

WORKBOOK AND JOURNAL



Replacing NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

Written By Tiffanie Danielle

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We destroy
arguments and every
lofty opinion raised
against the knowledge
of God, and take every
thought captive to
obey Christ,

2 Corinthians 10:5

An Introduction from the Author

Without even taking into consideration that I've got eight kids and a daughter-in-law to keep up with, a social enterprise to run, and Nepali girls from incredibly hard backgrounds living with us... let me just say that my mind is a tangled mess of random thoughts, important things, to-do lists, complex memories, hopes, doubts, dinner ingredients, gel nail designs, fun ideas, vacation plans, thoughtful questions, familiar faces, career goals, shopping lists, prayers for my kids, all the irrational things I'm afraid of, a list of everything I need to tell my husband, home improvements, outfits, conversations (real and imaginary), the plot of that book I've been trying to finish for the last several months, and somewhere, locked way down in the back, is a list of all the "safe places" I've tucked everything I can't find... to name a few. I have no shame in admitting that it can get pretty crazy in there. And sometimes, when I'm overwhelmed, or when I've made a mistake, been inconvenienced, put my foot in my mouth, been hurt, shown up under-dressed, felt unappreciated, burned the food, dropped the ball, or failed to hold my tongue, negative thoughts arise; I can't do this, I'm messing up my kids, I'll never fit in, nobody cares... We've all had them.

I rarely miss a morning in the Word, and I converse with God throughout my days. And yet, I'm not immune to negative thoughts. They still creep in, sometimes quietly, sometimes persistently. Taking those thoughts captive is a discipline and a spiritual practice that requires intentionality, awareness, and grace. And the more you practice, the quicker you become at replacing the thoughts, and eventually, the less frequent they occur.

This Workbook and Journal will lead you through understanding and identifying negative thoughts, getting to the root of them, uncovering lies you might be believing, replacing those lies with the Word of God, and releasing the thoughts and lies to God in order to move forward in grace and truth.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tiffanie Danielle". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

The Conscience, the Flesh, and the Spirit

It was one of those lightbulb moments when I realized that my conscience is not the same as the Holy Spirit. In fact, it can actually deceive and lead me astray. Our conscience, you see, is shaped by the customs and values we're taught, the cultures we live in, and the hardships we endure and overcome. While the conscience is useful, given to us by God, and may carry good intentions, it is formed by human experience, and thus should never be confused with the Holy Spirit, which is of God himself.

***There is a way that seems right to a man,
but its end is the way to death. - Proverbs 14:12***

Knowing that the conscience is of the flesh makes it easier to understand how we might be so easily led and deceived into thinking, believing, and contemplating negative thoughts. Negative thoughts often stem from the flesh and are frequently fueled by the conscience. Left on its own, our conscience acts as an inner voice guiding our actions and differentiating between right and wrong. But as we've discovered, our conscience is not always reliable and we need the Holy Spirit to reshape it. While our conscience may misguide, the Holy Spirit will always lead us in truth. It's the Spirit's role to reveal God's will and to sanctify us, and while our conscience isn't always wrong, it's important that it be brought into alignment with the heart of God.

So how do we discern between the conscience of our flesh, and the voice of the Holy Spirit? First, we need to realize that the conscience can be easily influenced by sinful desires or external pressures. Because it is developed in the flesh and shaped by our environment, upbringing, and personal experiences the conscience can be swayed by pride, fear, jealousy, feelings, people-pleasing, social values, or the desire for comfort and control. The prompting of the Holy Spirit on the other hand, will

always be rooted in truth and is aligned with the will of God. The Holy Spirit will never lead us to say or do anything in contradiction to God's character, or his Word.

Second, the fruit of the Holy Spirit is life and peace. His voice leads us toward unity, humility, and love, whereas the conscience may prioritize self; disregarding the charge to serve one another, turn your cheek, or to love thy neighbor. Right and wrong must be defined by the Word and not by the shifting impressions of the conscience or the fleeting desires of the flesh. Galatians 5:19 clearly identifies works of the flesh.

***“Now the works of the flesh are evident:
sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity,
strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy,
drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.”***

If even the smallest trace of these is present in our thoughts or actions, we can be sure that the flesh, and often the misguided conscience, is at work and in need of a Holy Spirit makeover.

Third, when trying to discern whether something is from the Spirit or not, it's helpful to consider whether the thing is rooted in love, or in fear or shame. Accusation comes from the conscience and never from the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is our helper and certainly convicts us, but never accuses or condemns us. Accusing, condemning, and shameful thoughts are of the flesh.

***There is therefore now no condemnation
for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of
life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.
For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do.
By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he
condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement
of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according
to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according
to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who
live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.
For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the
Spirit is life and peace. - Romans 8:1-6***

Recognizing Negative Thoughts

Now that we understand a bit more about the conscience, the flesh, and the Holy Spirit, let's explore the steps that we can take toward replacing our negative thoughts. First and foremost, we need to learn to recognize them. Negative thoughts can pop into our minds anywhere, at anytime. Their intrusions can be subtle or they can be loud and disruptive, but they always seem to be focused on magnifying problems, self-centered desires, self-condemnation, worst possible outcomes, and/or villainizing others. Though the vast majority are untrue, negative thoughts often feel believable and can be difficult to control. Some of the most common indicators of negative thoughts include unpleasant emotions, predictable patterns of unhealthy behavior, and overwhelming feelings of fear, shame, hopelessness, defeat, or anxiety.

Most negative thoughts can be categorized under the five C's.

- **Criticism** - Constant fault-finding toward yourself or others that leads to negatively, discontent, and pride.
- **Comparison** - Measuring yourself against others in a way that leads to envy, insecurity, or superiority.
- **Complaining** - Focusing on what's wrong instead of being grateful.
- **Control** - The need to manipulate outcomes or people, often rooted in fear and mistrust of God's sovereignty.
- **Catastrophizing** - Always expecting the worst or blowing things out of proportion.

Thinking about these, consider the following questions:

What are the most common negative thoughts that invade my mind?

How often do I struggle with these thoughts?

How do I know these thoughts are negative?

How do I normally respond to these thoughts?

Are there certain situations or people that trigger this negative thinking?

Digging Deep

The next step in replacing negative thoughts is to dig and uncover the root of them. Negative thoughts are often the fruit of unresolved pain, unmet needs, false beliefs, or spiritual opposition. After recognizing a negative thought we need to be able to identify its root, and to do so we have to be willing to engage in honest reflection.

- When and how often do I have this negative thought?
- Do certain situations or people trigger these thoughts?
- When did I first begin having this thought?
- What might I be afraid of?
- Do I feel like I have any unmet needs?
- Is this thought bearing fruit in my life, or how is it stealing my peace, joy, and/or freedom?
- Does this thought align with the Word of God?
- What was taught or told to me that might be making me think this way?

What other questions might help to uncover the root experience of the negative thoughts in my mind?

Naming the Lie

We have all accumulated lies throughout our lives. Growing up in a home with a parent who awards achievement might lead one to believe that value is based on performance; A lie, resulting in the thought “I’m not good enough.”

Identifying the root experience of a negative thought can help you to reveal any lie that might be planted in your heart. Lies are focused on earthly gains, desires of the flesh, a disregard of one’s identity in Christ, and are opposed to the Word of God.

But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. - James 3:14

Lies are tools of the enemy that hold us captive in cycles of anger, blame, and self-pity, robbing us of peace and of the joy that the Lord sets before us. The Spirit, who is truth, can help you to reveal the lies that you are believing.

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. - John 16:13

Invite the Spirit to reveal any lies you are believing that may be fueling negative thoughts and patterns of thinking.

Identifying Truth

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? - Jeremiah 17:9

Once we've named the lie, we need to identify what is true, and for that, we again rely on the Holy Spirit to illuminate truth and to heal the wounds in our hearts. The most powerful defense we have against negative thinking is to fill our minds with what is good, right, and true.

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." - Philippians 4:8

When truth is hidden in our hearts, it becomes the filter through which we see the world, ourselves, and our struggles. As we daily renew our minds with God's Word, the Holy Spirit transforms our thinking, silences the lies, and replaces fear with faith, shame with grace, and confusion with clarity.

What is my plan for "hiding truth in my heart?"

Releasing it to God

Our final step is releasing it to God, which means that we stop agreeing with the negative thoughts, and we start choosing to believe truth instead. We acknowledge that we've been holding onto something false; Something that has shaped our identity, behavior, or perspective in ways that do not align with God's truth. This act of repentance and trust turns us away from deception and invites us to walk in God's grace, peace, and perfect love.

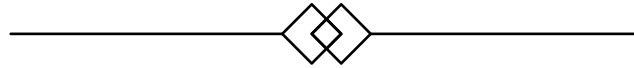
“and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.” - 1 John 4:3-6

Releasing lies to God is an active step of faith that realigns our hearts with His truth. As we reject the voice of the enemy and embrace the voice of the Spirit, we step into greater freedom, clarity, confidence, and joy.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. - Romans 12:2

Once we've released it to God, all we have left to do is walk according to truth. What does it look like to walk forward in truth having shed negative thoughts and lies?

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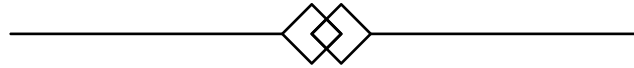
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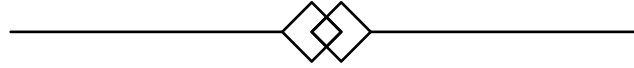
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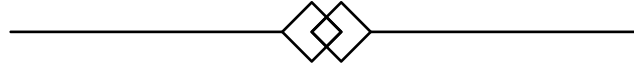
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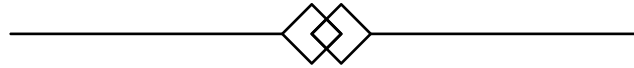
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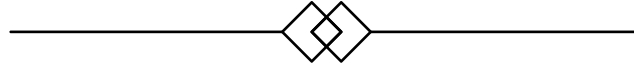
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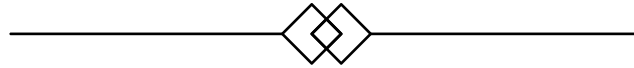
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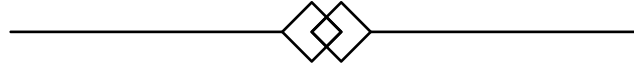
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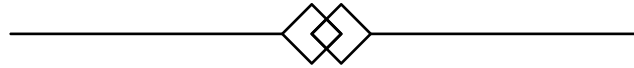
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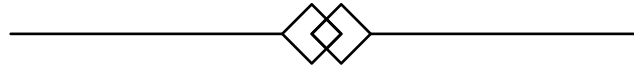
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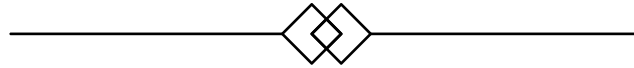
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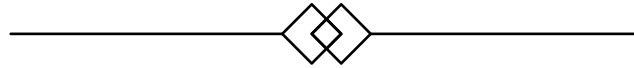
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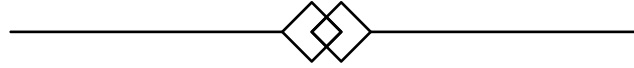
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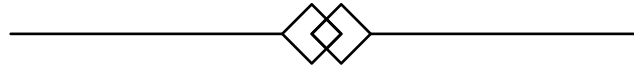
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Let the word of
Christ dwell in you richly,
teaching and admonishing
one another in all wisdom,
singing psalms and hymns
and spiritual songs,
with thankfulness
in your hearts to God.

Colossians 3:16