

CHANGING SINFUL THOUGHT PATTERNS

This study is designed to help you overcome the problem of sinful, destructive, God-dishonoring thought patterns. Sinful thought patterns include excessive suspiciousness; constant pessimism and negativism; envy; a critical, condemnatory, accusatory, judgmental attitude; bitterness; resentment; impulsiveness; vain regrets (looking to the past in such a way that it keeps you from living Biblically, responsibly, productively in the present); brooding, fretting; jumping to hasty and unfounded conclusions; daydreaming (inventing your own fantasy world, refusing to acknowledge faults, failures, reality); self-pity; wicked, immoral imaginations; etc.

1. Circle the phrase or phrases in the preceding paragraph and in the following paragraph that best describe the sinful thought patterns which you tend to have. I ... often jump to conclusions; think others are talking about me behind my back; assume others are out to trap me; watch for the mistakes of others and am glad when I see them fail; don't listen to both sides of the story; tend to dwell on the other person's bad qualities; am quick to assume that other; persons are wrong; often think the worst; exaggerate my problems or successes; exaggerate the faults and mistakes of others; often wish I was someone else or that I was some place else; often feel sorry for myself; I often don't see the sense in trying to change or improve; I often think about how others don't like me, don't appreciate me; I often reflect on how others have abused me or mistreated me; I frequently think about how much better off others are; etc.

Be very objective and honest in evaluating your sinful thought patterns or you will not receive the help that this present study can provide for improvement, Remember, you probably will not be helped much unless you are aware of the specific ways in which you need assistance and change. Compare Proverbs 28:13.

2. For the next week (or until your next counseling session) keep a daily journal of your sinful thought patterns. On a daily basis write down every time you think in one of the ways you previously circled. Briefly record what happened where you were, when it happened, with whom you were, and what you did when you became aware that you were thinking this way. Evaluate the way you handled this propensity in the light of what God wants you to do with such thoughts.

3. Read I Samuel 16:14-23. What was King Saul's attitude toward David?

In what specific way did Saul honor David? (I Sam. 18:5) _____

4. Read I Samuel 18:6-9. How did Saul's attitude toward David change?

According to I Samuel 18:8, what particular sin was at the root of Saul's problem?

Observe the different reactions Saul had to David's harp playing.

I Samuel 16:18 _____

I Samuel 18:10, 11 _____

Was the problem David's fault or Saul's fault? _____

Did Saul have any basis for considering David a threat? Were Saul's suspicions well grounded?

5. What positive qualities that David possessed should Saul have dwelt upon and appreciated?

I Samuel 16:18 _____

I Samuel 17:32 _____

I Samuel 18:15 _____

I Samuel 18:16 _____

I Samuel 24:5, 6, 12 _____

I Samuel 26:11 _____

I Samuel 17:44-46 _____

6. Is there one particular person of whom you are especially suspicious, jealous, critical, judgmental?

Assignment No. 1;

In applying Philippians 4:8, make a list of 20 things you appreciate about that person. The list may include character qualities, attitudes, past deeds, gifts, talents, etc.

Examples:

I appreciate _____ because he/she is always consistent in church attendance.

I appreciate _____ because he/she keeps his/her bedroom tidy.

I appreciate — — — — — because he/she greets me and others warmly.

I appreciate my husband because he makes it part of his schedule to spend time with me and the _____ children.

I appreciate my wife because she does her household duties regularly and faithfully without _____ grumbling and complaining.

After you have made your "Appreciation List," thank God for the good qualities and actions displayed in his/her life and then seek opportunity to express your appreciation verbally to him/her. Keep a daily record of the times you express appreciation to people.

Study the following verses to discover what we shouldn't think and what we should think in reference to others. Write out in your own words what the verses mean.

Matthew 7:1-5

I Corinthians 13:5

Ephesians 4:31

Ephesians 4:32

Proverbs 19:11

Proverbs 17:9

Philippians 4:8

Proverbs 12:25

Proverbs 15:23

Isaiah 50:4

Proverbs 29:11

Romans 12:17

Romans 12:19-21

II Corinthians 10:5

Genesis 6:5

Philippians 1:3

I Thessalonians 1:2

Philippians 4:1

Romans 1:8, 9

II Corinthians 7:16

Romans 16:1

Romans 16:3, 4

Philippians 2:22

8. The Bible has much to say about jumping to conclusions and how to handle a situation in which you actually have been offended. Look up these passages and write out what these verses mean to you.

Rash Judgment

Proverbs 18:2

Proverbs 18:13

Proverbs 18:17

Proverbs 20:6

Proverbs 25:8

Proverbs 17:14

Proverbs 14:15

Proverbs 22:3

Proverbs 29:11

Proverbs 25:2

Proverbs 16:20

Proverbs 20:19:

Proverbs 26:20

Proverbs 26:21

Philippians 1:9, 10

I Corinthians 13:7

Reconciliation

Proverbs 26:9, 10

Matthew 18:15

Matthew 5:23, 24

Luke 17:3, 4

Matthew 6:14, 15

Ephesians 4:32

Assignment No. 2:

The Bible says, "Speak evil of no man" (Tit. 3:2). If you have jumped to conclusions about someone's activities, and your accusations have been made public and jeopardized another person's reputation, confess your sins to God and ask for His forgiveness. Then apply Matthew 5:23, 24 and confess your sins to the offended party and seek his/her forgiveness. Then go to all those with whom you have gossiped and confess your sin.

Write down several of the verses under "Rash Judgment" on a 3x5 index card. Every time you are tempted to impulsively condemn someone else or offer a rash opinion, read the verses on the card. Continue to 'do so until your sinful thinking pattern has been broken and replaced by the Biblical pattern. Carry the card with you at all times and review the verses continually. Force yourself to read or quote them whenever you are tempted to think or speak wrongly about another person. Ask God to help you to follow His directives and then proceed to do and think Biblically.

9. Read I Samuel 13:5-14; 15:1-31. What sinful pattern did Saul develop in his life which ultimately led to God's rejection of him as king of Israel? (Refer particularly to 13:13; 15:11, 19, 23, 24)

10. Study Proverbs 28:1. How does a guilty person act?

11. What sins have you committed which-you have failed to overcome and that have promoted a suspicious attitude?

a .

b .

c .

d .

e.

Assignment No. 3:

Confess those sins to God and ask for His forgiveness and then seek forgiveness from those persons whom you have sinned against. Ask someone who is close to you to covenant with you to help you overcome your sinful habits.

12. What bizarre behavior did Saul's suspicious, jealous, and rebellious attitude produce?

a. I Samuel 18:25

c. I Samuel 19:11

d. I Samuel 19:33

e. I Samuel 31:4

13. What important fact was Saul unwilling to accept as final, true, and unchangeable?
(I Sam. 15:28-30; 28:16-17).

14. Has God providentially changed, removed, brought into, or taken from your life something you have been unwilling to accept which has promoted daydreaming, living in the past, or constructing a make-believe world in order to escape from your discontentment and dissatisfaction?

Examples:

I am unwilling to acknowledge that I am physically disabled.

I am unwilling to accept the fact that I have moved to another location, house, occupation.

I am unwilling to accept the fact that my husband/wife has passed away.

I am unwilling to acknowledge that I am getting older and cannot do some of the things I once could do.

15. These verses address particularly the necessity of putting off false, wishful, imaginative, preoccupied, daydream thinking, and putting on the habit of thinking realistically, thankfully, unselfishly.

I Thessalonians 5:18

E p h e s i a n s

5 : 2 0

Philippians 4:4

Psalms 34:1

Deuteronomy 11:16

Ecclesiastes 5:7

Ecclesiastes 7:10

II Timothy 1:7

Philippians 1:9, 10

Philippians 4:8

Philippians 2:5-8

Assignment No. 4:

List at least 30 things for which you should presently thank God, then, according to I Thessalonians 5:18, thank God in prayer for these things. Also, make a list of the areas of your life where you have failed to live responsibly and faithfully and then seek to do those things which God wants you to do, no matter how you feel. How are you failing as a husband/wife, mother/father, church member employee, citizen? What abilities, talents, or opportunities are you overlooking or failing to use? Make a list of things you do have and think of them instead of what you don't have. Make a list of all the things you can and should do and then plan a schedule when you will do them and get busy. For the next week, keep a record of all the profitable things you do. When you are tempted to think wrongly ask God for help to do His will, remind yourself of what Scripture says you should think and do and of all the profitable things you have on your lists. Then get busy thinking and doing these profitable things. As you consistently follow this procedure, God will help you to change your thought patterns (Rom. 12:1, 2; II Cor. 10:4,5).

