

Small Group Guide: RETHINK HOW YOU'RE THINKING - Think About Managing My Mind

Opening Question If your thoughts showed up as a “thought bubble” cartoon over your head for one day, what *kind* of show would it be most of the time—comedy, drama, action, soap opera, or something else?

Opening Prayer *Lord Jesus, thank you for bringing us together tonight. We heard this week through Pastor Dan how important our thoughts are and how much you care about what goes on in our minds. As we talk, would you help us to be honest, encouraged, and open to you? Teach us how to manage our minds in a way that honors you and leads to freedom. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

- Your thoughts control your life, but you control your thoughts.
Where you are today—emotionally, spiritually, often even practically—is largely the result of how you’ve been thinking. To change where you’re going, you must change how you think.
- We are in a spiritual *war*, not on a spiritual *cruise*.
When we come to Christ, we’re not put on a cruise ship but on a battleship. The enemy targets our *minds* with lies and deception, just as he did with Adam and Eve.
- Strongholds are mental prisons built on lies.
A stronghold is a fortified way of thinking that’s contrary to God’s truth (e.g., bitterness, fear, lust, criticism, distrust, compulsive habits). The enemy’s goal is to get us to *believe* lies so he can keep us in bondage..
- Worldly weapons can’t win a spiritual battle..
Education, self-help, human strategies, and positive thinking have some value but cannot break spiritual strongholds. We must use spiritual weapons: God’s Word, prayer, repentance, the blood of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit.
- We must take every thought captive and make it obey Christ..
We don’t just “try not to think bad thoughts.” We capture thoughts that don’t line up with Scripture and replace them with God’s truth
- Loving like Jesus means sacrificing for others.
Jesus laid down His life for us, and we are called to lay down our lives for others in tangible, practical ways. Serving and giving aren’t optional add-ons; they’re central to following Jesus.
- Mind renewal is daily, not one-time.
Romans 12:2 calls us to be “transformed by the renewing of your mind.” This is ongoing work—demolishing old patterns and rebuilding with biblical truth.
- Philippians 4:8 is a practical filter for our thought life.
We are commanded to dwell on what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy. This gives us a grid to test our thoughts and redirect them.

Discussion Questions

1. **Read 2 Corinthians 10:3–5.**

- What does this passage teach us about where the real battle is taking place and what kind of weapons we're supposed to use?
- How does this challenge the way people normally try to deal with struggles (self-help, more willpower, etc.)?

2. **Read Romans 12:1–2.**

- Pastor Dan said we don't just "tweak" our thinking; God wants to demolish and rebuild it. What do you think it practically looks like to "not conform" to the pattern of this world but be "transformed by the renewing of your mind"?

3. **Read Philippians 4:8–9.**

- Choose one or two words from verse 8 (true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, praiseworthy). In what everyday situations could that specific word become a helpful "filter" for your thoughts (e.g., scrolling social media, watching shows, conversations at work)?

4. **Spotting Strongholds:** Pastor Dan described strongholds like bitterness, fear, lust, criticism, and distrust—patterns of thinking that become mental prisons based on lies.

- Without sharing anything too personal, where do you see these kinds of strongholds commonly show up in our culture or in people around you (bitterness, fear, criticism, etc.)?
- How can recognizing something as a lie-based stronghold, rather than "just the way I am," be freeing?

5. **Capture and Replace, Not Just "Try Harder:** Pastor Dan said we don't just stare at our bad thoughts and say, "I'm not angry, I'm not angry..." Instead, we capture and replace them with Scripture.

- What's the difference between trying to "resist" a thought and actively replacing it with God's Word?
- Can you think of a time when a specific verse or truth helped you think or respond differently?

6. **Garbage In, Garbage Out (Mark 7 & Philippians 4:8):** Jesus taught that what defiles us comes from the inside, not just external things like unwashed hands. Pastor Dan connected that to "garbage in, garbage out."

- What are some common sources of "mental garbage" in everyday life (without naming specific people or settings)?
- What are some practical ways we can be more intentional about what we allow into our minds?

7. **Building a New Habit of Mind Renewal:** Pastor Dan shared how he used Philippians 4:8 to confront his own anxiety—asking, "Is this true?" and then working through the rest of the list.

- What is one small, realistic step you could take this week to start managing your mind differently (for example, using the Philippians 4:8 grid once a day, memorizing one verse, or pausing to ask, "Is this thought consistent with God's Word?")?
- *LEADER NOTE: Have everyone share just one simple step, nothing too heavy...*

Practical Applications (Choose one or two.)

1. **Use the Philippians 4:8 Filter Once a Day.**

Once each day, when you notice your mind racing or drifting, pause and ask:

- Is this thought true? Noble? Right? Pure? Lovely? Admirable? Excellent? Praiseworthy?
- If not, ask God to help you replace it.

2. **Memorize One “Weapon” Verse.**

Pick one verse (such as the memory verse below) and memorize it. When a lie or destructive thought comes, quote that verse to yourself and to God.

3. **Limit One Source of “Mental Garbage.”**

Choose one media source (a show, social feed, website, or talk radio) and reduce or skip it this week. Replace that time with Scripture reading, worship music, or silence with the Lord.

4. **Start a Thought Journal (Brief Version).**

For a few days, jot down a recurring negative or fearful thought you notice. Next to it, write a Bible verse that tells you the truth about that issue. Pray that truth over yourself.

5. **Pray Daily for a Renewed Mind.**

Each morning this week, take 1–2 minutes to pray:

“Lord, renew my mind today. Help me recognize lies quickly and replace them with your truth. Help me think thoughts that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable.”

Memory Verse for This Week

2 Corinthians 10:5 (NIV)

“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.”

Closing Prayer *Father, thank you for reminding us this week that our minds matter to you. Thank you that in Christ we don't have to be prisoners to lies or old patterns of thinking. Please help us to recognize thoughts that don't line up with your Word, to take them captive, and to replace them with your truth. Give us the strength and discipline to use the tools you've given us—your Word, your Spirit, and prayer. Renew our minds and lead us into freedom. In Jesus' name, Amen.*