

BOOK TITLE GOES HERE

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INTRODUCTION

How this book is put together

This is a “Toolkit”. Toolkits are designed especially for people struggling with mental health difficulties such as depression and anxiety. It is a well-known fact that mental conditions impacting ones thinking, emotions and behaviors also tend to make concentration more difficult.

That’s why it may be hard to listen to a whole sermon or speech for 45 minutes without wandering or being distracted. That’s why reading a full-length book may be cumbersome.

Since cognition is often adversely impacted by depression/anxiety this book is divided up into small segments with ample white space.

People with mental health conditions also may have their learning styles affected. A person that normally likes to digest information through listening, reading or doing something may find he combining all three of these styles to gain new insights from a book.

A left-brain person may regularly prefer logic and data presented in clear and concise manner but in the midst of a mental health difficulty may lean on the right side of his brain – abstraction and ideas.

This book is constructed with a variety of learning activities. You will be asked to read information and copy the questions down on a separate piece of paper, journal and/or 3x5 cards. The reflective questions will help you think meaningfully about how the material applies to your life.

Don’t skip any parts or assigned activities. Everything in this book has been put there for your overall benefit.

My Goal

My goal for you is that you would enjoy a closer relationship with God that would inspire you to the point where your thinking will begin to change. Your cognitions will be more in line with how God thinks about you. His truth is the foundation of the entire book

Of course you are probably reading this book now because you or someone you know has the desire to reduce symptoms of depression/anxiety. The principles and practices in this book are proven to help heal the unpleasant results of mental health difficulties. I have personally used most of these strategies in my recovery to optimize the potential God has blessed me with.

Why Listen To Me ?

Perhaps the greatest qualification I could have is that I am your peer. I have struggled with mental health difficulties as long as I can remember.

As a kid I suffered from various types of adjustment problems. In hindsight it can be determined that these were early symptoms of complicated anxiety and depressive conditions. In my youth I wondered why I was “different” than my friends and heroes (my dad being chief among those I idolized by was incapable of emulating.

I can remember seeking out professional counseling early in college. While I was stricken with milder forms of the disorders that hamper me today I managed to get good grades, become popular at school (elected as President of a 100 man fraternity and Homecoming King Runner-up on my campus of 20,000 students) and enjoy an active and rewarding social life.

God blessed those days with the beginning of a long-term relationship with my wife to be. She was the perfect woman to whom I was married for 22 years. We have been blessed with three wonderful children that remain a very close part of our lives.

In the decade that followed college I manage to not only secure my dream job but rise to the top of the company. By my late 20's I provided leadership to 50 people.

Ironically I overcame intense fear and anxiety around speaking in public. My career required outstanding motivational teaching and sales skills. Despite paralyzing emotional difficulties I was often retained by Fortune 500 companies (over 200 organizations) to help maximize employee potential as training and consulting executive.

By my early thirties I was officially diagnosed with Panic Disorder and Syncope. I was started on psychiatric medication but most did little to help cure my episodes. However despite health difficulties God used me to become a leader in the church, grow a national ministry and lead a consulting firm. Annual career earnings rose to the top 2% of all workers.

Around the age of forty the diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder was given to me. This condition is marked by mood swings – ranging from deep depressive episodes to periods of unrealistic elation often referred to as mania. While this condition caused significant hardships that resulted in missing quite a bit of work I still managed to achieve the following

- ordination into the ministry
- licensed mental health counselor
- graduate school university professor
- published author

The next decade was significantly dotted with psychiatric hospitalizations (12 in a short period of time). I sought help from 20+ counselors and psychiatrists during this time. Moreover, they tried over 100 different medications (not to mention dose adjustments with each). I was deemed “treatment resistant”.

Put simply this means that I didn’t respond as most people to the strategies that were employed. In addition to the traditional practices of the day I also underwent shock treatment and experimental infusions that had significant evidence in favor of their use. Neither helped. In fact ECT made matters much worse.

On top of my mental health diagnosis my doctors also found significant physical health conditions that have been proven to contribute to, cause and/or compound mental illness.. Over the years they found low thyroid, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, syncope (dizziness), ulcers and neurocognitive impairments (memory and executive thinking function). Most of these conditions were inherited but undiagnosed for most of my life.

Perhaps the most difficult symptoms I have continued to fight over the years are tied to the side effects of the medicines they tried. Because of the complexity of the issues I face there is not a great deal of research to date on what type of medicines and at what dosages are used to treat. I have experienced insomnia, GI problems, heavy sedation, and elevated levels of harmful bodily chemicals. I have even been hospitalized for allergic reactions to certain medications that the most experienced doctors could not figure out.

The aforementioned problems contributed to all sorts of challenges in living. I've experienced auto accidents, the loss of jobs, the loss of a marriage, an attempt at ending my own life, and a host of other nightmares I won't delineate here.

But what you need to know is that God has been with me the whole time. I have used much of the material in this book to live a successful life. So can you!

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

Depressed/anxious individuals tend to make statements and think about things that may seem accurate on the surface. But actually, research indicates that the depression (medically, spiritually and psychologically) causes people to think about themselves in a skewed manner. This is not only imbalanced but this practice is seldom in accordance with how God sees things.

Further, depressed/anxious people tend to interpret and perceive the past much more negatively than it really occurred. Sometimes these reflections are tied to past experiences, interactions with key influencers (like parents and teachers) or are a byproduct of biochemical changes in the brain that predispose the afflicted person with pessimistic views through no fault of their own. In this session try to notice how your perceptions and interpretations match up with reality as you look into what God has to say on the subject.

Don't beat yourself up for conclusions you have formed without knowing how or why you were doing yourself a disservice. With God all things are possible. I can personally attest to miraculous changes in the lives of people I have worked with.

The Foundation of This Book: Combining Proven Faith-Based Strategies With CBT

This book incorporates your spiritual beliefs and values into a very effective psychological model, best known as the creation of psychiatrist Aaron Beck. The psychological model is called Cognitive Behavioral Therapy or CBT. When this is combined with faith-based approaches to well being it is called Faith Based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy of FBCBT.

You will learn a proven treatment approach that combines biblical theory with an approach to understanding human behavior that is centered on examining and changing thoughts, emotions and actions. The approach holds that depression/anxiety arise in most cases because of the thoughts that undergird difficult moods

This approach works just like putting on a pair of sunglasses in the summer. Dark lenses allow a person to see things more clearly, sheltered from the blinding rays of the sun. The glasses don't change the people and things viewed. Rather, they "color" the perspective of the person wearing them.

This is similar to the impact our perspective has on the conclusions we come to. Someone with a negative attitude tends to have pessimistic feelings. These feelings fuel actions that correspond to the thoughts.

A skeptic for example, is less likely to take risks because of the inherent danger perceived. So his views correlate to the moods and actions that follow. The optimist tends to see life through more positive lenses. So he is more likely to take risks or actions that move toward the activity.

People often get mad when others don't meet their expectations or anticipate their needs. While this may not provoke an outburst or physical expression of retaliation, it often follows we get depressed and anxious when others stir up negative emotions inside of us. Here is a key psychological cornerstone principle that frames our whole discussion:

Its not what happens to you that determines your well being.

--Anonymous

Self-Coaching Questions (SCQ)

Throughout this book you will find carefully constructed questions that are designed to allow you as the reader to become a "participant". Rather than just read the words – like in any book, we want to facilitate life application. This makes it easier for you to get a much higher return on investment for the time spent with the material.

Simply copy the SCQ down in a notepad or journal. Find or buy one – its well worth the small investment. Use this as a companion tool. You can also use 3 x 5 cards. Copy the question on one side of a card and make note of your thoughts/feelings on the flip side.

Life coaching is a proven process for maximizing the personal growth potential of people. Its similar to counseling but concentrates on practical life application in the present versus analyzing past influences. Just like an athletic coach gets the most out of his players so you will be tasked with the adventure of optimizing your own development. It's wonderful to have a professional counselor or life coach to help you sort through things. But give this approach a try and see what you think.

There is a tremendous amount of research and evidence that shows self-help strategies, like self-coaching, are just as effective as external resources in helping people accomplish their goals. Just think about the largest section of your neighborhood bookstore. Chances are that the self-help psychology shelves are the most stocked and trafficked of any section on the floor.

CBT Scenario

Here is an illustration about how Cognitive Behavioral Therapy works. Imagine you are stranded on a secluded road. Your car has just broken down and you are standing next to it wondering what to do. Then you notice your next-door neighbor driving by. You can easily see that his eyes met yours as he canvasses your predicament. But he keeps on driving, passing you right by. You then call AAA and have them tow you and the car back to your home

What would you predict is most logical or understandable emotional you might have in response to these circumstances?

The scene continues...

A few minutes later you notice the same neighbor standing in his driveway. Upon seeing you outside he rushes over to your house. He then proceeds to tell you his version of the events

that occurred earlier with respect to your break down. He apologetically explains that he was rushing to the hospital ER because his son had a huge gash on his forehead from an accident with a nail and hammer while building his tree fort. He begs you for forgiveness. He is noticeably remorseful and obviously embarrassed about not stopping to help you out.

As you react to his unpredictable explanation how do you feel? What thoughts go through your mind as you quickly contemplate how to respond to his plea?

Most people would be miffed and mystified after experiencing this type of scenario. Common reactions might be anger, frustration and confusion. It is typically assumed that the friend who passed by deliberately chose to avoid lending a hand, motivated by more pressing matters than a lady or gentlemen in distress.

A core component of this model is the notion that most people experience some form of negativity or unhappiness if things don't go their way. But in actuality it is NOT what happens to us that determines our well being. It IS how we react to others or the circumstances that contribute to our thoughts, moods and/or behaviors.

Locus of Control

You probably know some people who tend to blame others or life events for their behavior (random or seemingly purposeful) and therefore relinquish responsibility for how they are responding; charging outside circumstances for causing their undesirable attitude.

This is called "Locus of Control". Where is your locus of control most of the time?

It's quite common for people to refuse to be accountable for their actions and feelings – citing unfortunate factors seemingly outside of their control as the culprit. In actuality, two people can walk through life even on the very same path; one might have the attitude that a glass of water filled to the 50% level is half empty.

Conversely, the other might conclude that that same glass is half full. The reality of the ratio of water and air doesn't change one bit. But the "glasses" each of the two travelers wears dictate their emotional well being.

In this book you will see how your spiritual beliefs and practices can be used to improve how you are feeling. Since thoughts lead to emotions and moods you can readily replace unwanted thoughts with biblical truth.

This thought-replacement technique has helped millions change their unwanted emotional states and build positive and rewarding new habits.

The "Act As If" Technique:

The "act as if" technique is a common approach to facilitate more assertive risk taking without forcing you to do something against your will. You simply try on new behaviors or actions without waiting for your beliefs to motivate you. These may never come or come too slowly.

This life strategy is also known as "fake it till you make it" or "feel the fear and do it anyway". In all these instances it can be concluded, to be balanced and fair in our assessment of human behavior, that we have the power to choose and move in a direction despite how we might be thinking and feeling inside.

Since you may be weighed down with pessimistic thoughts, worries and distorted viewpoints this technique allows you to try new things – just like an actor. Don't wait till you feel like it...just do it anyways! Jump over the progression of thoughts-feelings-actions and start acting.

Adjusting Your Thoughts

One of the ways we can adjust our thoughts is by changing our activities. Some actions lead to feelings of elation, reward, fulfillment and joy. These positive behaviors (especially when done repeatedly and with improvement over time) have a direct correlation with how we feel. Conversely, if you had a setback of some kind or got a speeding ticket, it's natural to be upset.

But if we meditate or chew on that incident over and over, it will cement the experience in our mind and lead to replicating the same action the very next time it comes around.

Thoughts and Perspectives

So we are saying that thoughts and perspectives lead to feelings and behaviors. But also, there are times when we take actions despite what we may think about the situation and wind up feeling rewarded and accomplished afterward. It can be said that the person who takes a positive action despite how they feel in their gut is brave.

But another way of looking at it is that the individual is acting on faith. They believe in their heart that ultimately taking a step forward will be for the greater good. Their optimism overrides pessimism and new results are obtained.

The Faith-Based Approach

The faith-based model is similar to "acting as if." Faith can be defined as belief without evidence. In other words all sorts of information and facts can be gathered through our five senses as we approach a situation.

Often our personality, brain chemistry and lifelong conditioning can cause us to view a situation according to predetermined factors or unconscious assumptions and core beliefs that are deeply held.

It can be said that faith is the substance of things hoped for against the evidence perceived. A faith-filled person chooses to see things in line with how God looks at them and as the Bible may already have defined the truth.

Faith can turn reality upside down. There are tons of examples of faith-filled people in the Word of God.

The Old and New Testaments are replete with illustrations of how our thoughts and assumptions play an important role in influencing our emotions and behaviors. The original FBCBT proponents can be found in the pages of scripture (even though no one was around to label such a theory in those days)

The Concept of Metanoia: Change Your Mind

Both John the Baptist and Jesus described the concept of Metanoia in their early biblical discourses. Metanoia can be translated as “change your mind” or “change how you think”, which the scriptures sometimes concluded is the description of true repentance.

Repentance is simply stopping, turning around and to start walking in a new direction. Yes, some theologians may associate repentance with identifying and confessing our sins. This is also a true definition.

But one can see the common element in both instances. Changing directions is the core root meaning of metanoia. See Mt 4:17 for the biblical account of this. Consider the apostle Paul’s admonition:

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect”.

Rom 12:2

The point being made is that major life change or “transformation” occurs through renewing your mind. Said another way, Proverbs communicates the following message:

“As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he”.

(Prov. 23:7)

Renewing of the mind takes place when we replace old unbiblical preconditioned thought patterns, with the truth that God sees and describes for us in his written or verbal Word and voice.

It's impossible for us to see things in two different ways at the same time without great emotional disharmony and discord occurring.

-Anonymous

This is a very important principle of human behavior. Let me state it another way. You will go crazy by trying to hold two conflicting ideas as the same time.

After watching sports event on TV its pretty difficult to conclude that the outcome was both horrible and glorious. Humans tend to form a single conclusion about things. That isn't to say that mixed emotions don't come into play. They obviously do.

But when it comes to identifying your core beliefs – those underlying assumptions that you hold about life and yourself... well, they tend to be skewed on way or the other. Just look at the conclusions an optimist and pessimist have about the same circumstances. Their personality shapes or molds their beliefs and observations. Similarly the state of depression/anxiety colors your perception of the world around you.

When we adopt God's viewpoint on something, it can be said that we are acting on faith. Maybe we really don't believe the words at first, but overtime our options about what is and can be true change.

Renewing The Mind

Research indicates that we have about 50,000 thoughts going through our mind in any given day. Unfortunately, most people with mental difficulties tend to think the worst about themselves, their lives, other people and even God at times.

It is therefore not surprising to find out that their thought life is largely responsible for their dark moods.... which in turn lead to adverse activities.

The healthy person tends to have a more balanced viewpoint on self, others and life in general. They are able to discern the good and bad in things but choose to dwell on the positives. They are rewarded with many more feelings of elation and actions that are reflective of optimism.

Another way to understand our thought life is to look at the example found in scripture as to how seeds grow in relationship to how fertile the ground is. Thoughts are like seeds that are planted in the ground by a gardener or farmer.

Apple tree seeds are buried in rich soil and nourished by nature's process of healthy growth feature water and nutrients derived from the ground, sunshine, rain etc. Healthy ripe fruit eventually grows at the end of the vine and branch.

It doesn't just pop in there to be readily picked by a reaper. No, it grows slowly in accordance with the type of make up the seed has and the impact things like weeds and difficult weather patterns can have.

One doesn't expect a pear to grow on a tree that was started with apple seeds that were properly planted. It would not be in concert with its nature. Similarly, if you plant negative seeds in your heart and mind through disconcerting and disturbing conclusions, the most likely fruit to rise up out of the ground is going to be like the seed; bad.

A Change In Your Perspective

The Bible says that one way to begin to change our perspective and therefore the level of depression or anxiety we feel is by planting healthy, positive seeds. In the Word of God, seeds are likened to thoughts. If we replace negative, unhelpful thoughts with positive truths from scriptural promises, principles, practices and moods will be reversed over time.

In fact, the Bible states that the Word of God is in fact “living” and “active” and “more powerful than the sharpest two edged sword.” *See Hebrew 4:12*

As we meditate on scriptural positive truths and faith filled ideas from God a transformation takes place. The new fruit comes alive from the inside out. If you start believing what God’s Word has to say about you, about Him and about life your whole perspective changes!

Chewing Cud

The biblical idea of meditation on things like scripture is derived from the concept of how a cow chews its cud. The animal takes in the food and chomps it up into little pieces before digesting. This process takes time but it is in accordance with the way God divinely wired some animals for natural nourishment and growth.

So when we chew on the inspired words of God, as is done when we review the truths over and over in our mind, our emotional and behavioral life blossoms in accordance with the process.

Identifying Unhelpful Thoughts

As we begin to identify some unhelpful thought patterns in our mind it can be seen how replacing these with positive thoughts in line with God’s truths will reap the good things God

says about our lives. Faith comes alive when we believe God's promises even though they may not appear to be true at the moment we first encounter them.

But as we reflect, meditate and visualize them taking root, shape and form in our lives they will overgrow the dead foliage that used to be in our heads.

Neuroscientists have determined that thoughts are actually chemical pathways that communicate with one another in cellular form. When we think, "I'm no good" for instance, it literally carves a path in our neural pathways in the brain.

The more we meditate and prove this misnomer to be true, the wider the path becomes until it is like a freeway through our mind.

Imagine thought patterns as being like a forest. If a route is travelled over and over as time travels on, so too will our behavior patterns fall in line with the road that has been plowed through the twigs, trees, brush and weeds in the forest.

But if you start meditating on a new inspirational biblical truth the one that follows... your attitude will eventually change... which leads to new actions and behaviours.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"

Philippians 4:13

It begins to carve a new neural pathway through the brain. Eventually, as you fall in line with this new path (by choice), the old unused path of negativity begins to get overgrown and smothered with trees, weeds and foliage again.

The new positive freeway is being built right beside the old road. Eventually, it's easier for your brain to take the new road than the old overgrown one.

“ThankFormations”

This toolkit features an easy and effective way for you to renew your mind each day. I am going to teach a system of behavioral change that starts with changing your thinking. The process is called *ThankFormations*.

I have used *ThankFormations* for years to help adjust my thinking. It allows me to replace negative thoughts and beliefs with scriptural truths. This in turn allows God to change me from the inside out. The bible teaches over and over that God changes His children as we incubate and visualize His Word coming truth in our lives.

ThankFormations are simply the personalization of a biblical passage. They are similar to the popular practice in today's self help psychology literature of creating, reading and saying “affirmations” I learned how to do affirmations in the very first motivational self improvement course I took as a teenager.

I've been using the secular process to obtain fantastic results in my life ever since. But after become a Christian I lost interest in devising and repeating statements about myself that were not true yet. I was actually lying to myself as I attempted to reprogram my subconscious.

Conversely I developed the process of *ThankFormations* after much bible study and prayer. This new process is based on scriptures I sense God wants me to appropriate – as He shapes me into the image of His Son. That is a little different than me coming up with a wish list of all the dreams and material things I wanted to add to my life.

By starting the biblical passage with an expression of thanks and gratitude, we are building the habit of joy and thanksgiving into our lives. It is a wonderful act of faith to affirm and declare these ideas to be your own.

In Philippians 4:8 God calls us to apply our minds to whatever is good, true noteworthy and otherwise positive. This is an act of faith – as discussed earlier! God rewards faith and it is the only way the Bible says we can really please Him.

Thankformations – Give It A Try

Here is a bible verse that encourages us to develop the regular habit of renewing our minds with the positive message of scripture.

“Thank you Lord for I think about whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable –if anything is excellent or praiseworthy –I readily meditate on these things vs negative thoughts I catch myself mulling over once in a while”.

(Phil 4:8)

Step-By-Step Thankformation Implementation

Here is what you can do to complete your “Thankformation” work:

1. Copy a bible verse down on one side of a 3x5 card. Personalize it with words like “I” and “My”. On the others side make notes as the thoughts and feelings come to you as you visualize or imagine the new reality taking hold of you in your future.
2. Read each word slowly and see what comes to mind as you patiently praise God for the truth of His holy Word.
3. Imagine the scripture becoming a reality in your life and picture all the good thoughts, feelings and actions that will come about as your mind and life are transformed in accordance with God’s new superhighway in your brain.

The new truth will replace the truth in your subconscious over time.

HERE ARE SOME SAMPLE THANKFORMATIONS

SCOTT: INSERT THERE

NOW, ITS YOUR TURN

B. “Moodivator” (Observing yourself form):

This part of your homework IS DESIGNED TO HELP YOU DEVELOP SKILLS IN DISCOVERING what negative thoughts and feelings tend to be surfacing in your life. You will also begin to discern patterns over time as you reflect on when these cognitions tend to occur, what you were doing and how they impacted your feelings and/or mood.

This process is referred to as self-observation. The goal is not to “try hard” at this point to change longstanding habits; that can be a frustratingly slow process. Old patterns take time to change but can and do become transformed as you trust God to make the improvements and adjustments transformation becomes a reality over time.

It is our goal to begin to develop your aptitude for assessing what may not have been apparent or obvious to you before this book. Many people are just not self aware while others may be too self-aware. This process will help you balance the two and make the desired changes when and where necessary.

You will see on the log that there are lines for you to fill in your activity and moods every two hours on any given day. For example you could record your morning activities at lunch and afternoon at dinner. Try this for an entire day once or twice in the week ahead. You can either print out the form or copy the content on to a journal page or writing pad.

This will help us determine which activities lead to better moods, less depression and anxiety or more.

“Moodivator” Guidelines:

1. Keep the log with you throughout the day so that you can record things as they occur or at regular intervals.
2. Use very few words like “read a book” or “watched TV.”
3. Immediately after recording your activities record your thoughts/mood.
3. Feel free to record even trivial events like “read the newspaper.”

“MOODIVATOR” WORKSHEET

DAY/DATE What You Did

How you Felt

6-8 am

8-10am

10-12pm

12-2pm

2-4pm

4-6pm

6-8pm

8-10pm

10-12pm

CHAPTER TWO

PATTERNS

Session Objective:

To examine how our actions impact our feelings and learn how to adjust thoughts to improve our moods and engage in more profitable behaviors.

WALKING THROUGH LIFE WITH FAITH

The Bible says that without faith it is not possible to please God, (**Hebrew 11:6**). The biblical definition of confidence happens to be “with faith”. Scripture also points out that faith is belief without necessarily having the proof or evidence first.

Faith Illustration

A simple secular example could have to do with your car. Most of us don't understand how the engine, transmission etc. all work together to make an automobile function. The techno “idiots” like me just as soon avoid lifting the hood because we can't comprehend how the system and its parts work together.

However, faith comes in to play when you turn the ignition switch on, put the car in gear and apply the gas and brakes while steering the direction of the vehicle with the wheel.

A car has all kinds of gadgets, monitors and gauges to help us monitor its functionality. We place a great deal of trust on the car manufacturer to have correctly assembled all the pieces necessary to drive the car safely.

Plus we see tons of other drivers operate cars all around us each day.... which gives us a kind of reassurance and comfort that this type of transportation works for tons of folks. Also that they work without the need for a technician's level of understanding of how everything works.

It is by faith that we drive our cars. Nearly all the activities we engage in to make it go are a part of our subconscious.

When we first learned to drive in “Drivers Education” at the age of 15, we gained fundamental understanding and skills related to how to maneuver this complicated piece of technology. However, when we acquire the experience, it is no longer necessary to be conscious of everything we need to do to operate the vehicle.

We drive without fear that we should be cognizant of all the activities the driver is responsible for. Moreover, we are often more interested in the music from the radio, talking on a cell phone or interacting with one or more passengers.

Here is another example of how you already live by faith. Look at how you go about each day without worrying about how God wired all your inside parts together. The bible says that man is fearfully and wonderfully made.

Typically, we only become cognizant of our internal biological workings when something is wrong or we become ill. In such cases we take our “bodies” to another type of technician; this time it’s a health practitioner.

If we are relatively in good health we don’t need to worry about how the serological, cardiovascular, psychiatric etc. parts of us work together. The control center in our brain takes care of functioning well.

Applying Your Faith: Behavioral Activation

Now we are going to ask you to apply your faith to changing what you may try to do with your life.... often referred to as “Behavioral Activation”. Just like learning a new sport. When first tried the game of golf everything started on the conscious level. I was aware and overwhelmed by all the complex tasks that had to be done correctly to hit that little white ball.. But over time with practice the mechanics became second nature or habituated through the learning process. New skills are built this way.

Most of your activities on a given day like eating, working, communicating and self-care are done without thinking first. But when a change is desired we usually have to relearn subconsciously and consciously how to coordinate everything to achieve a new outcome.

The self-monitoring exercise “Motivators” was used to bring to the awareness level some of your reactions when engaged in a variety of activities.

This is important so we can identify the best activities for our mood. Either subconscious forces or conscious level thinking form your behaviors. Your performance in any given activity will generate positive, negative or mixed emotions, especially when influenced by the reaction of others.

Motivating Factors: Motives

It's also important to discuss motives. We are motivated to carry out behaviors or tasks by factors we may not be aware of (underlying desires, aims and ambitions). Or we can be motivated by factors we are aware of – which is particularly true for new activities you are trying to perform.

It is not that crucial at this point to dissect every secret motive you might have for doing things. This will drive you crazy. But human beings, even babies are typically driven by self-interest.

If you have ever spent much time around a cranky toddler it's pretty obvious that he probably has a strong will or motivation to make sure his needs are met. If language and interpersonal skills are not developed crying and tantrums are used to manipulate his environment when mom, dad and others aren't meeting his expectations.

As adults we keep this underlying wiring pattern. Most activities we engage in are associated with anticipated outcomes like feelings of pleasure or need for belonging, success and significance.

Jesus Engages In Activity

Jesus willingly followed His Father's will by relinquishing His life to enemy captors who were set on torturing and hanging Him to death. His feelings during this excruciating process were not warm and fuzzy.. He managed to endure the affliction and gain victory over His natural personal longings to stay alive.

Scripture tells us in Heb. 12-2 that Jesus managed to persevere despite lying accusations, bloodletting beatings and ultimate asphyxiation from the killing method of hanging from a cross. How could He go through such a horrific “activity” that went against His emotions of pain, fear and anger?

The bible says that He endured the cross for the “joy set before Him”. He sacrificed His Life so Gods plan of forgiving mankind and setting us right with Him could be unleashed.

Lets look at biblical times. Entire nations, like the Hebrews, conducted ceremonies where sacrifices of animal blood and flesh were superstitiously offered. These activities were said to follow Old Testament laws, rules and traditions. The killing of an animal was part of the atonement process people engaged in to please God.

It was felt that keeping such ceremonial laws and traditions would wipe away the sins and transgressions of people who worshiped and longed to be in good graces of a most Holy Supreme Being.

Two thousand years ago God broke into history. He put a new rule system in place. On the old testament over 500+ regulations were documented. These laws were followed in order to receive favor from the Supreme Being.

However, God intervened in History two thousand years ago. He sent His one and only begotten son to live a sinless life here on earth, to show humanity a new way to live based on grace and love as opposed to performance and right living.

Gods plan called for Jesus to die on a cross for the “joy set before Him.” The *joy* spoken of in the bible is the sheer delight of knowing that through this selfless act He was giving a new freedom to all of mankind. There would be no more need for animal sacrifices, burdensome rule keeping and endless waiting for a messiah to come to rescue God’s people.

How Did Jesus Rejoice?

Jesus was *joyful* because He kept His eye on the miraculous outcome of His death, burial and resurrection.

Another aspect of the *joy* Christ kept in view was the enormous pleasure He would experience upon receiving the adulation and embrace of God Himself as He was welcomed back in Heaven, job well done. As you likely know, Jesus was in a tomb for three days and miraculously arose and escaped, coming to life for some very significant time and activities, which remained on His agenda.

The point of sharing the aforementioned story of Jesus is to highlight a providential system of sorts for following Gods will and achieving personal goals. Jesus was able to endure horrendously painful feelings leading up to the cross because His motive was altruistically pure, honored and followed the Father's plan. This was an ultimate example of faith.

We can't always control the circumstances or negative events surrounding us. Sometimes we may not even know whether an activity will yield a positive mood and outcome or not. If our goal is aligned with the kind of love and grace that characterized God, that's all that really matters.

The right motive:

If we engage in positive activities or even routine, mundane tasks with the right motive we can generally influence the level of positive emotions that flow as a result. Like Jesus, sometimes we may even have to force ourselves to engage in an activity that doesn't seem to be appetizing at first, like attending a social event when you would rather hide or be alone or going to the gym to work out. We often feel much better if we push through the difficulties in order to receive "the joy set before us" or a pleasurable outcome and its associated happy thoughts and emotions. Sometimes we just have to engage in behaviors we would rather avoid. However, once we realize that inactivity reinforces negative moods we just might choose on the basis of faith to focus on the desired end result.

HOME PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

<u>Activity/Task</u>	<u>Thoughts/Perspectives</u>	<u>Desired Feelings/Outcomes</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

10 SELF COACHING REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Now review the list of “Gratifying Activities” that follows. Select two or three activities that you would like to pursue this upcoming week. You can also review your self-monitoring LOG from last week and give an activity you previously tried another chance. Or, simply use

your imagination to select a shorter and longer activity (one can be less than 15 minutes while the other can be lengthier).

Here are some criteria to help you make some selections. Some things that:

- You have some control over
- Bring a sense of accomplishment or mastery
- Will likely generate some positive outcomes or moods afterwards

You should do an honest self-appraisal as you think about this assignment. Are there any fears or reluctant thoughts or feelings you may encounter with each activity?

15. SCQ:

- ✓ *Are there any thoughts, memories, scriptures or religious rituals you could use to replace anything in your "Thought Log" from last week.... that you aren't happy with, as you look back on the week? When you look back at your original beliefs, expectations or means of thinking about a situation that could be enhanced with something from your faith that could generate an alternative reaction or viewpoint?*

16. SCQ:

- ✓ *Can you think of any examples from your life where you persevered despite having difficulty? Describe below.*

17. SCQ:

- ✓ *Can you think of a time where you exercised your faith and diligently followed your heart or understanding of Gods will? Describe below.*

18. SCQ:

- ✓ *As you consider your schedule and calendar for this upcoming week, think about the pros and cons of pursuing or avoiding one significant personal or professional activity.*

Honestly jot down what you think will happen with your thoughts, feelings and behaviors if you carry out the action.

19. SCQ:

- ✓ *Identify and schedule positive activities that you believe will help you feel better. Both little ones like routine and mundane tasks, bigger ones like working on fitness or a project at work and a potentially longer one like taking visitors out to dinner. For one example...what are the positive motives or reasons you can keep in mind to fuel you?*

20. SCQ:

- ✓ *Can you recite or write down the “Thankformation” based on the scripture you were asked to review, meditate on and journal about this past week?*

21. SCQ:

- ✓ *Jot the phrase down as best as you can remember. If everything doesn’t come out verbatim do the best you can.*

22. SCQ:

- ✓ *Observation: What thoughts, reactions, emotions and ideas that may have surfaced during the process of completing this assignment each day, do you think are particularly meaningful? How would you summarize the most valuable impressions?*

23. SCQ:

Did you see any “thought – feelings – behavior” patterns emerging? Describe below.

24. SCQ:

- ✓ *Now let’s look at one entry that you wished had been better. What other ways could you have viewed the situation? How do you think that would change your resulting feelings and actions?*

25. SCQ:

- ✓ *What do hope to gain out of the accomplishment? What thoughts could you jot down or keep in mind as you approach each activity?*

GRATIFYING ACTIVITIES LIST

Select, schedule and complete as many of these enjoyable activities as reasonably possible over the next week. Use the worksheets that follow.

- Call a friend
- Attend a movie
- Try something new on your computer or cell phone
- Clean a room
- Daydream and journal
- Rearrange the furniture
- Get your hair done
- Prepare a meal
- Wash the car
- Do outdoor yard work or gardening
- Buy a plant
- Watch TV
- Go to a church or small group function
- Take a mini-vacation or discuss a vacation with friends/family
- Accomplish a task at work or home you have been procrastinating
- Go to an amusement or regular park
- Have dinner with friends/ family
- Attend a play/concert/function
- Visit a museum or historical/tourist place
- Play a sport
- Watch a sporting or other event in person

- Go dancing
- Attend a religious service
- Speak to a friend/family member via phone, text or email
- Play a video game
- Enjoy some time on social media
- Visit a friend or family member
- Provide child care for family or friends
- Exercise alone or with others
- Get a massage, pedicure, nails done or other activity to spoil yourself
- Read a book or magazine
- Write a poem or short story
- Play an instrument
- Listen to music
- Engage in a new or existing hobby such as photography, knitting etc
- Take a warm bath or shower
- Take a nap
- Go shopping
- Do a water related activity (boating, fishing or swimming)
- Attend an educational class
- Add your own.....

GRATIFYING ACTIVITIES WORKSHEET

Pinpoint and list your first activity: _____

Preparation: Does anybody need to be contacted or do any plans need to be made? _____

When will it be accomplished? _____

Prediction: On a scale of 0 to 10 how positive do you anticipate the activity will be? _____

Reflect: _____

Date accomplished: _____

Outcome: On a scale of 0 to 10 how positive was the event for you? _____

Conclusion: what seems to make the event pleasant at this time? _____

What did you learn? _____

Does this help generate any ideas for future activities you want to try (schedule those a.s.a.p.)?

PEER SUPPORTS

For many of us who have an introverted or rather socially shy style of relating to people (new and even existing relationships) this section should be helpful to you.

When God created the world He said that it was not good for the first man (Adam) to be, work and live alone. He created Eve to be Adam's helpmate and partner for their journey with God.

Later in the work God says that it's not good for a man to labor on his own (generally speaking) because if he falls there would be no one to pick him up. Even in the entire paradigm for creating Himself, God chose to use a trinity or three parts to describe His divine life. There is the person of God the Father, the person of Christ the Son and the person of the Holy Spirit: revealer of power, wisdom and gifts. God enjoyed interacting as a threesome.

Ultimately however, God's plan called for the creation of people, in His own image. God wanted relationships with His offspring. He desired to bear children, guide and hang out with them into eternity.

A combination of our will (choice) and God's miraculous intervention:

Being the gentleman that God is, His grand plan for the development of our species is a combination of our will or choice and His miraculous intervention; as is the case when a married couple starts to have a family. But to enjoy true and authentic relationships with His children, God decided to make man to be capable of making his own decisions.

While He could have made each man and woman a robot; programmed previously to love God and choose to follow Him. What kind of relationship would that be like? Imagine being with another person on earth where their emotional response was already pre-determined. This would not be a "free will" choice based relationship but more akin to a robot programmed with all the desired responses.

No, God leaves this all-important decision up to us. Once we come to learn who He is and what He can do, many fall in love with this marvelous supernatural specimen of mankind. Whether we learn about God through experience, other people, His Holy Word or some other means we are left with a decision to either accept or reject God and His gifts of perfect love, redemption, salvation, forgiveness and eternal life.

How does God want us to interact?

In the relational world that God created where He is with us and we are with others, we soon realize that we are built to rely on, play with, worship around and go through life with sovereign partners we may choose to know or receive at the bidding of the Lord. When people get depressed and anxious it's easy to withdraw into a shell and hide from the disapproval of others and pressure to say the right things. This is not how God ultimately wants us to interact. Each of us has been pre-wired as an instrument of God Himself.

Yahweh (Hebrew for God) Partnership:

Each of us has emotional, physical, spiritual and many other needs built into our personality or acquired as we mature. God could zap down a full course meal anytime we are hungry to take care of our need for food, drink and nourishment. He could also design the wildest and most fun video game for us to play and gain pleasure/fun with.

But that's not how He works. Yes, He causes ducks to fly that we can hunt and provide for a family supper but that involves God and us working together to the same end. Similarly, God could fill your barns or garage with stacks of cash to cover private school, a vacation or even clothes on your back. But we all know that is not how He works.

Our Vocation:

In terms of vocation, He calls us to gain knowledge, use our skills, team up with other contributors and have all of us use our natural talents bestowed by Him and/or spiritual gifts also a product of His grace and generosity.

In Old Testament times a boy typically learned the family trade by studying under his father (like an apprentice) for a pre-determined training period. During this time values, abilities,

characteristics, techniques, wisdom and relationship building strategies could be modeled and eventually embodied by the learner.

Jesus grew up in His father's carpentry shop. What kind of tables and chairs do you think they made? I wouldn't mind having a wooden product of their labor anywhere in my house! Rather than zap tables down to earth so man could enjoy a meal while reclining – like He zapped down the beginnings of a forest or lake he created a "Partnership Plan." This plan is to give His children certain gifts and aptitudes, call His children to build skills and knowledge "on the job" and ultimately learn how to perfect His craft.

Relationships and emotional health:

It's the same way with relationships and emotional health. God uses the people closest to us, whether professional or peer, to meet our deeply held social requirements. When you plan to engage in activities with others, you are setting the stage for both of you to exchange empathy, sharing and listening. Most people would welcome the chance to learn of anything that is bothering you or driving a wedge in your heart between others or us and God.

Psychologist Abraham Maslow said that people have fundamental needs for safety and security. God pre-wired us with a vacuum to fill these longings while on earth. Once our basic existence needs are met, humans tend to pursue higher level need fulfillment. Primary personal needs include love, belonging and respect through accomplishment.

You need people and they need you:

To tie this topic to the notion of planning productive activities the point is that you and I need the engagement of people in order to find fulfillment on this earth. There are seasons for each need to be met. Sometimes you might need a friend with a knack for old jokes to cheer you up. At other times you may find yourself being fully present with a dear acquaintance, validating your honest emotional expressions and accepting you all the more, despite how grievously you previously regarded your secret (conscious or unconscious) yearnings.

When in the throws of an unfortunate mental condition, it is imperative that you value and interact with other people compared with hiding out – for fear of embarrassment or personal disclosure that is too deep or threatening based on your personality and ways of relating to people in the past. Be mindful that **you need people and they need you!**

TRANSFORMATIONS

Please find below a personal declaration called a transformation based on a particularly meaningful passage of scripture. Read, meditate and reflect on the following verse each day for a week. You will be reprogramming your subconscious mind by rehearsing the successful completion of what your life will look and feel like afterward.

Transformation Passage:

✓ *“I walk by faith and not by sight”*

(2 Corinthians 5:7)

Transformation Post-statement Activities:

- Memorize this phrase.
- Repeat it quietly to your life.
- Jot down any thoughts, feelings and/or ideas you have.

27. SCQ:

✓ *What do you envision as you picture the following scripture verse unfolding in your life? How would you think, feel act and change when this verse becomes a reality?*

CHAPTER THREE

RESPONDING WELL

INTERPRETATION OF EVENTS LEADS TO EMOTIONS

- ✓ *“It is not what happens to us but how we handle it that
Determines our emotional well-being”*

An illustration:

Here is an example of the aforementioned quote in “action”:

The scene:

Three different people each peak out their respective home windows to check on the weather. It started to rain. Three possible reactions could be...

Reaction #1:

“Darn, now I can’t go for a walk” (anger surfaced because event controlled how they felt).

Reaction #2:

“Yes, it’s starting to rain. We really need the water and its fun to walk in the drizzles, get wet and even kick a puddle like kids do on the way to school” (elation surfaced because event was not “allowed” to ruin this person’s mood).

Reaction #3:

“Oh well, I’ll just take an umbrella during my walk” (neural response that didn’t stop the walk)

All three encountered the same event: the rain. But their evaluation of the circumstances generated different reactions.

Life is the same way. For example one person could be feeling desperate and defeated in light of some bad news about a health condition. Another may allow for some of these perfectly normal reactions but chooses to see the event as an opportunity for friends/family to come together. Further, they might welcome the chance to trust God for His miraculous healing power, not otherwise pursued.

28. SCQ:

- ✓ *What is an example in your life or the life of someone you know, who looked at a potentially negative circumstance in a refreshingly positive way?*

RELIGIOUS APPLICATION SYNOPSIS:

Paul says:

“Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, rejoice... for I have learned how to be content in whatever state I am. I know how to be abased fed or going hungry, having a sufficiency and enough to spare or going without and being in want. I have strength for all things in Christ who empowers me and live humbly in difficult circumstances, and I know also how to enjoy plenty and live in abundance. I have learned the secret of facing every situation, whether well“

(Phil 4:4, 11-13)

Paul learned that Christ was His source of power that could withstand anything.

ABCDE FORMULA/HANDOUT FOR THOUGHT TRANSFORMATION

Last week we learned the ABC method. Today we are introduced to an extension of that method by adding a “D” and “E” to the end. *(Note: The ABC method is not found anywhere... You have to provide it so I can fix it up)*

D: Disputing

We ask ourselves multiple questions to bring into question just how accurate our original belief or negative thoughts really are. We might ask ourselves “What evidence do I have that this belief is true? What evidence do I have that the opposite is true?” Sometimes the situation can’t change. In this event we need to look for evidence that you can manage it. Evidence can be found in such things as your innate abilities, past experiences, support persons, and resources.

E: Effective

The answers we derive from these disputing questions, such as about evince, will result in step E: Effective new beliefs, new emotions and behavioral consequences.

As Christians:

This process gives us the chance to replace unhelpful thoughts with biblical truths such as those in your weekly “Thankformations”. The Scriptures compare our minds to a place of war or type of battlefield. Our goal is to pinpoint negative threats, challenge them and make sure they are in line with what God says.

In **2 Cor. 10:3-5** we are challenged to examine and not believe everything that goes through our mind. The Bible gives us instructions for waging war as God would do. He uses mighty supernatural weapons not bullets and swords. By quoting scripture or meditating on a biblical truth we join God in a partnership in this war. Together we can tear down the strongholds or overpowering influence of such things as human reasoning. This destroys false argument, as we capture these errant thoughts and bring them to our Lord in obedience to Christ.

ABCDE METHOD FOR THOUGHT TRANSFORMATION WORKSHEET

Select a situation to examine and respond to the following:

Activating situation:

What were the circumstances surrounding your negative thoughts/emotions.

Beliefs:

What unhelpful thoughts and aspirations automatically went through your mind?

Consequent Feelings and Actions:

What painful feelings did these beliefs or expectations lead to: Rate each feeling using a scale of 1-10, where 10 is very painful. What behaviors did these beliefs and feelings lead to?

Dispute the Beliefs and Deal with the Situation:

Is there any evidence that those beliefs or expectations are not totally accurate or true? Describe the contrary evidence. Specify the unhelpful thought category that best describes the error in the belief. Even if the situation cannot change, what evidence do you have that you could manage it (based on your talents, past experience, support persons and/or resources)?

Religious Beliefs and Resources:

How can your view of God, your Christian worldview, the Bible and religious writings, spiritual wisdom and other sources provide evidence that challenge your automatic negative beliefs and thoughts that you can't cope?

Effective New Belief and Consequence:

What is a different way to now look at the situation? How did your feelings change after you looked at the situation differently? Rate each feeling using a scale of 1-10, when 10 is very painful.

*An adaptation of a model by *Carol Vivian at get.gg.com*

ABCDE form completion instructions:

Select a thought from your log completed before. Dispute your negative thought by coming up with effective new beliefs. Pinpoint the new emotional and behavioral consequences of new beliefs. Write your answers down on the ABCD worksheet.

INCORPORATING FAITH

Let's examine some of the most important beliefs that make up your faith tradition. For most people trusting in God is a significant value and practice. Often we have negative thoughts and feelings because we don't realize their presence replaces the trust that faith teaches us. For example many people have trouble coping with difficult situations. One aspect of our hesitancy could be that we are focused more on the negatives and not coping with the situation. You will obviously need to explore the reasons for some of your deep-seated beliefs and corresponding actions.

In most instances, using this Faith Based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) model, one can use their beliefs and practices to fend off negativity. For example, someone may not cope well with tough circumstances. Use the skill of evaluating your religious beliefs to come up with a spiritual resource to aid the situation. Uncovering unconscious beliefs about not trusting God is a bold undertaking and requires some honest self-reflection.

This new habit won't occur over night. You need to recall the faith beliefs and practices that are significant to you. Then use creative ways to remind yourself about this religious resource – like the concept of trusting in God, as the only way to please Him.

In between sessions and in your journaling time, see if you can list some positive verses or aspects of your theology that you could begin applying to an unhelpful belief or action that is not in line with your God-given potential. Over time you will master this skill of challenging automatic thoughts that may not be in line with the will of God. Work on developing this practice into a habit and you will be overjoyed with the results.

DISPUTING QUESTIONS

To help you with the “D” part of the aforementioned method please find below some questions to help you dispute or at least think about the possibility that your first impression may not be true.

1. Do I know for certain that _____?

Example: *Do I know for certain that I won't have anything to say?*

2. Am I 100% sure that _____?

Example: *Am I 100% sure that my anxiety will show?*

3. What evidence do I have that _____?

What evidence do I have that the opposite is true?

Example: *What evidence do I have that they didn't understand my speech? What evidence do I have that they did understand my speech?*

4. What is the worst thing that could happen? How bad is that? How can I cope with that?

5. Do I have a crystal ball?

6. Is there another explanation for _____ ?

Example: *Is there another explanation for his refusal to have coffee with me?*

7. Does _____ have to lead to or equal _____ ?

Example: *Does "being nervous" have to lead to or equal "looking stupid"?*

8. Is there another point of view?

What does _____ mean? Does _____ really mean that _____ ?

Example: What does "looking like an idiot" mean? Does the fact that I stumbled over my words really mean that I look like an idiot?

CHAPTER FOUR

THRIVING IN THE MIDST OF LOSS

This week our goal is to help you apply your faith to mental well-being. If you are struggling with illness such as depression or anxiety here are three common (but not obvious) types of losses:

ISSUES PERTAINING TO LOSS

There are three main areas for us to focus on:

- Loss of identity
- Loss of capacities
- Loss of relationship

29. SCQ:

✓ *Are there any others you can list? Such as:* _____

Dealing with chronic illness:

Dealing with grief from your own loss, loss of a loved one, loss of friendships/relationship, loss of job or loss of the environment or routine you have gotten used to.

LOSS EVALUATION ASSESSEMENT

Evaluation 1 to 10 Scale:

Review the following and give each a grade with 10 being the worst. Jot down any notes that surface as you contemplate each one.

1. Meaningful relationships? **Scale:** _____

Note:

1. Reduction in time spent with friends and family? **Scale:** _____

Note:

2. Lost any capacity or interest for leisure, recreation or fun that you miss? **Scale:** _____

Note:

3. Have you had to reduce your work tasks in any way? **Scale:** _____

Note:

4. Has your illness led you to question who you are as a person or whether or not you will be?

Scale: _____

Note:

5. Able to reach the goals that make for a satisfying life? **Scale:** _____

Note:

6. Has your illness let to not being able to participate in social activities you once enjoyed?
What are they?

Scale: _____

Note:

7. What are the most important things you have had to give up or curtail as a result of your illness?

Scale:_____

Note:

8. Sacred losses: Things we suffer related to our illness, our faith and/or relationship with God. Some feel abandoned by God, abandoned by church friend.

Scale: _____

Note:

ENCOURAGING SCRIPTURE FOR DEALING WITH LOSS

“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they prove we may have hope”

(Romans 15:4)

The stories we read about in the Bible are there to encourage us, to provide a model for us to interpret the events in our lives and to create hope in us.

It may be comforting to know that a number of people in the Bible like David suffered. Despite being called “a man after Gods own Heart” David cries to God about his suffering. Even though he was King and had a very close relationship with God that doesn’t make him immune. In fact the disciples suffered great losses for the cause of Christ.

29. SCQ:

- ✓ In the **losses you have experienced, have you ever experienced** the comfort or compassion of Christ? How about the care expressed through others He may motivate or equip to help you?

LOSS: _____

HELP RECEIVED: _____

CONTROL EXERCISE

Some aspects of life are in our control whereas others are uncontrollable. It’s also difficult to let go of longstanding but limiting thoughts, and habits.

We are now going to examine the skills of surrendering to God. This helps us let go. It’s not giving up but more intensified trust in God. Letting go and trusting God actually increases your sense of control, assuming that you have the correct views about God’s nature and character.

Here are some examples:

1. In Personal Control:

- Choosing doctor
- Choosing the amount of time we spend at certain activities, eating, taking meds, exercise and participating in hobbies.
- Yours:

2. Outside of Personal Control

- Course of illness
- Outcomes of treatment
- Yours:

30. SCQ:

- ✓ **How do you cope with issues that you feel are “under your control” compared with other issues you observe may be out of your control?**

Under Control: _____

31. SCQ:

- ✓ *What happens when you try to control aspects that you don't have control over?*

Out of Control: _____

ACTIVE SURRENDER

“Active Surrender”

Active Surrender is a habit that will improve your peace of mind. It involves a decision to let go of something that you have the power to change. Giving God power and releasing your own, helps you manage things that seem improbable, painful or distasteful.

32. SCQ:

- ✓ *Is there anything that you would like to surrender to God? How do you think this might help you cope with your illness and losses better? Thank Him for promising in His Word to “cast your cares upon Him because He cares for you”.*

(1 PET 5:7) ??????????????

PROMISES FROM GOD’S WORD THAT RESULT IN ENCOURAGEMENT

Consider the following passages about how people dealt with loss and suffering in the Bible. Of course the disciples and Jesus suffered greatly as they gave up their lives for the Christian cause. This goes to show us that becoming a devout Christian does not remove one as a candidate for loss/surrender. Rather it’s a fact to be expected and progressively handled better and better as God gives us the grace to manage life.

“In the world you will have trials and distress; but be of good cheer and be courageous for I have overcome the world.”

(John 16:33).

“Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted:”

(Matthew 5:4)

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves received from God”

(2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

Perhaps the reason Jesus calls us blessed when we mourn is because we get to be comforted by Jesus Himself, and His comfort and compassion are so great that we are then able to comfort others that are facing troubles.

CHAPTER FIVE

OVERCOMING BLOCKS

“Thank you God, for the righteous cry out and the Lord (You) hear them; You deliver us from all our troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. The righteous person, like myself, may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all”

(Ps 34:17-19)

THE CONCEPT OF BILATERAL IMPACT

What kind of thinker are you?

One point that needs mentioning before we go on to a new subject is the concept of *bilateral* impact. People with the tendency to think bilaterally rather than singularly tend to process information differently. Sometimes bilateral thinkers have a tougher time understanding the theoretical premise upon which FBCBT stands.

The theory presumes that, as you know, thoughts lead to feelings, which lead to actions or behaviors. We have spent quite a bit of time studying this pattern in our own lives and in the lives of others. This is a logical right brain approach to processing cognitions.

But some people tend to be more left-brain or have a combination of patterns. Their eye for creativity leads them to come to all sorts of conclusions not otherwise obvious or necessarily logical. The people tend to decide and act first and allow their feelings to follow after the activity is over. You may be wired similar to this. Too much thinking before hand leads to “analysis paralysis” where the information consumes clarity of thought and otherwise intuitive gut feelings.

No matter which way your brain tends to be wired don't fret that something is wrong with you. God created each of us in a “fearful and wonderful” way. God is most concerned with our motives behind our actions and whether or not we are inspired to serve others and bring

Him glory. There are many places in scriptures where He tells us to get our thoughts in order, to experience a more abundant life but there are other parts of the Bible where he tells us that “faith without WORKS” is dead. In other words, if we don’t take action we will not only fail to accomplish anything but we are really displeasing the Lord.

The safest way out of this puzzle is to prayerfully align our thoughts around adoration, thanksgiving, petition and inquiring, with the goal being – to honor the Lord and do all in His name. Rest in the Holy Spirit that God has put inside of you to whisper God’s Word and testify of His wishes.

Keep your thoughts aligned with scripture and your deeds will soon follow. If they don’t, no cause for alarm or quitting, pursue the positive activity you believe He would be calling you to pursue.

SOVEREIGN STUMBLING BLOCKS

We will now focus our attention on the relationship we have with God and try to unpack any misbeliefs, deep-seated emotions or unconscious behaviors that are not in harmony with fulfilling the potential He has for each of us.

Key Battle:

Many followers of Christ struggle with feelings that God has abandoned them, when they can’t physically sense His presence or audibly hear His voice. Another equally troubling conclusion many believers struggle with is the idea that God must be punishing them in order for all these negative thoughts/emotions and circumstances to appear.

First let’s clear the air with some spiritual facts:

1. It is normal to question God in the face of illness and affliction.
2. It is normal to feel negative emotions and think negative thoughts about God.
3. God created us to experience a wide range of emotions (from anger to elation). He is not surprised or alarmed...He accepts and loves us unconditionally.

4. God wants us to be true and honest with Him – not afraid of any potential negative reaction if we “come clean”.
5. Often these things are not on the top of our mind or even things we are always aware of. Life is a journey where these things tend to surface over time and the Bible says that it all works together for good for those who love God.
6. God created all feelings – even negative ones.

Ask Questions like:

- Where is God in this?
- Did God forsake me?
- How can a loving God allow this to happen?
- Why is there suffering?
- Am I abnormal or crazy?

God wants us to be honest with others, ourselves and Him. Some people grow up with the notion that they should never question God or feel angry with Him. Sometimes there is a fear that He isn't listening or desires to punish us. It's critical for you to realize that God feels sadness for all the pain, anguish and suffering we undergo. Like Christ did in the garden before going to the cross. It's ok to share our innermost concerns and even cry, as He did. Honesty is the key that opens the door to healing and restoration. It facilitates and leads toward growth.

33. SCQ:

- ✓ *Do you ask yourself these types of questions? Which are the most predominant questions that have bothered you lately?*

Relationship Questions:

Jot down your answers to these about your relationship with God

34. SCQ:

- ✓ *Has your relationship with God changed because of your illness, depression or anxiety?*
-

35. SCQ:

- ✓ *What kinds of questions do you find yourself asking?*
-

36. SCQ:

- ✓ *Have you ever felt abandoned or angry with God? How did you cope with this?*
-

37. SCQ:

- ✓ *Have you felt resentment, bitterness, questioning, shame or guilt recently?*
-

A note for you:

Remember that while the “why” questions are natural, God often doesn’t choose to answer us right away or in the manner we expect. There isn’t time to go into the theology of mystery or uncertainty as portrayed in both the New and Old Testament. Just be mindful that God is in control and wants us to depend on Him for wisdom, life/mind change and all we need. Sometimes it’s only in hindsight that we can get a glimpse of God’s purpose in promoting or permitting certain things to happen. As we learned previously, God’s thoughts and ways are much higher than our own.

He hasn't left us alone in the process of transforming our life and overcoming illnesses like depression and anxiety. He just wants us to take one step at a time as though Jesus is just ahead of us on a path. He has a flashlight but it only illuminates a small circumference. So we need to stay close to him for the light to "see". Often in the Bible, God doesn't tell us why some people get healed and some remain sick. If it was that important for us to know all the "whys", don't you think He would reveal the answers we seek?

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF SUFFERING AND STRUGGLING:

Before He died Jesus prayed to God for "this cup to pass from me"... "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" This leads us to the conclusion that he felt alone, afraid and abandoned. His negative thoughts and feelings made it hard to experience God's peace at that time. But eventually, He intimately knew and experienced God's wonderful plan.

Job experienced upheaval in nearly every aspect of his life. He had many intense negative emotions, doubts and questions about God's love. We are blessed to have an account of Job's ultimate inquiry and answer. He said that prior to his tough times, he only heard about God with his ears (Superficial knowledge). But at the end of the chapter he recounts: "**Now I KNOW HIM**". God used trials to create a more intimate and personal relationship. Therefore, Job counted his anguish to be worth it in the end.

Life is a "journey" and an "adventure" not a scavenger hunt to find "the hidden treasures".

Over time if you seek Him and search His ways, He will reward you with an "abundant life". This transformation occurs more readily when we start replacing any negative thoughts, feelings and/or mistakes with fresh truths we didn't understand before. In fact much of the low self-esteem we see in life today can be traced to erroneous conclusions people have come to.

Often, once explored, we can detect a possible source of detrimental conditioning as we think about how we grew up and how influencers treated us. Many spiritual struggles result from unintentional errors in our thought life, which has left our emotions "stuck" in certain areas.

This may lead to avoiding something spiritual because of our past experience and resulting attitude formulation.

For now, let the questions subside and trust that your illness exists for a sovereign purpose, which likely involves developing greater compassion and empathy for others who are similarly afflicted. So too, we tend to let go of the grip we have on things, trying to control them in our own strengths. It's only when we release things like this to the all knowing all powerful God that we can be truly free!

FORGIVENESS AND REPENTANCE

Sometimes our spiritual struggles can be tied to some inner resentment or unforgiveness we may not be aware of. Emotions like anger and bitterness are often not noticeable to us without deeper self-exploration. God is highly interested in these two aspects of human dynamics. They are each mentioned over 100 times in the scriptures. And scientifically, it has become well known that negative thoughts and emotions have a detrimental impact on our mental and physical health. This means that our body can't fight off infections and viruses as they can when we are experiencing positive emotions.

The bible says:

"..I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health just as your soul prospers."

(3 John1:2)

So our prosperity in life is contingent upon the state of our mind, emotions and will. If we harbor negative attitudes toward God, others or ourselves our mind don't prosper.

Repentance and forgiveness are the main tools the Bible gives us to remove negative feelings and conclusions about being wronged or getting even. The Bible sometimes refers to unforgiveness as sin that curbs God's power to fly freely in us.

38. SCQ:

✓ ***What does forgiveness mean to you?***

39. SCQ:

✓ *What does repentance mean to you?*

What the Bible says about forgiveness:

The Bible says that when we ask for forgiveness and desire to turn the other way (repent) God will remove that force, action thought/attitude as far as the East is from the West. In other words the mistake is gone from His view and memory forever.

God knows that sin messes up our lives and relationships with Him and others. To take away this horrible force inside of us, He sent Jesus to earth to die for our sins. There is no “fine tuning” or “tweaking” to disarm the power of sin. It has to be put to death. Rather than ask us to die for our wrong doings He allowed His sinless Son to be a sacrifice for us....atoning for all the mistakes and misbeliefs we have made and will make. All we need to do is accept God’s gift.

Expressing our desire to be clean and close to Him does this. And instead of trying to figure out how to make up for our weaknesses, all we need to do is express our sorrow to God (repentance) and ask for Him to take control of our lives. This isn’t to say that we shouldn’t hold another accountable for some damages he may have caused but it does mean that an act of faith in God’s huge salvation plan is all that’s needed.

Confession:

When we confess our wrongdoings and express our intention to live rightly before God, He automatically forgives us and cancels any debt we may have accumulated as a result of our mistaken human ways. By embracing the sacrifice Jesus made for us, we are washed, clean and able to enter into the holy presence of God in total righteousness or right standing with Him. The act of confessing our sins is like emptying a wood pile in our hands in order for us to be able to reach the firewood God has for us (The means and method for heating, eating, lighting etc).

Because this is such a central treatise in the Christian theology we are encouraged to live our lives as forgiving and repenting individuals. Not only continually turning from our old ways to God’s ways but by extending forgiveness and repenting for any wrongdoing we have committed to someone else and even ourselves. When we forgive someone else that means we give up the right to hold his unfortunate actions against him. We give up our normal reactions

like resentment, bitterness and anger. This is especially true when we don't feel like apologizing and changing our thoughts and feelings. Don't expect immediate feelings of elation to immediately take the place of long standing preconceptions. God will help us change our thoughts, feelings and behaviors over time; as long as we ask Him to lead the inner transformation and refrain from trying to shape- up by our own self -effort (Apart from the ultimate source and motive).

FORGIVENESS TRAVEL MAP (PART ONE)

Thoughtfully review the following questions when you are in relaxed and prayerful mood. Ask God to reveal His Will to you as you note thoughts and impressions. Be honest – no one needs to see this but you. You might just want to answer one question per day so as to not get overwhelmed. Use a journal if you need more paper.

List any thoughts, feelings or actions that you would like to be forgiven for:

1. Have these occurred because of your illness?

2. Do you think repentance and forgiveness would help you overcome your undesired thoughts and feelings?

3. Is there anybody else who you would like to forgive?

4. What would you like to ask God for in terms of forgiveness and repentance?

5. Who else would you like to forgive and seek repentance from?

FORGIVENESS TRAVEL MAP (PART TWO)

1. I need forgiveness for:

2. I need to forgive:

3. Write out a prayer to God.

SAMPLE: Lord I release others from any indebtedness, I feel justified to collect on. I give up accusing and blaming them. Please help me by forgiving them and dealing with bitterness. I give all my thoughts and feelings to you Lord. May my mind line up with yours? Lord as I imagine myself standing with you at the cross, I can visualize you saying that I am forgiven. Thank you for this tremendous act of grace.

FORGIVENESS IMAGERY EXERCISE

Picture yourself standing at the cross with Jesus hanging beside you. Give Him all your lists – as though you have written them down for Him to take – to be buried with him after He dies and before He is risen again to live an eternal life.

Sample prayer words (silent or out loud):

- 1. Father, please forgive me for anything I may have thought, said or done that needs to be removed. I release to you all my feelings and help me to treat others as being cleared from any wrongdoing. These are:*

- 2. I choose to forgive myself for:*

3. *God, I thank you for your supernatural power to remove any stronghold negative thoughts, feelings, or behavior patterns that I may have indulged in recently or long ago. These include:*

4. *I release any resentment, bitterness, anger or accusations toward:*

5. *I ask you to help me forgive others just as you have forgiven me. These are:*

CHAPTER SIX

THANKFULNESS

Session Objective: To learn the biblical quality and skills around the idea of gratitude.

Practice: Thought transformation to reconstruct undesired thinking. Put thankfulness into action by identifying the gifts God has bestowed upon you and put this concept to use in relating to someone else.

INTRODUCTION TO THANKFULNESS

Research indicates two interesting facts when it comes to the attitude and actions of gratitude. One conclusion is that thankfulness and joy are greatly associated with participating in pleasant activities, as well as moving away from pain and negativity. Another conclusion is that it is natural for people to experience a feeling of grateful happiness while also experiencing sadness, illness and other negative thoughts or emotions.

It's hard to practice **FCBT** when you are dealing with a mental health issue. Thoughts of depression or anxiety tend to have a powerful impact on our perspectives of self, others, God and life in general. However, the easiest and most effective means to overcome unhappiness, struggles or hurdles is to identify any contributing thought pattern or emotional state that leads to a downward mood shift. It's easier to be happy when we are optimistically focusing on the positive. So a "quick shift" that is the most highly profitable is to do something positive, like a rewarding activity and redirect your thoughts from a negative pattern to a more balanced pattern, made more real through an abiding sense of God's power, presence and peace.

The Bible is replete with admonitions and encouragements to be people of thankfulness. Even the angels are said to be praising God in His presence by focusing on who He is and what He has done.

The whole of scripture can be boiled down to this calling upon the lives of those who are followers of Christ:

“Thank God in everything, no matter what the circumstances may be; be thankful and give thanks, for this is the will of God...”

(1 Thessalonians 5:18)

The verse is telling us that we will have difficult circumstances to travel through but these hardships or trials should not prevent us from expressing praise and thanking God for His many blessings. This is an instance where God is declaring that while life can be very tough at times we need to make a sacrifice.

If it were easy to snap our fingers in order to change thoughts, feelings or behaviors everyone would go for a quick fix. But God is telling us to rearrange our thoughts without waiting for the right mood. Conclusively, we are called to bless God through prayer, praise and worship whether or not our feelings happen to be grateful or needy. Scripture wouldn't admonish us to be grateful and thankful in all times and in all circumstances if it were not possible. You are to physically, mentally and emotionally offer our sacrifice of thankfulness in whatever ways you are comfortable expressing them.

Don't wait for when you are feeling “in the mood” to worship God or to participate in a spiritual practice. God's thoughts are already inside of us by the power of the Holy Spirit. So even if we are feeling weak or down we are called to rely on His strengths not our own. In this manner God will get the credit as well.

40. SCQ:

- ✓ ***Describe a time when you pushed through a negative mindset in order to persevere through difficulties and praise God by faith not on feelings?***

HOME PRACTICE REVIEW

1. Transformation: Ps 34:17-19
2. Reflect on your prayer times this week? Are your thoughts negative? Can you see positive thoughts and emotions? Describe these:
3. Mood Scoring Exercise (same as prior weeks)
4. Did you have the chance to meet with or talk to another person from your faith community? How did that go?
5. How did you do with the forgiveness and repentance process this week past? List more items, pray about the issues and/or communicate with someone you trust about this matter.

THANKFULNESS ACTIVITIES

In the upcoming pages you will find two thankfulness activities for you to complete. They will help you bring to mind things in your past that you can be grateful for and even celebrate (better late than never).

1. Complete the two forms in this section on thankfulness.
2. Answer the questions posed on these pages.
3. Thankfulness is the result of “Thought Transformation” which you are learning how to control. Let’s go through the ABCDE worksheet now. I want you to review your gratitude lists preceding the filling out of this form. This time, see if you can reconstruct

your thoughts when your beliefs or feelings were leading you down. Challenge instances and dispute beliefs with a paradigm of thankfulness.

41. SCQ:

- ✓ *Pick one item on either list that makes you the most thankful. Why do you think this is at the top of your list?*

42. SCQ:

- ✓ *Can you apply anything you learned to your life right now? How so?*

43. SCQ:

- ✓ *Imagine what life would be like if and when you progressively become a more grateful person. What images, thoughts or feelings surface? Can you visualize any interaction specifically where you might have reacted negatively or less grateful than you would have liked?*

THANKFULNESS ACTIVITY 1

Numbering the gifts and blessings we have received.

1. On a 1 -10 scale how would you rate your state of mind right now? 10 would correlate with the happiest score and 1 would be the lowest:
2. List below 2 – 3 of the top good things God has either promoted or allowed to bless your life. These items may include things, activities/events, opportunities, situations, goals, aspects of your character and natural abilities, including interests and personality strengths.

THANKFUL FOR

RATING

3. Use the backside of the page or a journal for more entries. Review your thankful items and give each a 1 – 10 rating where 10 equates to the most grateful.
4. Ask yourself the same question as in #1 above. Do you feel better having completed this thankfulness activity?

THANKFULNESS ACTIVITY 2

Relishing Victories

List the three people in your life current or past that had a particularly meaningful or significant impact on you. Think about your sense of thankfulness and the gratitude you have for these gifts. (Whether they had a big or longstanding impression or a smaller or short term impression)

PERSON

POSITIVE IMPACT ON YOU

1. Identify one person from the aforementioned list that had the greatest positive impact on you. What is their name and the most memorable blessing you received from them.
2. Write down the greatest qualities the person exhibited or exhibits currently.
3. Thankfulness Note: Write a card or letter to this person. You can mail it, personally hand it to them and/or read the words out loud
4. Thankfulness Interaction: Call and/or meet with them to express your gratitude

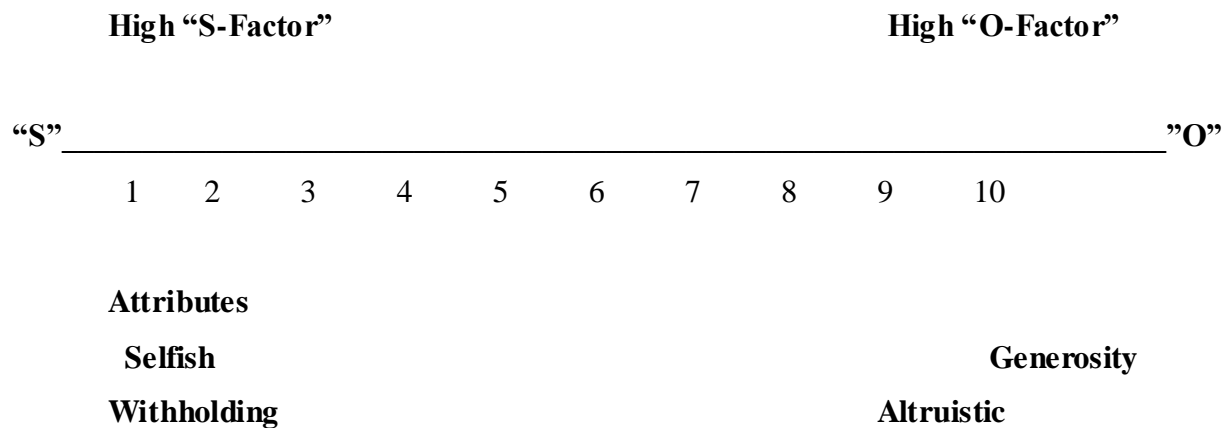
CHAPTER SEVEN

THE “O FACTOR”

LIVING OUR LIVES IN THE CONTEXT OF RELATIONSHIPS

When it comes to living our lives in the context of relationships, most of us vacillate between two ends of another centered continuum with most of our time being somewhere in the center.

At one end of this continuum is the high “O Factor” side. The closer you are at any given moment to being focused on the needs and want of others the higher the “O Factor”. At the opposite end of this continuum is a high “S Factor”. “S” stands for being self-focused and self-orienting. Here is what a scale might look like.



BEING OTHER CENTERED

Research tells us that if we pay even a little attention to giving to others that over time we end up feeling better ourselves. Christ tells us that the greatest charge of the faith is to first:

Love the Lord your God with your whole heart, mind and soul; second and love your neighbor as yourself.

The way God has wired us is that our mood gets progressively better the higher our “O-Factor”. Emotional hardships make it easy to forget the healing nature and priority of giving to others. It’s part of our dignity to care for and take care of people in need. When we remove or distance ourselves *we* lose something. It’s natural to lose some other-centeredness when feeling intense pain of any kind. It’s hard to focus on meeting the needs of a neighbor when you are injured or ill. So when you act out of a generous heart, you are moving through your own stuff to do something for someone else. Ironically, both the giver and receiver get blessed in this practical but supernatural act.

OWN NEEDS

Have you ever really listened to the flight attendant on an airline give passenger instructions in the case of an emergency? When the oxygen masks drop down we are told to put ours on first then take care of the child or needy person beside us. In aviation and life it is a fact that if we are incapacitated in some way we won’t be “well” enough to help others. If you can’t breathe on the plane you won’t be much use to follow the life saving instructions prescribed by the stewardess.

The same principle holds true with those experiencing a mental condition. If someone is really incapacitated by their illness they won’t be apt to serve others in a healthy manner. Once a patient is stabilized it can be observed that their countenance is improved and they become progressively other-centered.

No matter how painful and chronic your condition may be there are always some “seasons” when you feel better and with less acute pain intensity. I suppose if a deep depression robs someone of their joy and generosity, the primary focus should be on getting them well long enough to look outward to the needs of those around him. In the case of chronic and persistent serious psychiatric conditions, the patient must take positive actions in a wide variety of life areas without feeling motivated “per se”. It’s amazing to see how attitudes can change even when a little bit of generosity is shared.

Other emotional benefits:

While there are obvious emotional benefits to serving others, it can sometimes require a sacrifice of some sort. When Jesus gave His life on the cross He did so willingly participating in God's plan to give up all that He was for the salvation and sanctification of others (humankind). When asked about how to become the greatest in God's Kingdom, Jesus said that the criteria or prerequisites are to live a simple life as a slave or servant not seeking applause or material goods for oneself. He calls us to freely give and freely receive.

Jesus said:

“Whoever desires to be great among you must be your servant. And whoever wishes to be the most important among you must be the slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to have service rendered to him, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many”.

(Mk 10:43-45)

Reflections:

44. SCQ:

- ✓ *Imagine what life would be like if and when you progressively become a more grateful person. What images, thoughts or feelings surface? Can you visualize any interaction specifically where you might have reacted negatively or less grateful than you would have liked?*

45. SCQ:

- ✓ *Can you cite an example when your mood changed after you did something for others? What was it? Is there a time in the near future that you would like to apply your altruism (unselfishness) and generosity more liberally?*

46. SCQ:

- ✓ *How does your illness impact your “S” and “O” Factors? Do you have times when you have been able to give to others? Do you ever feel like your illness requires too much of others? Where you are the focus of attention too much of the time?*

47. SCQ:

- ✓ *How do the ideas about the “O” Factor relate to your faith?*

48. SCQ:

- ✓ *Think of a time in the past when your “O” Factor was high. How did your generosity and act of giving to others impact your mood?*

JESUS: THE O-FACTOR ADVOCATE

What does Jesus think about the motivation for giving to others?

Jesus said something surprising about the significance of putting the needs of others before your own. He was and is an “O Factor Advocate”.

- ✓ *For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you brought me together with yourselves and welcomed and entertained and lodged me. I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me with the help and ministering care, I was in prison and you came to see me. Then the just and upright will answer Him, Lord, when did we see you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when did we see you as a stranger and welcomed and entertained you, or naked and clothed you? And when did we see you sick or imprisoned and came to visit you? And the King will reply to them, truly I tell you, in so far as you did it for one of the least in the estimation of men, my brothers, you did it for ME.*

Matthew 25:35-40

You, (your name: _____)

49. SCQ:

✓ *Now complete the following two “O-Factor” Activities*

“O” FACTOR ACTIVITY (A) “SELF INITIATED”

List below some ways in which you have done generous, altruistic random acts of kindness or high O-Factor deeds in the past. These can be big or small, unique or frequent, times where you received positive feedback from the recipient/onlookers, or when your intention/action was mostly done in silence. Next rank how you felt while doing the activity and after completing the activity: (0 = Bad, 10 = Best)

Past Record of Action

Person Served

Resulting Self

Feeling

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

- | | | | |
|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| 6. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 7. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 8. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 9. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 10. | _____ | _____ | _____ |

“O” FACTOR ACTIVITY (B) “DONE UNTO ME”

List below some ways in which someone else did something generous, altruistic, random acts of kindness or high “O”-Factor deeds in the past FOR YOU. These can be big or small, unique or frequent, times where you gave positive feedback to others or didn’t mention it.. Next rank how you felt after the deed was completed. (0= Bad and 10 = Best)

Done For You

By

How it made you Feel

- | | | | |
|----|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
|----|-------|-------|-------|

2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

“O” FACTOR ACTIVITY (C) “WILL DO FOR OTHER(S)”

List below some ways in which you could do something generous, altruistic, or a high “O” Factor random act of kindness for someone else. These can be big or small, unique or

frequent, times where you gave positive feedback to others or didn't mention it. Next rank how you anticipate you would feel when done (0 = Bad and 10= Best).

Done For You

By

How it made you Feel

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

PLANNING HIGH "O" FACTOR ACTIONS (WORKSHEET 1)

Deed #1 _____

Degree of anticipated difficulty 0 = easy 10 = very difficult: _____

1. To whom? _____

2. When? _____

3. Why? _____

4. How? _____

5. How frequently? _____

Afterward:

1. How did it go? _____
2. How did it make you feel? _____
3. Was it as hard as you thought it was going to be? _____

PLANNING HIGH O FACTOR ACTIONS (WORKSHEET 2)

Deed #2 _____

Degree of anticipated difficulty 0 = easy 10 = very difficult: _____

1. To whom? _____

2. When? _____

3. Why? _____

4. How? _____

5. How frequently? _____

Afterward:

1. How did it go? _____

2. How did it make you feel? _____

3. Was it as hard as you thought it was going to be? _____

HOMEWORK

Transformation:

- ✓ *Thank you Lord for giving me the opportunity to emulate your servant heart here on earth and at such a time as this. I chose to put the needs of others ahead of my own.... following your example of helping out the neediest people without reward, acclaim or praise.*

(Matthew 25:40)

Optional Second Transformation:

- ✓ *Thank you Lord for showing us what we need to do in order to gain eternal life: I want to be the kind of person who loves you with all my heart, my entire mind, and all my soul. Furthermore, I want to love my neighbor as I love myself. I choose to give*

without regret or worry because you call us to give freely as we have already been given all of our needs by your and through others. Jesus, you call yourself a servant of all because you gave up your life for all of us. You tell us that whoever wants to be the most important to you on earth needs to be a “slave of all.” For you gave your very life so that we might experience total salvation and sanctification.

Complete this activity each day:

“O” Factor Activities:

Plan and carry out your intention for completing a generous act for others. Write your conclusions about the event afterward in this book.

Contacting:

Contact someone from your faith community to share how the program is going. Also, seek to provide supportive listening as you naturally converse about each other’s lives. Additionally, over the next week try to start praying for the needs of someone else. Write their need, your prayer request and how the Lord respond sin your journal during your quiet times in upcoming days.

CHAPTER EIGHT

GROWTH

HOME PRACTICE REVIEW

1. How did your Transformation go?
2. How did your conversation with someone from your faith community go?
3. Did you have a chance to pray for anyone this week? What did you pray for and could you discern God moving in any way?
4. How did your “0” Factor Activity go? Who, what, when and where did you choose to engage in selfless actions on behalf of another?
5. How did it feel after it was over? Did this meet or differ from your expectations?
6. How did your prayer times go this week?

This week we are going to change routines from our typical session, assignments and homework. Our focus will be solely on the core of this program: that of renewing your mind with scriptural declarations – a process we have called transformations.

Please read over the following commandments of mental health and record your immediate thoughts/feelings after meditating on each one for a few minutes.

MENTAL HEALTH COMMANDMENT #1: GODS GRACE

- ✓ *“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong”.*

(2 Cor. 12:9-11)

Observation:

Notice the stark seemingly contrasting principles in the aforementioned verse. On the one hand, we are to rest and celebrate in the sufficiency of God's grace. As we learn to depend on the Lord to meet our deepest needs, we become more readily open to discovering and confessing our weaknesses?

Most people try to hide their shortcomings to look better to themselves or others. Weaknesses are generally not held in high esteem on this earth. We try to make as few mistakes as possible and meet standards of perfection that are not reasonably obtainable. But God's program reverses the common psychology. He loves to make Himself known to us and to those we interact with by showing up in surprising ways that aren't necessarily tied to our hard work or great knowledge.

Conclusion:

When it comes to anxiety and depression we can bring these emotional states to God with open arms ready to give to Him what we cannot bear on our own. God calls us to live our lives on the basis of faith. This means we don't need to know how, when or why God will take our problems from us. We simply know He will if we let go.

So the call is for joyfulness when we are in the midst of difficulty, trials or sufferings. Adverse circumstances give us an opportunity to lean on His omniscient supernatural power, rather than our own feeble and mostly unsuccessful ways to solve our own problems.

MENTAL HEALTH COMMANDMENT #2: IN CHRIST

✓ *“I can do all things through him who gives me strength”*

(Phil. 4:13)

✓ *“Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do neither. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch*

that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.”

(John 15:4-6)

Observation:

We are encouraged to remain in Christ as our vine or source of nourishment to get all our needs met. As the vine that arises feeds the branch of a tree from the roots and soil below, so we are to be enriched by the person of God in order to bear fruit. The act of bearing fruit is the natural outgrowth of the process of how trees expand.

The fruit exists for the farmer who planted the tree and reaps the harvest when the right time has come to pick the fruit from the branch. Likewise, if we get our needs met by trusting in the sufficiency of God then He takes responsibility to shape our fruit as He sees fit for Himself, others and ourselves.

This is similar to the weakness principle described before. We don't need to have our mental health "act" together in order to approach God. In fact, He's asking us to relax and rest in His all sufficiency. He promises us that if we remain in Him we can do anything. If we choose to go our own way we are essentially cutting ourselves off from the vine – which causes withering and death; such as the leftover branches that are picked up off the ground and burned in fire.

Conclusion:

While God freely offers us the gifts associated with being grafted in His source of strength, it requires us to let go of any tight grips we might have around our habits, patterns or old ways of trying to solve our own problems with mental health being chief amount them.

Faith requires us to believe in His abilities to fulfill His promises to take care of us, despite whatever evidence to the contrary (or symptoms) we may experience. We also know from scripture that faith without works or actions is unfruitful or even called "dead". So we are not just supposed to lay around and hope that God will do everything that is needed to heal us.

While it's true from our scriptures on Grace, Strengths and Christ's sufficiency that He is the power source, we must recognize that He expects us to act upon our belief in His all sufficiency. That means we need to take the obvious steps before us to serve others and meet our own needs

when necessary. For example, we may need to eat more nutritiously and get sufficient and adequate rest. While food, drink and sleep are gifts from God, we are expected to act upon our belief in His ability to use these vehicles of care to mature and grow us.

MENTAL HEALTH COMMANDMENT #3: HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS IS OURS

- ✓ *“The words ‘it (righteousness) was credited to him’ were written not for Him alone but all for us, to whom God will credit righteousness – for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and raised to life for your justification”*

(Rom 4:23-25)

- ✓ *“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God”*

(2 Cor. 5:21)

- ✓ *“For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

(Matthew 5:20)

Observation:

How do we make sense of all these verses about sin and righteousness? First, note that unless we are practically perfect --more righteous than the most learned- we can't enter God's presence either now or for eternity in Heaven. This could be a problem if it wasn't for God's perfect love and attribute of grace. He knew that on our own we could not be good enough or well enough for His unconditional approval. So therein lies a problem.

Essentially, we are sinful and would rather choose our own ways than follow God. He could have pre-programmed mankind to automatically love Him and follow His will perfectly, which was certainly in His power. But He chose a different plan. He came down to earth in the form of His one and only begotten Son.

Jesus was made responsible for sharing with all people the true purposes and plans of His Holy Father. God wants us to hear these words both then and now and place our faith in His plan for our redemption. Our unintentional and sometimes intentional motives and acts of selfishness greatly disappoint Him.

In fact, the punishment for those who hear the good news about God but reject Him is death. But in God's grand scheme of things he allowed Jesus to be put to death on our behalf. Even though Jesus did nothing to deserve the persecution and horrific torture he received from his enemies on earth, God allowed Him to die as a type of perfect sacrifice to pay for any and all wrong doings we might commit in the past, present and future. As you have come to know God's ways it might not surprise you to learn that this whole process started with God's loving heart and free gift to mankind. Jesus death and the blood He shed cover our mistakes, impurities and selfish tendencies.

We simply need to open our hands and receive this ultimate sacrifice. As if this wasn't good enough Christ rose from the death of crucifixion on a cross, lived and taught among mankind for a while and then ascended to be with God at His right hand. His redemption purchased eternal life on our behalf so we wouldn't have to be perfect on our own to try and follow all the Bible's admonitions and desires of God.

Because of Christ's sacrifice we are also made perfect through – so God not only doesn't see our shortcomings any longer but makes us actual children of Him – perfectly loved, accepted and guaranteed a position with Christ at the right hand of the Father when we die. Our part is to choose to love God and accept His sacrificial gift and walk in the newness of life that He planned for us all along.

Conclusion:

I know this can be a lot to swallow, especially if this is the first time you are coming to understand this divine plan. Don't worry about figuring it all out. God accepts and loves you, mental illness and all, just the way you are. Remember that it is impossible to please God without faith (belief and works). So just take whatever steps you can today. Pray about these verses and especially this final conclusion this upcoming week.

HOME PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

Thankformation:

✓ *Thank you God for giving power to the faint and weary, and to him who has no might He increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall stumble and fall exhausted: But those who wait for the Lord-who expect, look for, and hope in Him- shall change and renew their strength and power; they shall lift their wings and mount up-close to God- as eagles -mount up to the sun; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint or become tired.*

(Isa. 40:29-31)

1. Reflect:

On your prayer times this week, Are your thoughts negative? Can you see positive thoughts and emotions? Describe these:

2. Mood Scoring Exercise (same as prior weeks):

3. Did you have the chance to meet with or talk to another person from your faith community? How did that go?

4. How did you do with the forgiveness and repentance process this week past? List more items, pray about the issues and/or communicate with someone you trust about this matter.

CHAPTER NINE

AUTHENTIC AND ENDURING PERSONAL GROWTH

REVIEW PREVIOUS WEEK'S HOME PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

1. **Transformation:** How did it go?

2. Getting together with someone in your faith community

3. Reflecting on the exercises we did last week...any new insights?

4. How did your times of prayer go? Did you have the chance to pray for anyone else?

Mood: How would you rate your mood at this time on a 1 to 10 basis: 10 being the best.

Rate: _____

HOW TO RESPOND TO NEGATIVE CIRCUMSTANCES

Your personal growth:

This week we will be dealing with how to respond to negative circumstances that are causing a fair amount of stress. For example, your illness is a problem most people have difficulty managing successfully. It's very hard to reflect on some hard things in your life, times of affliction and suffering and put them in a positive light. Many people find that feelings like shame and guilt began to surface at this time because they feel sufficient progress has not been made. Christians are often told that we are to be joyful in the midst of tough circumstances. This type of joy is not the happiness most people assume goes along with living the Christian life "right".

You will recall we talked before about how Christ endured the persecution and horrific torturing because He stayed focus on the "joy" of seeing us reunited with God, having a brand new eternal relationship with Him – resulting in abundance and blessings. But we also know

that Jesus experienced intense pain – to the point of asking the Father if it be His will, to take this exercise away from *Him* (Jesus) and find some other way to redeem mankind. But He left it open during His prayer time as He said: ***“let your will be done, not mine”***.

It’s helpful for people to remember that at times Jesus felt such a lack of joy that he was seen actually sweating drips of blood from His forehead after diligently praying and pleading with the Father. So, if you have trouble seeing the good aspects of problems such as your health you are not alone.

But God doesn’t want us to just give up and come to a place of rest by just enduring excruciating pain. You will find below a worksheet to help you walk through the process of identifying any positive results that may have occurred in your life or in the lives of others – related to your illness.

Place a check mark next to some of the common and normal emotions associated with trying to manage mental and physical illness.

- **Terror.**
- **Betrayed by someone or the “medical system”.**
- **Lack of trust in those who claim to be of help.**
- **Difficulty learning to cope with self- care activities.**
- **Others?**

THE TRUTH OR FACTS ASSOCIATED WITH OUR CIRCUMSTANCES

God doesn’t want us to ignore the truth or facts associated with our circumstances. We are not asked to turn a blind eye when examining our difficulties and just claiming you have sufficient faith to feel “just fine”. That is likely not even close to being true and God understands.

But in some respects illness doesn’t have to be a dead end or culmination of a downward spiral. It’s possible to experience spiritual growth, meaning, purpose and an appropriate sense of control. In some respects your illness opened a door to a new beginning. Although you may not

wish for your illness to surface in someone else, you may be able to find a model of how we can change our attitudes from Paul in the book of Philippians.

Paul was speaking from prison, in chains for preaching the gospel when the society didn't want him to speak up. He knew he was incarcerated for being obedient to God's calling. Yes, this has led to justifiable cause for feelings of frustration and resentment. But Paul finds it within himself to speak from the depths of his heart. To summarize his points let's review his conclusions:

- He was imprisoned as a result of telling others about the good news of salvation.
- He was in chains and yet without fear-for he trusted that the prayers of those who knew his plight and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ would turn things around for his deliverance.
- He shared that he was eager and hopeful to see Christ exalted in him whether by life or death.
- He challenges the readers and hearers of his message to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.
- He reminds us that the message about Christ was given to us as a gift-even though Christ had to struggle at the same time – just as we struggle in our dire predicaments.

How about that as an attitudinal shift?

He sees his chains as a means of fulfilling his purpose of advancing the gospel. Despite the negatives and confusion Paul encourages us to ask God for help to see the meaning, purpose and even the positives in the situations we face.

Can you relate to any of this? Or is the pain too difficult to handle right now?

HOW TO COPE WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

Sometimes it's easier to cope, even though we may not like what is happening, to stop wishing it had never occurred or would rapidly depart. Some people go on to discover that there are parts of their struggles that could contribute to positive changes. Once we begin to make sense of the possible causes and effects finding benefits seem to give people a sense of serenity.

For example, in my personal life I have incurred and endured many painful illnesses, especially due to brain disorders or mental incapacitation. It's unfortunate that God has allowed these to remain despite all the effort and prayer that has gone into reversing the health circumstances.

But I find meaning and purpose in the midst of this sadness, knowing that God will use me and my life events to make me more sensitive and helpful to others going through similar hardships. "You might say I'm a wounded healer". This is a phrase coined by Henry Nouwen.

50 SCQ:

- ✓ *In what ways can you make some sense out of the struggles you have had to face?*

51. SCQ:

- ✓ *What positive changes have you noticed as a result of what happened?*

- In you
- In others
- In the way your look at the world
- In your religious convictions

52. SCQ:

- ✓ **How can these changes help you live your life more fully right now?**

The Bible calls us to live an abundant life based on the fact that God works all things (especially the difficult) together for our ultimate good. We must accept this promise on the basis of faith not on visible proof in our sensory experience. God also says that He will not allow anything that is TOO difficult to defeat us! He is our shield, source and almighty power.

The concept we are discussing has to do with the fact that God allows good things and bad things to co-exist. Both the negative realities and the positives are noticeable and purposeful. We must turn the control over to God and rest in His peace and power.

Finding benefits:

God invites us to come close to Him and literally sit in His loving consoling lap. Our faith in Him can be a mighty source of transformation and perseverance.

- How does looking for the good, the new capacities and the new strengths that may begin to appear, help us live with pain and suffering?
- How does being aware of God's presence and purpose help us face uncertain futures?
- How does God's previous faithfulness help us develop hope for the future?

WHAT DO YOU SEE

The 12 spies:

There is a wonderful narrative in the Old Testament about how the Israelite nation went about scouting what their enemies the Canaanites were up to. Scripture says that Moses sent 12 spies to assess the chance for victory in comparing the enemies' strengths and weaknesses with those of His people.

Joshua and Caleb were 2 spies who had a completely different report concerning what they had seen, from their perspective. They believed that the land was exceedingly good and the Canaanites could easily be defeated. While others said the enemy looked like giants in comparing the stature of the armies, these two convinced the leaders that the same God who had already performed many miracles would prove His power and provision again.

God's reaction to the negative spies:

God's reaction to the negative spies was defiance. He was angry and felt they were ignoring His promise to perform miracles and give them the land. Eventually the naysayers came around to the positive perspective and God forgave them and all of their fellow grumblers of their negativity and lack of belief. It's interesting to note that following this episode all 10 negative spies were struck with a plague and died in the desert.

Joshua and Caleb based their report on what God had told them "I will give you this land for you and your descendants to live in and I will provide bountifully for you in this land." This

motivated those who would heed and obey. Despite the appraisal about the dominant size of the enemy “Giants,” the strong chose to fight, like David and Goliath.

Your daily perspective on things:

What does this have to do with faith and mental illness? Each day we can choose to look at things in positive or negative ways. It’s natural or normal to make decisions based on what our senses perceive and what is obvious to a natural man who doesn’t have faith in God. But those who have faith in God’s work and see what He provides for us, can base our self-esteem, our lives and our future on His words.

This will eventually lead to positive emotions like peace, joy and hope; precursors to attacking life rather than retreating or giving up. This can be difficult but we must trust God for grace and His power to challenge negative beliefs and assumptions about the future that are based on unhelpful and untrue core thoughts and feelings (as well as old habits that die slow).

God is not surprised by our natural viewpoints and conclusions made on a logical basis without relying on mysterious faith. But He wants those of us who are facing tough circumstances to refrain from complaining and becoming bitter rather than resting on the promises of God.

Your Perspectives:

What thoughts and impressions do you have about your life and circumstances following the biblical account of Joshua and Caleb?

The point of the story is not that God is going to strike us down when we come to decisions that don’t please Him, for none of us can see, know and do His will as He desires. But God sent Jesus as a representative of the sacrifice God paid to purchase forgiveness and make us blameless before God through Christ. What are your thoughts and impressions about this?

Transformation:

- ✓ *“Consider it wholly joyful whenever you encounter trials of any sort or fall into various temptations. Be assured that the trial and proving of your faith will bring out*

endurance and patience. But let endurance and patience do a thorough work, so that I may be fully developed, lacking in nothing.

(James 1:2-3)

53. SCQ:

- ✓ *List changes in your life (positive and negative) that have caused your thoughts and emotions to stir or become more active? Is there an alternative way to look at the negative ones? List accordingly.*

END OF PROGRAM

CHAPTER TEN

HELPFUL INFORMATION

ADDENDUM

PERSONAL CONSULTATIONS:

If you would like to talk more in depth about anything related to this program and your reactions, I'd be more than happy to try to help you find the answers you need. Just keep the following email address somewhere handy and write to me when a question arises or you would like a professional opinion. Use SynerThrive@Yahoo.com and my name: *Scott Rosenthal*.

There is no charge for quick notes but if we feel it would be clinically beneficial to set up some time for a more extensive visit in person, via teleconference, through Skype or other chat means we can discuss the details and fees for those services as well.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Scott Rosenthal, PhD

Diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder 15+ years ago Scott has gone on to enjoy life, love people and serve God to the best of his abilities. Milestones in his recovery include achievements such as:

- ✓ *Licensed mental health counseling professional: Counseling 500 individuals.*
- ✓ *Ordained minister: church pastor and non-profit Bible publisher executive, training 100's of churches.*
- ✓ *Published author: Columns, articles, paper reports, ebooks and paperbacks*
- ✓ *Fortune 500 corporate trainer (including ATT, Pepsi and Digital). Selling and conducting training for thousands of employees.*

✓ *University graduate school professor, specializing in Adult Education.*

He enjoys living in Little Rock, AR where he has three happily grown children and a grandchild. In addition to writing he enjoys walking, painting, all kinds of sports and fostering relationships.

TESTIMONIALS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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