to believe combined with how you remember things that have happened to you in the past. So the dog comes toward you and you remember the last experience with a dog, or stories (real or imagined) about other people's experiences with dogs, or you make up a 'what if', and you form a belief for what will happen in this situation. Perhaps you believe the dog will or might bite you. The basis (or reason) for that belief is the thoughts (memories or imaginations) about dogs and bikes.

C - Consequences and Conscience - there are consequences, good or bad, to your beliefs and you need to listen to your conscience. The consequences can be physical, mental, spiritual, or a combination of all three. Let's continue with our dog and bike story. Now because you believe the dog might bite you, you become afraid. You see the dog did not make you afraid, it was your belief he might bite you that made you afraid. So the consequence of your own thought is fear.

D - Decide and Disagree or Determine - if you find what you believed was wrong, you need to disagree with that thought. If the thought was correct, then determine to what to do in that situation. Is the dog really going to hurt you? Here is where you take control of your thoughts. You start really thinking about the situation. The dog is friendly and wagging his tail. You've met him before when you visited the neighbor so you don't need to be afraid. Now you need to disagree with your first thought about the dog. Determine to do what is right and pray for strength. You might say "Hi, Rover, I'm just riding to the park today. You better stay home." Can you think of other ways to deal with this problem?

But what if the dog looks angry and your thoughts maybe right, there is something to fear? What then? Determine to give it all to God. Ask Him for protection, get out of the situation, and talk to someone. Don't let the fear sit inside you! You are still in control of how you think even if you can't control the circumstances. You may not be able to prevent the dog from coming out, but you can control how you treat your neighbor after or if you will be afraid of all dogs after this.

You see you can make your thoughts take a U-turn, you start out happy in Jesus, temptation or problems or trials come and you can turn your thoughts back to Jesus. Turn your thoughts right around into positive, right thoughts.

The ten pit falls of thought:

How do you know if what you're thinking is right or wrong? Here are ten cognitive distortions to watch out for:

1. All or Nothing thinking (All or nothing, not looking at the whole situation. You notice the dog running out toward you but you don't see the neighbor on the porch. Or ALL dogs have the ability to bite so they most likely will.)

2. Overgeneralization - Take one event or story and use it to analyze all other events. ie: Using one bad dog story/event as the basis for what all dogs will do.

3. Negative Mental Filter - Only remembering negative examples/stories. Ie: I know LOTS of bad dog stories, can't think of one time a dog liked me.

4. Disqualifying the Positive - Not thinking about the positive. Ie: The only time a dog was nice to me, my mom was there, so he had to be nice.

5. Mind Reading/Fortune Teller Error - We think we know what someone else is thinking and we predict the outcome. ie: That dog is looking at me with fire in his eyes, he WANTS to bite me. If I ride down that street that dog will come out because he is out to get me.

6. Magnifying the Negative (or dwelling on). Ie: I know LOTS of bad dog stories. OR The dog barked and if he bites me and I might die!

7. Emotional Reasoning - Emotions override logic and faith. Watch for feel, etc. Ie: I am scared so the dog must be bad or I wouldn't be scared. I know God can help me, but I don't think he will because I don't feel worth it.

8. "Shoulds and musts" - Demanding others/world give you your way. Ie: Dogs SHOULD not run out of the driveway. Dog MUST always be quiet and friendly.

10. Blaming of others or self. Ie: If the neighbors would tie up the dog, I wouldn't be scared of riding my bike. If dad would have bought me a faster bike, I would just fly past that dog, and he couldn't hurt me.) If I could just ride faster... (adapted from 10 distortions by Aaron Beck - see wikipedia).

Other issues:

Over-burdened (Surrender your will to God's will, self is a major burden.)

Under-fed (Not studying your Bible will leave you underfed. You need to know God's principles and the strength found in God's word. There are many promises in the Bible. Start memorizing one today!

Under-estimating Value (The value of oneself or others - "I can't". I can't ride past, I'm too scared. I'm not worth protecting or saving (nobody cares if I get hurt). That dog is not worth anything, they should get ride of him.)

Under-tolerating (Low tolerance to anything you don't like. I don't like being bothered, even if he is no threat. I don't like being even a little scared, EVER!)

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