

## I am What I Think

John 3:30

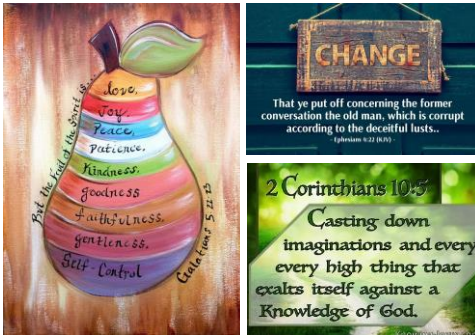
Online Sermon:

[http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page\\_id=3567](http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567)

**“He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls”**

**Proverbs 25:28**

Though self-control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit granted to every believer (Galatians 5:23), who among us does not struggle with the lingering influence of our old self, "being corrupted by its deceitful desires" (Ephesians 4:22)? While we aspire to dwell on what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8), we know all too well why we must strive to "demolish arguments and every pretension that



sets itself up against the knowledge of God" (2 Corinthians 10:5). Indeed, the mind is where the true battle takes place. Although routines and patterns offer a sense of stability, our negative thoughts and behaviors can trap us in cycles of failure and sin, distancing us from God. In this chaotic, decaying world, who among us can truly subdue the relentless turmoil of emotions and make them obedient to our will? In the upcoming sermon series, we will explore Dr. David Stoop's book *You Are What You Think*, with the goal of helping you realize that, with the mind of Christ and the right inner dialogue we have with ourselves throughout the day, i.e. "self-talk," you can take every thought captive and bring it into obedience to Him.

## Self-Control

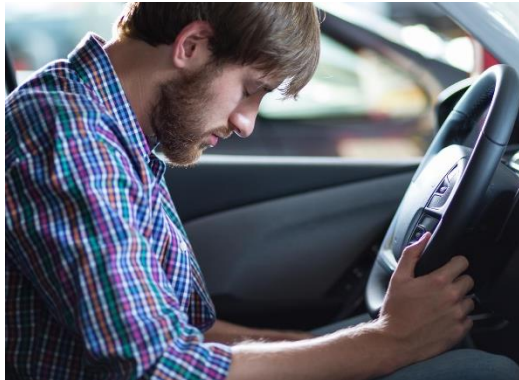
Living in a world filled with both mountaintops of blessings and valleys of tribulations, we often find ourselves overwhelmed by a sea of emotions. Who among us hasn't experienced a mix of worry, guilt, anxiety, sadness, joy, and contentment—sometimes all at once?<sup>1</sup> Psychologists often distill these feelings into three core emotions: love, anger, and fear. According to Dr. Stoop,



<sup>1</sup> You are what you Think, Kindle version, loc. 98

love "moves us toward someone or something," anger "moves us toward but against someone or something," and fear "always moves us away from someone or something."<sup>2</sup> These emotions can be so intense that we either erupt, letting them spill over onto those around us, or suppress them so tightly that we become like pressure cookers, ready to burst.

Neither of these responses to our emotions—exploding in anger or suppressing them—are what God intends for us. Imagine driving down a highway, feeling overwhelmed, and suddenly putting the car on cruise control. You jump into the b



ack seat, shouting to your spouse, children, friends, and even God, "You take over! I can't do this anymore!" We've all been there. Yet how often is God sitting in the back seat, gently reminding us, "I can't help you from here; I

can only guide you if you're in the driver's seat, actively participating in your journey." On the other hand, those who overcontrol never leave the driver's seat. They fail by refusing to listen to God's course corrections, stubbornly pressing the gas pedal of their own choices until they crash headfirst into problems that no human effort can solve. The key is finding

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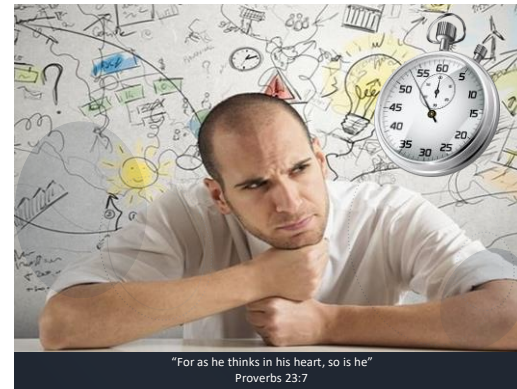
<sup>2</sup> Ibid., loc 82.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., loc. 163

balance—allowing God to guide while we faithfully steer.<sup>3</sup> Staying in control of one's feelings and making them submissive to Christ's will is paramount to holy living, for we truly are what we think.

## I am what I Think

Our identities are not shaped solely by our circumstances or environment, but often by the way we think and feel. While we naturally tend to blame others or unfavorable situations for



our lack of success or poor attitudes, it is often our own negative self-talk that turns blessings into burdens. We may speak around 200 words per minute, but our thoughts race at nearly 1,300 words per minute,<sup>4</sup> creating

a powerful internal narrative. As Proverbs 23:7 (NKJV) says, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he." In Lamentations 3, after Jerusalem's destruction and the exile to Babylon, Jeremiah descends into a deep depression, feeling overwhelmed by God's

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., loc. 296.

wrath. He laments his suffering, describing himself as "a man who has seen affliction" (3:1). In his mind God had "filled him with bitterness and sated him with wormwood" and as a result Jeremiah laments that God has "made my teeth grind on gravel and made me cower in ashes; my soul is bereft of peace, I have forgotten what happiness is" (3:15-17). His despair is so profound that, by today's standards, he might have been hospitalized. Yet, amid this darkness, Jeremiah shifts his focus to hope, radically transforming his outlook. He proclaims, "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning" (3:22-24). By changing his mindset, Jeremiah moves from the depths of despair to the heights of faith and hope.<sup>5</sup>

Our emotions profoundly impact our behavior and shape how we perceive reality. When confronted with an out-of-



control, broken world (Romans 8:21), we often think irrationally because we forget that everything remains under the sovereign control of God (Colossians 1:16). A powerful example is found in Numbers 13,

when the twelve spies returned from scouting the Promised

Land. Although they confirmed it was rich with "milk and honey," ten of them fixated on the fortified cities and the size of the inhabitants, viewing themselves as mere "grasshoppers" in comparison (Numbers 13:26-33). Only Joshua and Caleb had the faith to trust that God could easily deliver the land to them (14:8). Like them, we too have faced difficult times and have often lacked the faith to recognize God's hand in control. Whether we experience the loss of loved ones, financial difficulties, debilitating illness, job loss, or fractured relationships, our behavior can spiral as we allow fear and despair to dominate our hearts. This is why the Apostle Paul emphasizes that the true battlefield is in the mind, where irrational feelings often take control. Learning to manage our self-talk can help us break free from this discouraging spiral and restore our faith in God's sovereign plan.

## Self-Talk: Words of Faith

We all engage in self-talk, whether out loud or silently within our minds, and what we say often reflects where we place our faith.<sup>6</sup> When our thoughts are filled with negativity and despair, we tend to interpret life's circumstances through a gloomy lens. Proverbs 13:3 reminds us that "those who guard their lips preserve their lives, but those who speak rashly will come to ruin." When we allow emotions like anger, guilt, anxiety, and fear to dominate, we invite stress into our lives,

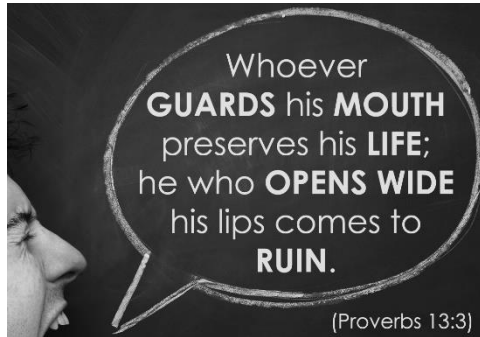
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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., loc 348.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., Loc 574.

which has been linked to 75-90% of illnesses, according to one study published by the American Medical Association.<sup>7</sup>

However, when we put our faith in God's promise that "all things work together for the good of those who love Him" (Romans 8:28), we can experience profound joy even in difficult times. Faith not only pleases God (Hebrews 11:6) but also lays the foundation for miracles and offers hope, knowing that the Good Shepherd will comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3-4), strengthen, and lighten our burdens during life's most challenging moments (Matthew 11:28-30).



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Self-talk reflects our inner faith, and when filled with negativity, it can distort how we see ourselves and the world around us. However, changing our self-talk is not simply a matter of willpower—it requires the grace of God. His grace empowers us to renew our minds (Romans 12:2) and take our thoughts captive (2 Corinthians 10:5). Prayer plays a vital role in this process by inviting God into our mental struggles and helping us rely on His



strength rather than our own efforts. As we pray, we can experience God's peace, which guards our hearts and minds amid anxiety or fear (Philippians 4:6-7). In addition to grace and prayer, community support is essential for transforming our self-talk. Fellow believers can provide encouragement, accountability, and perspective, reminding us of God's promises when we are overwhelmed. Sharing our struggles with trusted friends or church members allows us to receive comfort and wisdom (Galatians 6:2), reinforcing our thoughts with faith and truth. Ultimately, healthy self-talk is grounded in God's Word, strengthened through prayer, and sustained by the support of others. Through these means, we can overcome negative thought patterns and experience peace, joy, and hope, even in difficult circumstances.

## Difficulties in Shaping Self-Talk

While it may seem that we can easily talk ourselves into a positive outlook and unwavering faith, the reality is far more challenging. As the Apostle Paul rightly pointed out, the true battlefield is in the mind, and no matter how hard we try to shift our attitude, we often fall back into the very destructive thought patterns we aim to escape. For instance, despite Isaac's firsthand knowledge of the damage caused by his mother favoring him over Ishmael, both he and his wife repeated the cycle by favoring their own children. The influence of our families on our belief systems cannot be overstated—factors like emotional closeness, communication style, conflict resolution, self-esteem, work

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., Loc 524.

ethic, abuse, rejection, and even our understanding of God can shape us for generations.<sup>8</sup> Though breaking free from these ingrained patterns is difficult, understanding the roots of our faulty beliefs, coupled with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, empowers us to dismantle the mental strongholds that do not honor Christ. In the next part of this series, we will explore self-talk strategies that can help break the chains of anger.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., Loc. 630.