

SESSION 4: NEGATIVE THINKING

Welcome and Program Overview (Facilitator): 10 minutes Session #4 Teaching: Negative Thoughts 10 minutes

Do YOU struggle with negative thinking? We ALL do at times! Chronic negative thinking, depression, anxiety, and similar disorders are on the rise all over the world and keep us from living out our identity in Christ. According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, 40 million adults in the U.S. are affected, which is nearly 20 percent of the population. Of that number, many are professing Christians.

Fear is a root cause of many of these problems. It's no wonder people are fearful in a world where it appears nothing is reliable. It can be quite disturbing for a person to realize almost everything in life is ultimately out of his control—from the weather to his bank account balance. All the things people rely on for their security will sooner or later fail them. But the Christian who confesses the sovereignty of our Father God who works all things for his good (**Romans 8:28**) has the antidote to negative thinking.

When a Christian's thinking is primarily negative, anxious, or doubtful, it's a sign of a serious lack of faith. According to **Proverbs 29:25**, fear is a trap but trust in the Lord keeps a man safe. Those who struggle with negative thinking should do the same thing they would do with any other sin—**confess it** (agree with God that negative thinking is wrong because it reveals a lack of trust) and make every effort to replace your thinking with God's Truth and how He sees you as HIS precious child!

How do we do this? Prayer is a key part of overcoming negativity. As we pray "with thanksgiving" (**Philippians 4:6**), we focus on the blessings we have received and leave no room for negative thoughts. The Holy Spirit will be faithful to help the repentant believer overcome negative thinking (this will be discussed in session #6) (see **Matthew 7:7-11**). Your LIFE Starter Bible reading is also a great help in overcoming negative thinking. It's helpful to remember that, no matter how dismal the present circumstances, Christians have been promised God's love and victory in Christ (**Romans 8:37-39; 2 Corinthians 2:14**).

Small Group Discussion: 25 minutes

The struggle against negative thinking is a battle for the mind. In Philippians 4:8, the apostle Paul tells believers what to think about: **things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy!** So, Christians must think about what they're thinking about and not allow their minds to have free rein.

• **Do you allow negative thinking and speaking to control you? Discuss taking control of who and what you listen to.**

As long as Christians live in a fearful, stressful world, negative thoughts will come. We have the option of either stamping out those thoughts or nurturing them. The good news is, negative thoughts can be replaced with positive ones, and the more that Godly substitution takes place, the more peace and joy we can experience.

• **Discuss any lies that may have been spoken over you in the past. Where did you receive negative input about your identity? What can YOU choose to do to think differently?**

Pray with your group about arresting your negative thoughts, to make sure what comes out of your mouth will be positive in the future. Also ask for God to reveal to you who else in your life you need to discuss this with. Now commit to the group about having discussions over the next week with those people.

Small Group Wrap-Up: 15 minutes:

What were the biggest take-aways and action items?

SESSION 4: Weekly Devotional Day 1

Read Romans 12

Are you willing to be transformed by the renewing of your mind? Will you allow God to search your heart over the course of this class to invade your thought life and make you aware of any negative thinking? The same way that what we eat will affect how we feel, what we consume spiritually affects how we see ourselves and our world. To renew something involves refilling what's empty or restarting what's stopped. We don't just check out and stop consuming information.

L=Listen: in your journal by writing the date and the Scripture you're studying. After you've read the passage a few times, focus on a verse or two that stands out to you and then write out those verses in your journal

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I = Investigate: the context around today's Scripture reading. To whom was this written? Why? How does this passage fit with what comes before and after it? What is the Holy Spirit communicating through this text? Feel free to use Bible study tools for commentary: [Bible Study Tools](#), or [Easy English Bible](#)

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F=Focus: to the text to make it applicable for your own life. What is God saying to you personally through this passage? How can you apply what you've read?

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E = Engage: God. This can either be a short prayer or an action that you can take that day after reading the text. Is there a command to follow in the text? How are you different because of what you've learned?

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SESSION 4: Weekly Devotional Day 2

Read James 3

Journal about any curses others have spoken over you. Keep adding to the list as you go through this week to discuss with your group at the next class. It's time to TAME your TONGUE!

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SESSION 4: Weekly Devotional Day 3

Read Ephesians 1; Romans 8:31-34

God believes in you and nothing can stand against you. Do you believe that. Journal about that and if there is anything standing in the way, be ready to discuss in your next group.

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SESSION 4: Weekly Devotional Day 4

Read Ephesians 4:31-32; Matthew 6:14-15; Matthew 18:21-22

Over the next two sessions, we will be discussing forgiveness. Pray about the people in your life that you need to forgive, starting with YOU!

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