

Elections are over and the best part is all the negative campaign commercials are done.

It is so easy in our world today to get caught up in negative thinking.

Many of life's battles are won or lost in the mind. Battlefield where victory or defeat determined before we ever act.

Paul described this inner battle...

***For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.<sup>19</sup> For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Rom. 7:18-19***

Paul was describing this battle that goes on within us between our old nature and our new nature as Christians. When we are born-again we get a new spirit. That is where the Holy Spirit dwells. Unfortunately, we don't get a new mind and body. Our old mind and body ruled our lives and now they have to be overruled by the Holy Spirit if we are going to follow God.

The mind must be renewed (we'll talk more about that later) and the body or flesh must be controlled. The mind is where we decide what impulses we follow, what decisions we will make.

For many of us life and our environment have caused us to allow toxic thoughts to pollute and control our thinking and influence our lives.

**Definition: Toxic—anything containing poisonous material capable of causing sickness or even death.**

This is such a personal message because this is something close to my heart. I've had to overcome some pretty negative thoughts about myself. I had to learn to replace negative thoughts with God's truth and that's what I want to help you with today.

Bottom line: If you believe negative thoughts you become a negative person. If you think what God thinks you become like Christ. Who wants to be more like Christ?

**IDENTIFY AND REJECT TOXIC THOUGHTS.**

***Carefully guard your thoughts because they are the source of true life.* Prov. 4:23 CEV**

***The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.* 2 Corinthians 10:4-5**

The Greek word translated as strongholds is the word, "*ochuroma*". It means a **prisoner locked by deception**.

So many people today, you are not becoming who God wants you to become because you are locked in a deception of lies. You believe something about yourself that is not true. You are locked in a prison of lies, and today the power of God will demolish those strongholds.

Exercise: Identify negative thoughts. Break them down into four categories...

### **1. Negative**

Sometimes the recordings might say, I don't have what takes, you know, I'm never going to be good enough. No matter how hard I try, I just don't measure up. Everybody else, they get all of the breaks, but not me baby! I mean, if something bad is going to happen, it happens to me. If something good is going to happen it happens to you. I just can't do it all, there's just too much! I mean, I try and try, but I'm always overwhelmed and I just can't get it all done! No one appreciates me. I mean, I give and I give and I give, and they take me for granted. I've got the gift of giving and they've got the gift of taking. It's just not fair!

It could be just kind of simple, petty things. My hair won't do what I want it to do on this day and my cell phone dropped another call and we're out of milk! Just negative!

### **2. Fearful**

I mean the economy is tough and so, my company is struggling. What if I lose my job? You turn on the news and everything is bad. I mean there are terrorists and our kids are watching porn. You know the economy, oh it was getting better! What? All this kind of stuff. You know, who really cares because the mind said the world is going to end in 2012, I've seen the movie it's going to end! I mean, there's so much to worry about, right? We have got to get through all of this! Or, I'm such and such age and I'm not married! I might never get married and I don't feel safe! Someone could break in and I don't feel emotionally safe and I worry about my kids!

Worry is usually in the future and involves things that we can do anything about.

### **3. Discontented**

I don't like my body, I don't like the way I look, I'm not attractive, I can't be happy unless I'm dating someone. I can't be happy unless I'm married. Oh, I married the wrong person, I wish my husband was more like that guy, a better spiritual leader, a better provider. I wish my wife wouldn't nag all of the time! Nag, nag, nag, nag, nag! Don't elbow anybody and don't you dare say Amen as I'm saying that! Gentlemen, that's stupid and you need a brain if you feel like doing that! We would be happy if we had kids. I wish we had kids, or I wish we had different kids! These kids are driving me crazy!

I wish I had a better job, bigger house, nicer car. I wish we had granite countertops and a walk-in closet. I can't be happy unless I have it.

#### 4. Critical

We see somebody and we are like, I would never do that! Who does he think he is? Can you believe the way she dresses? Flipping her stuff here in the house of God! You know, critical! How many of you know somebody like that? Raise your hand! See, you are being critical of them right now, look at you! Just messing with you alright! You know, I don't like these people, I don't like this place. You walk into your work, they are all a bunch of idiots! This place would fall apart without me!

The NEED to pass judgment.

Some of you, you even have the spiritual gift of criticism in churches! I mean, right now you are criticizing everything that is going on! I don't like this place! Music is too loud!

***Yet you know me, O Lord; you see me and test my thoughts about you. Drag them off like sheep to be butchered! Set them apart for the day of slaughter!*** Jeremiah 12:3

- **REPLACE TOXIC THOUGHTS WITH GOD'S TRUTH.**

By the help of the Holy Spirit we are going to learn to identify and reject negative thoughts and replace them with the truth. Just trying to think happy thoughts or positive affirmations is not enough.

Example of Stuart Smalley on SNL. (Now that guy is a congressman)

***...the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true... noble... right... pure... lovely... admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.*** Philippians 4:7-8

*The MIND FILTER. If what you're meditating on gets stopped in this filter then reject it and replace it with the truth.*

*Give an example.*

***Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*** Romans 12:2

**Summary: This is who you are in Christ!**