



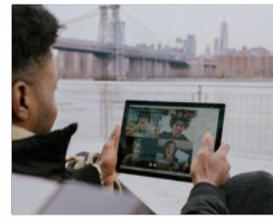
AUGUST 1 - 29

WINNING

THE WAR ^{IN} YOUR MIND

**3. “DEFEAT YOUR NEGATIVE
THOUGHTS”**

ICEBREAKER



If this is a new group or there are new people, please take a moment to **introduce yourselves**.

To start off your small group, briefly share your response to the following question:

What is one of your pet peeves?

Share with your group.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Let's get a big picture of what we'll be learning today...

Your thought life can often determine the direction of your future. Think positive thoughts and good things are in store. Think negative thoughts and you're bound for heartache and hardship. Why is that? Because our lives will move in the direction of our thoughts. What we constantly put in our mind will come out in our lives. Even though our lives could be going well most of the time, our minds have the tendency to drift to the things we don't like and to the things we tend to complain about. This week, we will see how negative thoughts develop over time and how to filter and frame them in a way to defeat them.

TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Tip: BE REAL, AUTHENTIC, & TRANSPARENT ABOUT

WEAKNESSES & STRUGGLES. Some people in your group who may be new to faith or new to a small group often think there's a *right* way to answer discussion questions--or at least a few *wrong* things to say. So, they show up and listen in, but don't feel permission to say what's really on their minds. Set examples by sharing honest vulnerable answers. Sharing with a level of vulnerability sets the tone and gives permission for everyone--regardless of spiritual maturity--to respond authentically.

Tip: IN PERSON GATHERING. Per State current requirements, please observe the following if your group decides to meet in person: No more than 25 people gathering indoors at this time. This may change based on what Tier we are currently at in the State of Hawaii; wear a mask; and maintain 6 feet social distance.

ONLINE Tip: ZOOM (ONLINE) GATHERING. If you're meeting together on Zoom, familiarize yourself with the Zoom features on your electronic device. It is helpful for everyone to know where the mute button is located. Ask the attendees to self-mute to avoid environmental noise when someone else is talking & sharing. Doing this will help with the flow of your SG discussion time.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1.) The life you live is often a reflection of the thoughts you think. That's why it's so important to think positive thoughts instead of negative thoughts. When you focus your mind on good and godly things, you will live out a life full of goodness and godliness. Take a look at this promise from scripture.

For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.

Proverbs 23:7 (NKJV)

What are some ways that negative thinking can produce a negative life? And how can positive thinking turn that around and give you a good life?

2.) Last week, we talked about the neural pathways that we develop in our brains. Over time they create beliefs and patterns of behavior. But there is another component that contributes to how we see the world and react.

Cognitive biases are mistakes in reasoning based on personal experience or preferences. It's when our brain is pre-wired to interpret a situation even if our interpretation isn't completely accurate. The things you have encountered in life will shape how you see the world and respond in the future. These can be good, as long as they align with God's truth. But when they are off the mark, they can produce really bad results.

Here's how Paul the Apostle dealt with some cognitive biases in his day.

The message about the cross doesn't make any sense to lost people. But for those of us who are being saved, it is God's power at work. As God says in the Scriptures, "I will destroy the wisdom of all who claim to be wise. I will confuse those who think they know so much."

1 Corinthians 1:18-19 (CEV)

There were some who thought they were wise, but they really weren't. Why? Did they have less education? Were they looking at a different set of facts? No. It's because they had experiences and preferences that kept them from seeing the truth.

Think of a time when you misunderstood something or someone because of a past experience or present preference. How did it turn out badly for you? (Example, you assumed something that wasn't true or accurate.)

3.) Cognitive biases are not a result of looking at a different set of facts. It's something else entirely. It's not facts, it's the **filters** we use. Every time we have an experience in life, we put that experience through a filter to understand what is happening, what it means for us, and what will occur next.

But what happens when our filters are off? In Numbers 13 & 14, Moses sends 12 spies into the Promised Land to look around. Two come back with a positive response. *"This place is amazing!"* (Numbers 14:7) While the other ten come back with a negative outlook. *"The people there are too strong!"* (Numbers 13:31) Those who came back with a negative report had filters that gave them a cognitive bias that kept them from obtaining God's promises.

Our past experiences are the biggest factor in creating filters. These filters shape how we see things and how we see life overall. In fact, they will lead to future expectations. How you view what has happened to you can direct the course of your life.

What experience in your past - either good or bad - do you think has had the biggest impact on where you are right now? (Example, growing up with a poverty mentality or growing up well provided for financially, having a skewed view of God because of your relationship with your parent(s), you have a difficult time trusting someone of the opposite sex because of past hurts, etc...)

4.) Another factor in creating a cognitive bias is how we frame what we encounter. We might come up against a problem or a possibility and react depending on how we anticipate it turning out.

In order to produce positive thoughts and expectations, we need to reframe our experiences. **Reframing** is a technique where we create a different way of looking at a situation or relationship by changing its meaning. Look at how Paul reframed his imprisonment in Rome.

I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News. For everyone here, including the whole palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ.

Philippians 1:12-13 (NLT)

Reframing not only allowed Paul to endure his harsh circumstances, it gave him a clear mission in the midst of his problems. Without that reframing, he might have drifted into depression or become overwhelmed by anxiety.

Think of a time when you reframed a bad situation by looking for the silver linings within the problems. A time when you focused on what was right, not what was wrong in the situation. Share with the group how it helped you move from grumbling to gratitude.

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

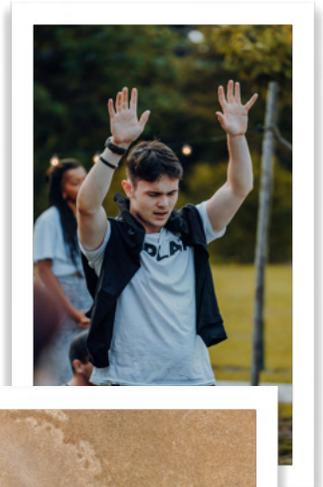
As you encounter new obstacles in life, you will have a choice. This choice is likely based on your past experiences and current preferences. **The facts of the moment won't change, but what can change are your:**

- Filter &
- Framing

This week, will you clean your filters and shift your framing of how you see the world?

ADDITIONAL ACTION STEPS (Optional):

- Do at least one (1) SOAP Devotions this week
- Share with your group one of your SOAP Devotions from this past week



CLOSE IN PRAYER

Take a few minutes to close your time together with prayer and to pray for each other's prayer requests. Below is a sample prayer to read if you choose to. You can also choose to write down each other's prayer requests to remember throughout the week.

Sample Prayer:

"Father God, thank You for revealing these truths to us. Even though we live in a fallen world full of pain, suffering, and broken expectations, we know for a fact that You have given us the power and mental capacity to choose to look at things in a different light. You have given us the divine power to demolish strongholds and to capture every argument that comes against Your truth. Would You help us get into the habit of cleaning our filters by washing them with Your word. Help us to frame negative situations into something positive. Give us eyes to see through Your lenses and perspective. As we come up against problems, help us to reframe them in a way that would reveal Your true purpose. We can't control what happens to us. But we can control how we respond with the help from the Holy Spirit who is our Counselor, Comforter, and Teacher. We know that You are with us and through You we can overcome any obstacle. We thank You for that hope and promise. In Jesus' name we humbly pray, amen.

Group Prayer Requests:

Name

Request

Day 1: *Make sure that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no root of bitterness springs up, causing trouble.* Hebrews 12:15 (HCSB)

Day 2: *God saved you by His grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.* Ephesians 2:8-9 (NLT)

Day 3: *I may walk through valleys as dark as death, but I won't be afraid. You are with me, and Your shepherd's rod makes me feel safe.* Psalm 23:4 (CEV)

Day 4: *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."* Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

Day 5: *God is the One who began this good work in you, and I am certain that He won't stop before it is complete on the day that Christ Jesus returns.* Philippians 1:6 (CEV)