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CREATING AN ONLINE RESOURCE TO FACILITATE  
BIBLICAL MIND RENEWAL TO RELIEVE  
DEPRESSION IN CHRISTIANS

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A Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Educational Ministry

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by  
David Brian Reid  
December 2023

**APPROVAL SHEET**

CREATING AN ONLINE RESOURCE TO FACILITATE  
BIBLICAL MIND RENEWAL TO RELIEVE  
DEPRESSION IN CHRISTIANS

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To the Lord Jesus Christ,  
who came that we might have life “to the full.”  
You have fully kept your promise. Thank you!

To my brothers and sisters who battle the black dog,  
I wrote this that we might be “more than conquerors” through Him who loves us.  
Let us take every thought captive to make it obey Christ . . . together!  
I count it among the greatest privilege of my life that you share your struggle with me,  
and we can lean on each other to walk out of the pit together. Thank you!

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BDAG	Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000
BDB	Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. <i>The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic</i> . 13th ed. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010
ICC	International Critical Commentary
NAC	New American Commentary
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary



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## PREFACE

This is a passion project, born out of my personal bouts with depression while church planting. I wish I had known then the core truths and strategies I am laboring to illuminate here for those struggling with the “black dog,” as Churchill called it.

No one accomplishes anything significant alone. Thankfully, I have been abundantly blessed with a wife who is unwaveringly committed to the glory of God, the good of mankind, and the full development of my God-given potential. So, thank you, Katie Reid! Your love and support to chase any dream God calls us to humbles and inspires me to live passionately for the glory of God. My life is richer, more devoted to Christ, more beautiful, and certainly more fun because of you.

Two other ladies were encouraging me long before Katie, and I love to mention them here. Ruth Knowles, everyone should have a mother who loves them as much as you do me. Candace Ivey, you have been my biggest fan and longest friend. You both encouraged me greatly in this journey. Thank you for loving me beyond what I deserve. I love you!

My whole family loves unconditionally, values Kingdom work, and encourages this husband/dad to retire for long hours alone to pursue an Enneagram Five’s contribution to the world. Abbie, my precious firstborn, Ben, the son of my right hand, and Rosie, my joyful and blessed caboose—I love you all! I deeply appreciate your whole-hearted support of every endeavor of my heart. You fill my life with joy.

I am grateful for Drs. Haste and Pierre who have challenged me to my best thinking about depression. I am wiser and have a more mature theology than when I started this process because of you.

Finally, to all those who participated in Renew U with me: thank you for

sharing a slice of your life with me and being transparent about your struggles! I dedicate this work to you. I am praying for you, that we will be “more than conquerors” (Rom 8:37) together. Selah.

David B. Reid

Carrollton, Georgia

December 2023

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Depression frequently robs the body of Christ of the best God's servants have to offer to the world. My ministry project seeks to counsel believers suffering from depression using Scripture to change thinking patterns often found alongside depression. Paul sums up the importance of our thinking in Romans 12:2: "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind."<sup>1</sup> God literally wrote the book on how to think. Through the experiences of biblical characters and teachings in His Word, God gives us the examples and principles to keep our eyes on Him no matter what kind of circumstances come our way. The truths and techniques God gives in Scripture on how to battle depressive thoughts need to be systematized and shared in a winsome package that many can benefit from. To that end, I developed a mind renewal curriculum, a theology of mind renewal, if you will. Then, I taught and facilitated it online to self-described depression sufferers. Finally, I measured before and after survey results to determine the effectiveness of the program.

#### **Context**

West Georgia is a blue-collar suburb community of Atlanta. The demographics and psychographics are typical of rural areas across America. Money is tight, spiritual maturity is low, and access to good, affordable mental healthcare is scarce. In fact, compared with urban populations, rural Americans have higher rates of depression (22 percent vs. 19 percent) and suicide rates; however, they are less likely to have access to

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the New International Version.

mental healthcare.<sup>2</sup> To make matters worse, rural people (in my decade of pastoral experience) feel more ashamed and less comfortable pursuing help for mental issues. Incomes are mostly lower middle to middle class, contributing to the hesitance to reach out for help. Significantly, 86 percent of West Georgia is unchurched (on par with the entire state of Georgia).<sup>3</sup> As a church planter, I learned that the majority of West Georgians believe in God, even in Jesus; they just had not found the church to be a compelling source of answers for life.

According to the US Department of Health and Human Services, 23 percent of Americans will struggle with depression seriously in their lifetime.<sup>4</sup> This is true for West Georgians as well. However, in June of 2020, 31 percent of adults in America self-identified as depressed.<sup>5</sup> No doubt, the dramatic rise was related to stresses brought on by health and economic concerns imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Though the “very religious”<sup>6</sup> suffer depression 24 percent less often than others,<sup>7</sup> the moderately religious churched and non-churched statistics are similar, with 20.4 percent and 18.7 percent, respectively, reporting having been diagnosed with clinical depression.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> K. E. Deligiannidis, “Primary Care Issues in Rural Populations,” *Primary Care of the Medically Underserved* 44, no. 1 (2017): 14.

<sup>3</sup> “Church Demographic: 2020,” Georgia Baptist Mission Board, accessed July 15, 2021, <https://gabaptist.org/churchdemographics/>.

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth A. O’Connor et al., “Screening for Depression in Adults and Older Adults in Primary Care: An Updated Systematic Review,” Agency for Health Care Research and Quality, US Dept of Health and Human Services, accessed August 6, 2021, [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK36403/pdf/Bookshelf\\_NBK36403.pdf](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK36403/pdf/Bookshelf_NBK36403.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Mark E. Czeisler et al., “Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicidal Ideation during the COVID-19 Pandemic—United States, June 24-30, 2020,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed July 1, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6932a1.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> Frank Newport, Sangeeta Agrawal, and Dan Witters, “Very Religious Americans Report Less Depression, Worry,” Gallup, accessed August 6, 2021, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/144980/religious-americans-report-less-depression-worry.aspx>.

<sup>7</sup> Newport, Agrawal, and Witters defined the “very religious” as people who say “religion is an important part of daily life” and attend church/synagogue/mosque “every week or almost every week.” See Newport, Agrawal, and Witters, “Very Religious Americans Report Less Depression, Worry.”

<sup>8</sup> Newport, Agrawal, and Witters, “Very Religious Americans Report Less Depression, Worry.”

Depression became personal for me when I had three bouts of clinical depression while church planting from 2003 to 2012. The first was undiagnosed and lasted three years. During that time, I was a poor husband, father, and pastor. The second season was when I learned about depression, its causes, and how to reduce my risk of depression with healthier habits and better thinking. My third episode was more quickly identified, milder in severity, shorter in duration, and even useful to identify what changes I needed to make to my life and lifestyle to move through the season intentionally. The less destructive nature of my third depression is due to several factors. These include learning how to recognize depression was coming on and how to choose a healthier way of thinking as opposed to rumination and worry about negative circumstances and potential negative outcomes.

When I emerged from the third depression, I taught a six-week sermon series on depression and how to fight it with biblical principles, focusing on physical, mental, and spiritual health. After this message series, multiple godly people from the congregation told me they thought they were the “only one” who wrestled with negative thoughts in their minds. They were encouraged that I had put words to their inner struggle and given biblical truth to combat it.

When considering the epidemic of depression in America (and particularly rural America), there is good news: the Bible is filled with truths, principles, and character studies to aid in battling depression. There is no shortage of passages that provide a better perspective and response to life’s situations that are prone to lead to depression.

However, there are three obstacles to the depressed in rural areas getting the specific care and coaching they need. Each of these flows out of the nature of depression. The first obstacle is shame on the part of the depressed person. There is a stigma associated with the person who struggles with mental health. Often, the hurting person struggles alone because he or she is embarrassed to seek help. Unfortunately, the church

has sometimes reinforced this stigma by judging the believer struggling with the very real symptoms created by depression.

The second obstacle is this: because of the reduced energy and pessimistic outlook of the depressed person, he or she is not self-motivated to build a new relationship, share on a personal and sensitive topic, or act to better their situation. When someone is struggling to get out of bed every day, the bar needs to be low to engage them to do the next right thing. People who are depressed need to be pursued if they are to keep from wallowing in a tough situation. Rarely is that the case in our society of shallow friendships, fellowship, and community.

Finally, the lack of accessible options to counseling depression ensures that most depressed people in rural America—even those who can overcome the previous two obstacles—do not get the help they need. Time with a skilled counselor costs \$75-150 per session, and although well worth it, is out of reach for much of the nation.

The local pastor may not be skilled in recognizing depression and leading someone toward health. And the contemporary rural pastor certainly has competing demands that would make him hard pressed to invest the amount of time needed with someone he does not know well or who is not productive in his congregation with no guarantee of success. The cost—to his ministry, family commitments, and personal margin—is too high.

Consider the amount of time it typically takes for a counselor to establish rapport, build trust, assess a depression problem, determine a counseling regimen, teach the impact of thinking patterns and how to change them, encourage positive steps, celebrate wins along the way, and hold accountable for progress. This is what a depressed person needs. This is a significant investment of time spread over multiple months. Pastors may feel they do not have time to do this. Professional counselors may not pursue counselees who cannot make appointments and do not have resources to pay what it costs. Spouses are not equipped or are already exhausted living with a depressed person.



Who can do it?

These obstacles contribute to one unacceptable result: those suffering with depression—particularly in rural areas—do not get the knowledge and coaching they need to care for their brains and renew their minds through Scripture.

### **Rationale**

This project aims to provide a remedy to the lack of means of counseling depression for rural laypeople. Specifically, I want to deliver truth and principles to aid in depression online and promote interaction on social media. The purpose for making the curriculum online is to significantly increase the access to mental health help.

As with any course, people will participate based on the value and encouragement/relationship they are receiving. My premise is that value can be communicated via video and chat. Offering a synchronous online community group will provide a lower bar of entry to a depressed person than having to come to a class. Many who are depressed have trouble getting out of bed. An online community, I believe, can greatly benefit from a biblical curriculum on how to battle depression. Although the course will be available on-demand after the synchronous class, I will encourage participants to join synchronously to avoid getting behind and to promote personal participation.

There is a great theological reason as well as practical reasons for the approach and ministry project recommended here. First, theologically, depression does not fit the “full life” Jesus came to offer humanity (John 10:10b). Instead of flourishing as God intended for His creation, depression robs people of productivity, joy, and health. Particularly, it deprives the Body of Christ of servants, encouragers, and world changers.

At worst, depression can have deadly consequences, with almost 50,000

suicides due to depression in America every year.<sup>9</sup> At best, it steals ministry, relationships, and joy from those it plagues. In the Kingdom, without effective treatment and strategies to fight it, it distorts the message of the gospel, that “we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Rom 8:37). Peter says in 2 Peter 1:3-4 that God’s “divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of Him who called us.” The problem is that the depressed person is not aware of the “knowledge” God has given on how to live in light of His divine power available to help in life’s struggles.

The first practical reason for this project is the need to make biblical insight on how to deal with depression easily accessible. Existing opportunities for the depressed to get help via ongoing care and coaching from a pastor or counselor are limited. The cost needs to be as near free as possible to take away any reason for not being able to afford good counsel.

The second practical reason is when someone is struggling to get out of bed every day, the bar needs to be really low to be able to engage them. Because the depressed person is struggling with low energy, sadness, pessimistic outlook, and low self-esteem, he or she is not self-motivated to seek out the help needed.

The ideal curriculum will be available on his or her time schedule, not require getting dressed and going out, be highly encouraging and insightful, and give meaningful but do-able assignments that enable the person to feel that he can make progress. Similar to how Jesus condescended to us in salvation when we could not act on our own, depression counseling needs to be as simple as watching a video on your phone and texting back a response to an engaging question.

The third practical reason for this project is that there is a need for a way to

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<sup>9</sup>“Suicide Statistics,” American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, accessed July 9, 2021, <https://afsp.org/suicide-statistics/>.

scale up ministry to the depressed in West Georgia—and ultimately to the 83 million depressed Americans<sup>10</sup>—that allows them to access knowledge, biblical strategies, accountability, and support to move forward. In order to serve many at a low cost, a treatment regimen needs to be self-sustaining. In addition to on-demand biblical content, one other thing is needed: an engaging online community made up of fellow strugglers and those who have struggled, won, and have a heart for those still in the fight. Since loneliness is a hallmark of depression, many Christians believe they are the only ones who feel the way they do in the midst of depression.

A great benefit of online community, especially with today’s social media technology, is that the depressed will see that they are not alone. Additionally, the workload of responding to a needy person can be divided among many caring people. A skilled facilitator can specifically guide people who need further help and make sure all comments are helpful without having to be the primary relator to each participant.

Finally, but not insignificantly, when depressed participants can actually encourage others through social commenting, they will be taking positive steps to take the focus off themselves and their own problems. This is a key element of bringing joy back into their own lives. These theological and practical reasons are why this project should be completed.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to create and test an online interactive resource based on biblical counseling principles for a volunteer group of Christians who self-describe as depressed.

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<sup>10</sup> O’Connor et al., “Screening for Depression in Adults and Older Adults in Primary Care: An Updated Systematic Review.”

## **Goals**

The following four objectives were established to complete this project.

1. The first goal was to secure the commitment of Christian volunteers who self-describe as depressed and to assess their initial perspective on their depression and their faith.
2. The second goal was to develop a ten-session curriculum that involves instruction and practical guidance for renewing their perspective on depression and faith with Scriptural principles and examples.
3. The third goal was to equip participants to use Scripture application, spiritual disciplines, and sound physiological principles to relieve depression in a weekly synchronous course session and continuous virtual community group over social media.
4. The fourth goal was to assess the effectiveness of the mind renewal curriculum in relieving depression by comparing pre- and post- survey results.

A specific research methodology was created to measure the successful completion of these four goals.<sup>11</sup> This methodology is described in the following section.

## **Research Methodology**

Successful completion of this project depended upon the completion of these four goals. The first goal was to assess the initial state of participants. I wanted to determine their incoming depression severity as well as their use of Scripture and spiritual disciplines as mind renewal strategies. I also wanted to assess the effectiveness of whatever strategies they used to avoid or relieve depression. This goal was measured by administering two pre-surveys (the PHQ-9 and the Depression Causes and Cures Survey) to the subject group. The pre-surveys included a diagnostic to help a subject identify if they were depressed. This goal was considered successfully met when at least twenty people completed the survey (forty-three people did!) and the results were analyzed, producing a clear picture of the initial state of depression and the initial use of Scripture and strategies for mind renewal for a cross-section of Christians in rural

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<sup>11</sup> All the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

America.

The second goal was to develop a ten-session, Scripture-based mind renewal curriculum that would equip depressed Christians to retrain their thought patterns in alignment with Scripture. This goal was measured by an expert panel who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, accuracy, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum. This goal was to be considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal was to equip participants to use Scripture and spiritual disciplines to relieve depression in a weekly session and continuous social media community group. This goal was measured by participation in the ten-session course developed for this purpose. This goal was to be considered successfully met when at least fifteen people completed at least 70 percent of the ten sessions.

The fourth goal was to assess the effectiveness of the mind renewal curriculum. This goal was measured by administering two post-surveys (the PHQ-9 and the Depression Causes and Cures Survey) that assessed the participant's level of knowledge, daily application, and motivation to meditate on biblical principles and course content to improve mood, outlook, and hope in God. This goal was to be considered successfully met when a t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores for the respondents who self-identified as depressed. As well, this goal would be successfully met when each participant scored at the sufficient or above level on the evaluation rubric.

### **Definitions and Delimitations**

The following definitions of key terms are used in the ministry project:

*Depression.* According to the National Institute for Mental Health, "Depression (major depressive disorder or clinical depression) is a common but serious mood disorder. It causes severe symptoms that affect how one feels, thinks, and handles

daily activities, such as sleeping, eating, or working. To be diagnosed with depression, the symptoms must be present for at least two weeks.”<sup>12</sup> Depression goes beyond simply a melancholy temperament or a case of the blues. Prolonged disruption to physical well-being or ability to function in everyday life can make depression spiral into more dangerous territory.

Ed Welch describes depression as “a painful experience that is typically described with images of emptiness, darkness, heaviness, and even hell itself.”<sup>13</sup> This depiction rightly broadens depression to be understood as emotional suffering as opposed to a “disorder.” Welch goes on to clarify that there are at least five causes of depression, (1) Ourselves (sin, unbelief, commitment to our interpretations instead of God’s), (2) Other people (e.g., discouragement, sexual violation), (3) Our bodies (e.g., lack of sleep, fogged thinking), (4) Satan (e.g., accusation), (5) God (e.g., His sovereign work in our lives to conform us to Christ).<sup>14</sup>

Significantly, biblical counselors emphasize the holistic nature of depression, that it is ultimately a spiritual issue that must be solved in cooperation with God, as opposed to a physiological issue alone. I do not disagree with this.

Biblical counselors often emphasize that outside of poor stewardship of the body, depression is usually the result of a person’s thinking being out of line with the principles of God’s Word, particularly around how to get our desires met.<sup>15</sup> Sins such as idolatry, jealousy, or placing trust in something other than God can be a cause of depression. People can also be deceived to think that they are alone, and God is not there

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<sup>12</sup> “Depression,” National Institute for Mental Health, accessed July 5, 2021, <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression>.

<sup>13</sup> Edward T. Welch, “The Heart of Depression,” Ligonier, March 1, 2008, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/heart-depression>.

<sup>14</sup> Welch, “The Heart of Depression.”

<sup>15</sup> David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes: Counseling and the Human Condition through the Lens of Scripture* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003), 147.

for them. These spiritual problems have a spiritual solution: meeting our needs through God's provision of Himself.

*Thought pattern.* A thought pattern is simply the way a person thinks by habit. Often, the depressed person has been conditioned by past experience or by nature to tend to think of new information in a negative light. This can cause him or her to spiral into even more negative thoughts. One key aspect of helping the depressed is to teach healthier, more Christ-focused ways of thinking.

*Rumination.* Rumination is a way of responding to distress that involves repetitively and passively thinking about the systems or events causing distress.<sup>16</sup> Where worry is thinking negative thoughts about the future, rumination is pessimistic thinking about the past or current situation. People who habitually ruminate are more likely to become depressed.<sup>17</sup>

*Spiritual disciplines.* The spiritual disciplines are biblical practices that help believers grow spiritually.<sup>18</sup> Some spiritual disciplines are prayer, meditating on Scripture, observing sabbath rest, fellowshiping with the body, and worship. Each of these can help break the ruminating cycle that contributes to depression.

*Mind-renewal strategies.* Paul commands us to “be transformed by the renewing of [our] minds” (Rom 12:2). Mind-renewal strategies are techniques for the believer to employ to aid in renewing his or her mind (e.g., meditating on Scripture, prayer, enjoying Sabbath rest, practicing gratefulness, reframing a problem to remember God is in control, etc.). Though similar to the spiritual disciplines, a mind-renewal strategy is something a person can do quickly in the moment when destructive or

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<sup>16</sup> Archibald D. Hart, *Unmasking Male Depression: Recognizing the Root Cause to Many Problem Behaviors Such as Anger, Resentment, Abusiveness, Silence, Addictions, and Sexual Compulsiveness* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 200.

<sup>17</sup> Hart, *Unmasking Male Depression*, 205.

<sup>18</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 12.

depressive thoughts enter the mind.

A few delimitations applied to this project. Participants must have completed seven out of ten sessions to be counted as part of the project results. Since new material and review were part of each session, someone who missed more than three sessions did not have a significant portion of the training. Their score would only skew results of those who fully participated. Since all sessions were available on-demand after the synchronous online training, not missing more than three sessions would have been difficult.

A second delimitation applied to this project. Since the primary research concern was how Scripture meditation can relieve depression, the focus was on the improvement of those who self-identify as depressed in the pre-survey.

The third delimitation is that anyone who indicated they have had thoughts of suicide in the last month would be referred to a qualified medical and skilled expert. This course could not substitute for severe help someone may need urgently.

### **Conclusion**

God has a wealth of help for the Christian struggling with depression. Scripture provides a foundation of truth that God is sovereign, loving, and wise. The indwelling Holy Spirit enables believers to live according to God's power instead of the weakness of the flesh. Community found in the church ensures that believers are never alone as they face the struggles that are common to man.

This project aims to make sure that the Christian who finds himself battling depression has the helps God has provided at his disposal. It is not enough that truth and tools exist. For the depressed soul to benefit, the knowledge and strategies must be easily accessible. Instead, the person who needs the most care often finds barriers of cost, commitment, and energy that seem too high for him or her.

As one who has been in the "pit of despair" (more than once), I have a passion



to make these tools absurdly easy to access to the depressed souls who need them. The following chapters will outline a curriculum and course to reach the depressed in West Georgia with God's Truth and techniques to "renew their minds" (Rom 12:2) and ensure the "full life" Jesus came to offer (John 10:10).

## CHAPTER 2

### BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR RELIEVING DEPRESSION BY TEACHING BIBLICAL MIND RENEWAL STRATEGIES

#### **Introduction**

In order to help Christians suffering with depression, we need to start with a biblical and theological foundation of understanding how God has designed the human mind to flourish. The Bible is filled with commands, examples, and propositions on how to live a blessed life (or not), but four key passages from the Old and New Testaments present a robust and broad framework of God’s mind on how man can tame his mind in a godly way. On almost every page, Scripture contains specific applications of these four key passages. This is not surprising. Paul said of Israel’s history, “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come” (1 Cor 10:11).

The four passages Romans 12:1-2, Genesis 4:1-8, Numbers 11:1-21, and Philippians 4:6-8 will be discussed in this chapter to give a concise biblical theology of mind renewal.

#### **Renewal of the Mind, Romans 12:1-2**

Romans 12-16 is a grand application to the good news of God’s grace to humanity that Paul presents in Romans 1-11. Romans 12:1-2 is at the hinge of the turn from theology to application. Consider the verses:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:2 provides a remarkable principle for God’s people. Paul says, “Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world, but *be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*” The key to transformation that the Holy Spirit wants to do in someone’s life (note the passive “be transformed” [Rom 12:2]) apart from how the world behaves is to have your mind *renewed*.

In the realm of depression, this gives great hope that God has a way for us to deal with negative, sad, or anxious thoughts differently than the world does. This mind renewal Paul speaks of can change us from the same unhelpful and unhealthy thinking that people who do not know Christ suffer through (the “pattern of this world” [Rom 12:1]). This is good news for Christians who struggle with depression. So, what is mind renewal, according to Paul?

In the context of Paul’s argument in Romans, “renewing your mind” is the way of sanctification. It is how we offer ourselves as “living sacrifices” (Rom 12:1) to God<sup>1</sup> and worship Him (Rom 12:1b). It is the right and reasonable response to God’s mercy in providing atonement for our sins and putting us in relationship with God, which was just spelled out in Romans 1-11 (note the “therefore” in Rom 12:1).<sup>2</sup>

“Renewing your mind,” according to Paul, is the antidote to becoming like the world (*καὶ μὴ συσχηματίζεσθε τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ* [Rom 12:2 NA27]) and the path to being “transformed.” *Μεταμορφοῦσθε* is the same word for how Jesus was changed in the Transfiguration (Matt 17:2, NA27).<sup>3</sup> In the Transfiguration, the disciples saw a foretaste of what followers of Jesus will ultimately experience as our entire being is glorified and freed from sin. This was a tangible example of the complete “renewal” God is going to do in every one of His children.

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 752.

<sup>2</sup> C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans*, vol. 1, *Romans 1-8*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979), 595.

<sup>3</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:607.

The word ἀνακαίνωσις, “renewal,” is a distinctly Christian word not found outside Christian literature.<sup>4</sup> It means to put something back into its original, unspoiled state.<sup>5</sup> Thus, we are changed toward glorification by our minds, the mental, thinking part of ourselves<sup>6</sup> (νοῦς), being renewed to the way we thought before our thinking was darkened and broken in the fall.

The key question, then, for us who have yet to experience complete transformation to renewal (mind and body), is how is the mind renewed right now? John Piper describes the process using several New Testament passages. It is a two-step process. First, we must become acquainted with the Truth through hearing the Word. This can be preaching, personal Bible reading/study, even meditation on the Truth we know about God from past revelation of God’s Word. This is what “beholding the glory of the Lord” in 2 Corinthians 3:18 refers to, according to John Piper.<sup>7</sup>

The second step is the Holy Spirit’s. When we submit ourselves to God’s Truth about Himself, about ourselves, and about the world around us, the Holy Spirit changes us. Note the divine passive of μεταμορφοῦσθε: “be transformed” (Rom 12:2 NA27). Jesus said the role of the Holy Spirit is to “convict the world of sin and righteousness” (John 16:8), “to guide [us] into Truth” (John 16:13), and to be a παράκλητος, or “helper” (John 14:16). The context of the “help” the Holy Spirit is providing is helping us understand and apply God’s truth to our lives (John 14:26; 15:26).<sup>8</sup> So, as we intentionally expose ourselves to God’s Truth, the Holy Spirit convinces us this Truth is right and provides us

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<sup>4</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:609.

<sup>5</sup> BDAG, 65-66.

<sup>6</sup> BDAG, 680.

<sup>7</sup> John Piper, “‘The Renewed Mind and How to Have It’—Romans 12:2,” *Desiring God*, August 15, 2004, YouTube video, 13:29, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-renewed-mind-and-how-to-have-it>.

<sup>8</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John*, vol. 4, *Peace in Storm (John 13-17)*, An Expository Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1982), 1198.

the power to apply it.

### **Cain's Challenge, Genesis 4:1-8**

If Romans 12:1-2 provides a didactic view of the work of the Holy Spirit in renewing our minds, the narrative of Cain leading up to the murder of Abel provides a negative example of the failure of a person to renew his mind, despite God's invitation. This story sets up the long, sad history of man without God seeking to solve his down emotions in a sinful way. Cain's thoughts and actions highlight the need for man to have the illuminating and empowering work of the Holy Spirit to be able to obey God and live with joy rather than depression. They also serve as a warning to all people of the danger of being subject to our emotions and a darkened mind as opposed to a renewed mind. A deeper look at Genesis 4:1-8 is instructive. Here is the passage:

Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man." Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So, Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it." Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

In the direct aftermath of the Fall, Eve is hopeful that her firstborn Cain will be the "seed of the woman" that God predicted in the protoevangelium who will defeat Satan (Gen 3:15).<sup>9</sup> However, Moses is about to show that the Fall has had devastating consequences and that sinful man is going to make redemption a long way off and will ultimately require a monumental sacrifice by God. Instead of Cain being God's man to set things right, he is his own man, tempted by sin, and will be an instrument against

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<sup>9</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis*, vol. 1, *Creation and Fall (Genesis 1-11)*, An Expositional Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 210.

God's desire for humanity.

Both Cain and Abel bring "offerings" to the Lord, each from their respective lines of work. God accepted Abel's offering but did not "look with favor" on Cain's. Cain's offering is characterized as "some" of his fruits (Gen 4:3). However, in Genesis 4:4, Abel's is described as the fat portions (most pleasing to the smell and taste when burnt)<sup>10</sup> and given from his "firstfruits" (before he knew if the rest of the flock would be mature and provide for his needs).<sup>11</sup> It is clear that Abel gave his best to God in faith that God would continue to provide, while Cain's gift was merely "some" of his increase, likely showing a disrespect for and lack of trust in God. Certainly, the text is pointing out that Cain did not offer God his best compared to Abel.

Some details about what God expected in the offerings are left out of the narrative, but knowing the whole of revelation, it is likely that God wanted recognition of a sacrifice that required death of a substitute (sheep) instead of a bloodless offering (produce). This is in line with God having provided the skins of animals to cover Adam and Eve's nakedness after the Fall. Killing the animals would have been required to provide the coverings (Gen 3:21). Similarly, the Passover Lamb provides the same symbol that something must die to pay for sin, because sacrifice of a lamb was required to put blood on the doorposts (Exod 12:7). Likely, Adam had taught his sons to offer something to God in the pattern of a blood sacrifice.<sup>12</sup> Each of these occasions are important pointers to the fact that God would solve man's sin problem once and for all by shedding Jesus's innocent blood as a substitute for sinful humanity.<sup>13</sup> Cain and Abel's offerings should have both been animal sacrifices with blood to make God's message

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<sup>10</sup> Tom L. Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Canton, MI: Galaxy Software, 2021), s.v. "Genesis 4:1."

<sup>11</sup> John Phillips, *Exploring Genesis: An Expository Commentary, John Phillips Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001), 65.

<sup>12</sup> Boice, *Creation and Fall (Genesis 1-11)*, 254.

<sup>13</sup> Phillips, *Exploring Genesis*, 67.

clear.

Instead of repenting when God was displeased, Cain “was very angry.” The Hebrew *חרה* (*harah*) is strong and literally means that Cain “burned” with anger.<sup>14</sup> His face was “downcast” (Gen 4:5). The Hebrew *נָפַל*, (*napal*), literally “fall,” when applied to one’s countenance means Cain’s face was “fallen.” In other words, his anger and disappointment showed on his face.<sup>15</sup> He wanted God to accept his efforts as he thought best instead of him submitting to God’s standard.

It is at this moment that Cain’s mind needs to be renewed. Recall that there are two steps. First, someone must become acquainted with the Truth they need through God’s Word. As God would later say in 1 Corinthians 10:13, “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.” True to His future Word, God speaks to Cain to provide a way of escape.

Verses 6-7a say, “Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?” God confronts Cain about his emotions, asking him to consider why he feels anger and disappointment. Then, God tells Cain there is a way for him to obey God and be in right relationship with Him. He also tells Cain the consequence if he does not repent.

Verse 7b says, “But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you.” God tells Cain that the choice he has to submit to God’s Word or not is a critical one. If Cain does not obey, then “sin” is poised and ready to pounce on him like a predatory animal (the meaning of the Hebrew *רֹבֵץ* [*robets*]). Using the same word that describes Eve’s “desire” for her husband in Genesis 3:16, God says

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<sup>14</sup> BDB, 354.

<sup>15</sup> BDB, 656.

that sin desires to have Cain. Allen Ross argues convincingly that the meaning is that sin desires to exercise authority over Cain.<sup>16</sup>

God also gives Cain the way out: “but you must rule over it [sin].” This is the second step of mind renewal: submitting to the will of God instead of giving in to sin. In Romans 12:1-2, it is evident that we need the Holy Spirit’s power to be able to live as God would have us to. In this pre-Pentecost event, had Cain expressed faith and desire to follow God, the Holy Spirit would have empowered Cain to resist the temptation to sin. However, his choice was not to repent and trust God. Therefore, he sinned as God predicted in “sin is crouching at the door” with devastating consequences, the death of his brother.

This passage serves in the progress of revelation to emphasize that sin has broken humanity’s relationship with God and each other. Thus, God will have to do something immense to redeem His creation. It also serves at the individual level to show us that unless a person submits to God at the moment of temptation, his unrenewed mind can lead to terrible thinking and actions. The message to us who read it today is that Cain had a choice to choose to depend on God. We can also choose to submit our thinking to God and have the Holy Spirit help us obey Him.

### **Moses’s Meltdown, Numbers 11:1-33**

The account of Cain is one of the most tragic in the Bible. In the book of Numbers, God provides a story that shows a positive outcome of a person having his mind renewed from a terrible track of thinking. Instead of death, this example ends with a closer walk with God for the main character and provision for God’s people. Because the story contains intimate details of the character’s mindset and thinking throughout an extended crisis, it is helpful in showing precisely how God renews the mind of one of His

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<sup>16</sup> Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 158.



people. In fact, the remarkable exchange between God and Moses in this passage illuminates how our minds work and principles God uses to rescue us from ourselves. To mine the most from this passage regarding human thinking and mind renewal, let us first consider the context of Numbers 11.

### **Context of Numbers 11**

The Book of Exodus begins with God's people having been in slavery in Egypt for over four hundred years. The Israelites then escape Egypt through the power of God mightily displayed through Ten Plagues mediated through the leadership of Moses. After the Hebrews walked out of Egypt, Pharaoh changed his mind and pursued them, backing them up against the Red Sea. If God does not show up, Moses and the people knew, then they would be dead.

But God did show up! He put a permanent end to the threat of Egypt by letting His people walk through the parted Red Sea on dry land (Exod 14:29). He then covered the waters back over Pharaoh and his army, drowning them (Exod 15:19). This secures the permanent safety of the people from Egypt and punctuates God's ability to take care of His people against all odds.

Fast forward to Numbers 11. It takes place two weeks after the amazing display of the power of God on behalf of His people at the Red Sea. If anybody has seen the power of God demonstrated and has reason to trust God that He will provide for them, it is Moses and the Israelites. Yet, this is not the case.

### **The Death Spiral**

Instead, the people are complaining about a lack of variety in their food. God is miraculously providing manna (and double the amount on Friday, so they have enough

food over the Sabbath without gathering<sup>17</sup>), but they are not grateful. This circumstance starts a chain reaction of negative consequences in Moses's mind. In fact, the impact is so much that the great man of God who has witnessed God's power on his behalf more than any other in history actually becomes depressed and suicidal in a remarkably short amount of time. I have termed this thought pattern the "Death Spiral" because of where it leads. It is something much of humanity can identify with. The stages of a typical Death Spiral are seen clearly through the experience of Moses in Numbers 11 (see figure 1). Here they are:

**1. Troubling circumstance.** The people are complaining because they do not like manna. Verse 10 says, "Moses heard the people of every family wailing at the entrance to their tents." Likely they were gossiping and questioning Moses's leadership. It is this circumstance that kicks off the Death Spiral. Note that troubling circumstances are the stuff of life. Jesus Himself said, "In this world, you will have tribulation." (John 16:33). The circumstance of the people grumbling is completely outside of Moses's control.

**2. Emotional viewpoint (v. 10b).** The text says that Moses "was troubled." This is the Hebrew :פָּרַח, which means literally "restricted" or "tied up."<sup>18</sup> The people's displeasure and God's anger had Moses's stomach tied up in knots. A troubling circumstance can do that *if* we do not react with a renewed mind. This is the moment when Moses took the problem on himself instead of asking God and relying on Him to handle it through Moses. A sound mind focused on God's Truth is not guiding Moses at

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<sup>17</sup> K. A. Kitchen, "Manna," in *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. I Howard Marshall, et al., 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1996), 725.

<sup>18</sup> Kitchen, "Manna," 744.

this point. Instead, an anxious mind based on feelings is dominating.

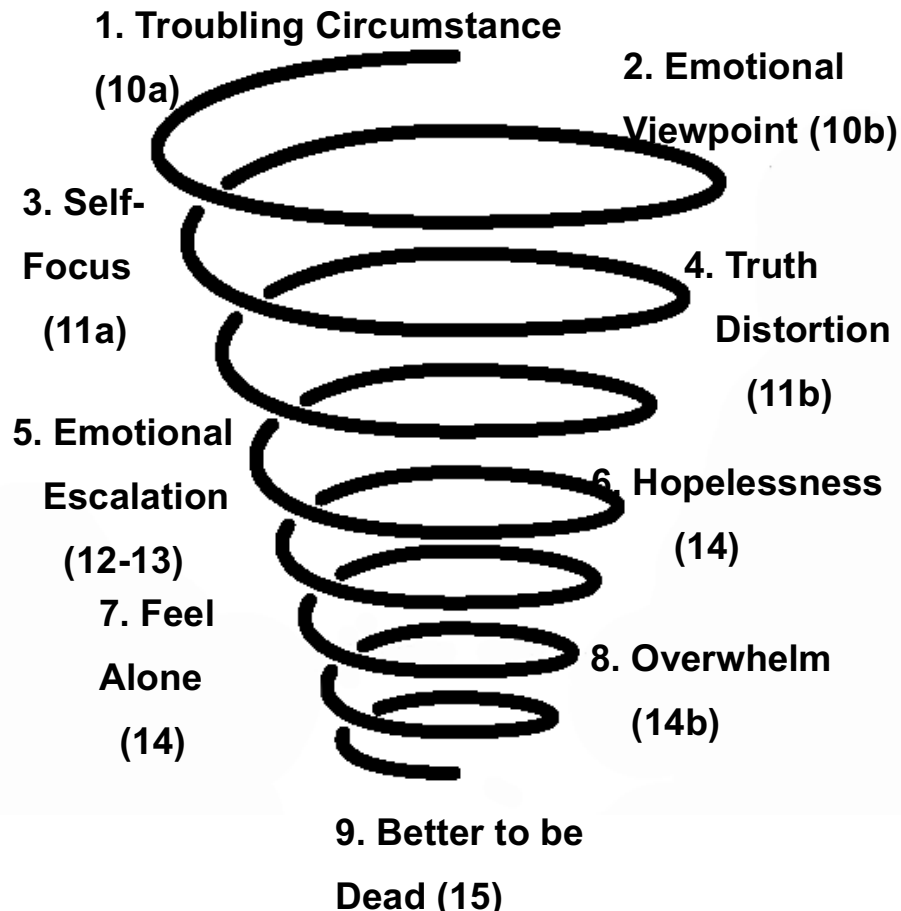


Figure 1. The death spiral

**3. Self-Focus (v. 11).** Seventeen times in verses 11-15, Moses references

himself as the bearer of the burden of the people's complaining (see the italics below):

He asked the Lord, "Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their ancestors? Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, 'Give us meat to eat!' I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how you are going to treat me, please go ahead and kill me—if I have found favor in your eyes—and do not let me face my own ruin."

This problem is all on Moses, according to him. An unrenewed, darkened mind interprets a problem as all on oneself. In reality, who has a problem? The people who are complaining? Yes. God? Yes. But does Moses really have a problem? No. Is God big enough to deal with his problems? Yes. Moses taking the problem on himself is counterproductive to solving the problem and certainly adds to Moses's discouragement.

**4. Truth distortion (v. 11b).** This is the crux of the matter for Moses. Recall that the catalyst for a renewed mind is the Truth of God's Word. But here, Moses is believing things that are not true. Note his words to God in verse 11b: "Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that put the burden of all these people on me?" God is not the source of Moses's trouble; rather, He is the solution to it! Secondly, God has not put the burden of "all these people" on Moses. It is a lie that the weight of leading the people and managing their expectations falls on Moses. God never put that burden on Moses, but he distorts the truth and assigns the responsibility to himself. This is often the case with the unrenewed mind. We can falsely take on burdens God never meant for us to carry.

**5. Emotional escalation (v. 12).** As Moses believes a lie that he is responsible for the burden of the people, his response turns hyperbolic, fearful, and emotional. Moses says, "Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their forefathers? Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, 'Give us meat to eat!'"

Moses's image here is his own exaggeration of his responsibility. He implies that God has made him the mother (full caretaker) for the Israelites. Note that God did *not* say, "carry them in your bosom" as Moses accuses God of. His fearful, emotional response is exaggerating his view of his responsibility as well as causing him to alienate himself from God and the people. Emotional escalation, a common response of an

unrenewed mind, serves only to heighten fear, separate us from God, and make the problem at hand seem bigger than it really is.

**6. Hopelessness (v. 14).** In verses 14 and 15, Moses progresses down the Death Spiral quickly. His hopelessness is evident in the words, “I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me.” This is a far cry from the man who stood against Pharaoh two weeks earlier as God’s spokesman saying, “Let my people go.”

Hope in the theological sense is to expect good things to happen in the future because we serve a God who has made promises and will keep them.<sup>19</sup> Moses here has lost his hope in God and despairs that he cannot bear his burden. The unrenewed mind has rejected the Truth that God has revealed, instead imagining a future without God’s strength to uphold His promises.

**7. Loneliness (v. 14).** The next level of the Death Spiral is the feeling that one is all alone. Moses says, “I cannot carry all these people by myself.” This is a true statement, but the burden is not on Moses by himself. Moses has never been alone in leading the people of God since the burning bush. The world, our flesh, and the devil seek to convince us that we are alone in our struggle. The unrenewed mind accepts this lie and feels alienated from God and from others who are meant (by God) to help.

**8. Overwhelm (v. 14b).** Hopeless and alone, Moses feels overwhelmed by it all. He claims, “the burden is too heavy for me.” This is the common plea of the unrenewed mind.

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<sup>19</sup> John Piper, “What Is Hope?,” *Desiring God*, April 6, 1986, YouTube video, 6:23, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/what-is-hope>.

**9. Better to be dead (v. 15).** The man of God, in his current state, says in verse 15: “If this is how you are going to treat me, please go ahead and kill me—if I have found favor in your eyes—and do not let me face my own ruin.” This is Moses, the most important, greatest servant of God, second only to Jesus, and perhaps Paul, in the entire canon of biblical heroes. The man who most clearly witnessed the awesome power of God up to this point in history only two weeks earlier is having suicidal thoughts because of his overwhelm at the grumblings of a hungry people.

The Death Spiral is complete, with Moses hitting rock bottom. What started as a troubling circumstance, firmly on God’s shoulders and within His power to handle, has devolved into Moses thinking that the only solution is death. Do not think you or someone you love cannot get there.<sup>20</sup>

### **But God . . .**

Moses’s darkened mind needs to be renewed, that is, restored to its original condition before the Fall. In this case, his specific fall at this moment is from trusting God to take care of him and the children of Israel. Just as this passage provides a vivid picture of what the journey down the Death Spiral looks like (and how fast it can happen), it also gives a clear antidote to the Death Spiral. It is actually quite simple. It is remembering the Truth that God is in control and submitting to God in His wisdom of how He wants to work through a problem. Here (Num 11:16-20) is how God brings Moses back from the brink, renewing Moses’s mind in the process:

The Lord said to Moses: “Bring me seventy of Israel’s elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Have them come to the tent of meeting, that they may stand there with you. I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take some of the power of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them. They will share the burden of the people with you so that you will not have to carry it alone. “Tell the people: ‘Consecrate yourselves in preparation for tomorrow, when you will eat meat. The Lord heard you when you wailed, “If only we had meat to

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<sup>20</sup> In my decade of pastoring, I have conducted three funerals of suicides, known of five friends who committed suicide, and heard of a dozen famous people, including several pastors, who took their own lives. That is a tragic loss that should not be.

eat! We were better off in Egypt!” Now the Lord will give you meat, and you will eat it. You will not eat it for just one day, or two days, or five, ten or twenty days, but for a whole month—until it comes out of your nostrils and you loathe it—because you have rejected the Lord, who is among you, and have wailed before him, saying, “Why did we ever leave Egypt?””

First, God gives Moses some human help. The burden of leading the people will be distributed among other leaders with God’s Spirit (v. 17) to settle disputes and give counsel. This is God’s way of taking the pressure of overstress off Moses.

But what Moses and the people really need is a right-sized view of God. That is what God proceeds to give them. God says that on the next day, not only will the people eat meat, they will eat it for thirty days (Num 11:19b). He says this in response to having heard them “wail” that they “were better off in Egypt!” (Num 11:18). The people have a darkened mind. They were not better off in Egypt under slavery. The people doubt God’s goodness and power to take care of them. So does Moses; consider verse 21,

But Moses said, “Here I am among six hundred thousand men on foot, and you say, ‘I will give them meat to eat for a whole month!’ Would they have enough if flocks and herds were slaughtered for them? Would they have enough if all the fish in the sea were caught for them?” The Lord answered Moses, “Is the Lord’s arm too short? Now you will see whether or not what I say will come true for you.”

Moses is still not trusting God that He can solve this problem. Like Peter looking at the waves instead of focusing on Jesus, Moses imagines that there are not enough resources (among the animals brought from Egypt or even in all the sea) to feed the people meat. He is looking at it from a human perspective of solving the problem. God’s rhetorical response is the question of the chapter and the key to a renewed mind: “Is the Lord’s arm too short?”

God is saying He is able to accomplish what He wants to. If He says He will provide meat for three million people in the desert (the likely total number of people based on six hundred thousand men),<sup>21</sup> then He has the power to bring it to pass. See verses 31 through 33:

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<sup>21</sup> Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible*, s.v. Numbers 11:16.

Now a wind went out from the Lord and drove quail in from the sea. It scattered them up to two cubits deep all around the camp, as far as a day's walk in any direction. All that day and night and all the next day the people went out and gathered quail. No one gathered less than ten homers. Then they spread them out all around the camp. But while the meat was still between their teeth and before it could be consumed, the anger of the Lord burned against the people, and he struck them with a severe plague.

God did deliver on His Word. Quail three feet deep for a twenty-mile radius landed in the camp.<sup>22</sup> The people gathered quail for two days. Nobody had less than fifty-eight gallons of birds!<sup>23</sup> Some commentators say that God blew the large number of quail in from off their migration route.<sup>24</sup>

To complete the theology of the passage, God did not allow the people to enjoy the meat that they had complained for. They had insulted His character. He wanted to teach them to keep the focus on Him and not merely the blessings He brings. Just as with Adam and Eve in the Garden, the people wanted the one thing they had not been given. God was teaching them that if even if they had meat—but did not have a relationship with Him, it would not be enough to satisfy their real need.<sup>25</sup>

At this point, Moses knew that God could provide for the people. Moses's mind is renewed. When we face a troubling circumstance, we need to remember "But God." What makes Moses's situation okay is that God is in the middle of it with him. What makes our bad situations okay is that God is with us also. Instead of going down the Death Spiral when our circumstances are troubling, we can remind ourselves of the truth of the outcome of Numbers 11 and choose to trust God instead of doubting. Moses goes forward, knowing again that God can be trusted. He also knows he should listen to God's voice rather than the grumblings of the people.

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<sup>22</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC, vol. 4 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1981), 109.

<sup>23</sup> Wenham, *Numbers*, 109.

<sup>24</sup> Wenham, *Numbers*, 109.

<sup>25</sup> Wenham, *Numbers*, 110.



## Full Life Thinking, Philippians 4:6-8

To complete our concise biblical theology of mind renewal, let us turn again to one of Paul's letters. In the book of Philippians, Paul's treatise on joy in the Christian life, Paul returns to the theme of how to think and what to think about. Romans was written in AD 57-59;<sup>26</sup> Paul wrote Philippians (from jail) in AD 67.<sup>27</sup> Thus, in Philippians, we have an even more mature perspective of Paul's command to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom 12:2).

### How to Think

Philippians 4:6-7 is a well-known promise, and for good reason. It succinctly provides a way to think that produces peace instead of worry. Consider each phrase: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

**1. Do not be anxious (v. 6).** Likely quoting the Sermon on the Mount, Paul affirms Jesus's words to not be anxious about *anything*. Anxiety has no place in the life of the people of God. *Μεριμνᾶτε* means "to be apprehensive, have anxiety, or be anxious."<sup>28</sup> Paul says not to be anxious about *anything*, big or small. Rather, he recommends a more productive way to engage our minds.

**2. Pray (v. 6).** "In every situation," Paul says, by prayer ("talking to God" and petition ("asking God for things")) bring our requests to God. As opposed to worrying (which Jesus said does not change anything), talk to God about your situation and ask Him to help.

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<sup>26</sup> Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 408.

<sup>27</sup> Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 555.

<sup>28</sup> BDAG, 632.

**3. Be thankful (v. 6).** Paul also points out that there is a specific attitude we should have when we bring our requests to God. “With thanksgiving” means that we should realize that God is the source of all we already have, and therefore, the right way to approach Him is with gratitude.

The result of such thinking and presenting our requests to God in prayer, Paul says, is peace. The Greek εἰρήνη is equivalent to Hebrew שָׁלוֹם (shalom). It means fulfillment. When you do not worry but bring your requests to God, in an attitude of gratitude, then the fulfillment of God will stand guard (φρουρέω) over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. This means that you will not have fear, worry, doubt, or confusion, but instead your heart and mind will be at peace.

Paul also goes on to define the type of peace that God gives as that which “passes understanding.” This means that it is peace that is beyond our human wisdom to get for ourselves. In other words, if you worry and handle your problems with your own wisdom, you will not be able to attain the same peace that God can get for you without worrying and asking for His help with gratitude. Human striving and wisdom will not get you that same peace because you will not have the “peace” of knowing that the God of the universe, all-wise, all-loving, and all-powerful is at work for your good.

Finally, note that Paul is specific that this kind of anxiety-free thinking and God-dependent prayer will provide peace to Christians’ “hearts” (καρδίας) and “minds” (νοήματα). The heart, biblically, is the center of one’s entire being: mind, will, emotions, and strength.<sup>29</sup> Thus, Paul says, you will have peace over your entire faculties. The Greek νόημα, refers to the intellect or thoughts.<sup>30</sup> Your thoughts will be peaceful (not anxiety-ridden). This is the mark of a renewed mind.

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<sup>29</sup> B. O. Banwell, “Heart” in *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. I. Howard Marshall et al., 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1996), 456.

<sup>30</sup> BDAG, 675.

## What to Think About

In addition to how to think, Paul also provides instructions about what to think about. Philippians 4:8 is both very specific but also intentionally broad: “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” First, consider the vastness of the command: the Greek ὅσα, translated “whatever” or “as many things that are,” is meant to open up the mind to the enormous number of things one could think about and still be in obedience to Paul’s command. He is being intentionally open-ended. There are countless things one can think about.<sup>31</sup>

The list of virtues to think about are similar to secular Greek lists of virtues.<sup>32</sup> Paul’s use of two words here that are not found anywhere else in the New Testament (“lovely” and “admirable”) suggest that Paul is encouraging us to look across human experience to find worthy things to think about.<sup>33</sup>

But Paul is also specific. In the pursuit of peace, there are specific characteristics we should focus our minds on. Here are the eight qualities that Christians should focus their minds on according to Paul. Whatever things are:

**1. True.** The Greek ἀληθῆ, means “pertaining to things that are truthful or honest”<sup>34</sup> as opposed to lies.

**2. Noble.** The word σεμνά means “worthy of respect/honor, noble.”<sup>35</sup> Used

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<sup>31</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Philippians*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 146.

<sup>32</sup> Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC, vol. 11 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 177.

<sup>33</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *Philippians*, IVP New Testament Commentary, vol. 11 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 177.

<sup>34</sup> BDAG, 43.

<sup>35</sup> BDAG, 919.

only three times in the New Testament, the other two occurrences are 1 Timothy 3:8 and Titus 2:2, both times describing the character of godly men. They are to be “worthy of respect.” Paul is urging us to think on respectable actions (as opposed to shameful).

**3. Right.** The Greek *δίκαια* means “right” or “just.”<sup>36</sup> It refers to what is right or just in the sight of God. Thinking “right” thoughts aids in putting conflicts into a godly perspective and considering other’s needs.

**4. Pure.** This word is *ἁγνά*, meaning “holy.” It refers to what is wholesome, not mixed with moral impurity.<sup>37</sup> God is holy; motives or actions can be pure. Setting one’s mind on things that are pure means thinking pure thoughts instead of sinful ones.

**5. Lovely.** The Greek word *προσφιλή*, a hapax legomena, means “lovely,” in the sense of being attractive or admirable. Hellenistically, it is not associated with morality at all, as the other words in Paul’s list are. Fee says, “It could refer to a Beethoven symphony as well as to the work of Mother Teresa among the poor of Calcutta; the former is lovely and enjoyable, the latter admirable as well as moral.”<sup>38</sup> I believe Paul is saying to think on beautiful things: sunsets, mountain vistas, works of art, etc. Thinking about such things renews the mind by reminding us a good God created beautiful things for us to enjoy, even in the midst of the brokenness so prevalent currently.

**6. Admirable.** *Εὐφημα*, another hapax, means “of good report” or “commendable.”<sup>39</sup> It means something positive worth talking about, like an unselfish

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<sup>36</sup> BDAG, 246.

<sup>37</sup> Robert P. Lightner, “Philippians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, vol. 2, *New Testament*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 664.

<sup>38</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 180.

<sup>39</sup> BDAG, 414.

gesture or a heroic action.

**7. Excellent.** The previous six terms were all adjectives, each started with the pronoun ὅσα (“whatever is”).<sup>40</sup> But after listing the six specific adjectives above, Paul adds a subjunctive clause: “if there is anything excellent or praiseworthy.” He is broadening his list, in essence saying, “these six adjectives I have listed are not the only things I want you to think on; it can be anything excellent or worthy of praise.”

Ἀρετὴ means “excellence of character;”<sup>41</sup> thus, it has a moral sense. Peter uses ἀρετὴ in both his letters to speak of God’s character (1 Pet 2:9; 2 Pet 1:3). To emphasize its moral sense, Wiersbe actually translates this first subjunctive phrase as “if anything possesses virtue” instead of “if anything is excellent.”<sup>42</sup> That is helpful. The main point is that Paul is saying that there are lots of things worth focusing on, not just a narrow list.

**8. Praiseworthy.** Finally, Paul says to consider “anything praiseworthy” (τις ἔπαινος). These are any thoughts, actions, or attitudes that is worthy of praise. These things will inspire us to imitate them.

If I might apply Paul’s words, there are two things that Paul would wholeheartedly endorse us focusing our thought life on. First, Jesus. There is no more fitting example of a human who personifies “whatsoever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy,” therefore we do well to focus our mind on Him. This is what the author of Hebrews had in mind in Hebrews 12:1b-3: “And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, *fixing our eyes on Jesus*, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and

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<sup>40</sup> The “is” comes from ἐστὶν stated once in the first phrase. It is understood in the next five instances.

<sup>41</sup> BDAG, 130.

<sup>42</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *Be Joyful (Phillipians): Even When Things Go Wrong, You Can Have Joy*, 2nd ed., BE Series Commentary (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2008), 147.

sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. *Consider him* who endured such opposition from sinners, *so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*”

Second, Scripture. Every page has stories, propositions, and principles that fit the description of holy, excellent, and praiseworthy things to focus our attention on. Even when God’s characters do not live up to this standard, God’s grace or justice in dealing with His people does.

Putting this into the context of “being transformed by the renewal of the mind,” allow me a few examples. The person who focuses on the opposite of these things (e.g., pornography, negative news headlines, divisive issues) will continually be tempted to sin, worry, or lose peace. But the person who dwells on positive examples, God’s care, and God’s promises will continually be inspired to think well.

### **Conclusion**

God has provided many instructions in His Word for how to renew our minds beyond the four foundational passages chosen here. In my Renew U course, for my ministry project, I taught ten key passages that illuminate principles of mind renewal, including the four foundational ones exegeted here. However, anyone who benefits from these ten Scriptures can rest assured that he or she can spend a lifetime finding more strategies for mind renewal in God’s Word.

After introducing Romans 12:1-2 as the foundational passage on biblical mind renewal, passages were addressed in canonical order. Teaching from Genesis to Revelation served to show the progress of revelation. Therefore, in the Old Testament, several of the passages were foundational narrative texts from the lives of biblical characters. Later, the passages were more didactic, most frequently from Paul’s letters. The result is a comprehensive (but not exhaustive) framework of a biblical theology of mind renewal which can be applied by anyone looking to “be transformed by the renewing of [his or her] mind” (Rom 12:1).

CHAPTER 3  
THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES RELATED  
TO RELIEVING DEPRESSION

**Introduction**

In 1928, Dr. Alexander Fleming discovered that the mold penicillin retarded the growth of Staphylococcus bacteria. By 1943, penicillin was being mass-manufactured and changed the game in preventing infection for the wounded in World War II. In 1947, it became available for civilians. Today, penicillin and similar antibiotics have saved the lives of well over 200 million people.<sup>1</sup> A simple medicine not discovered until thousands of years into recorded history has reduced the suffering or death of almost everyone on planet Earth. Let that sink in.

The benefits of penicillin are not mentioned in the Bible. Nor are the helpful effects of the automobile, computers, the internet, electricity, or refrigeration. But each of these discoveries or inventions *is* part of the Genesis 1:28 mandate God gave man to have dominion over the Earth. Because all truth is God's truth, God is the master designer of the knowledge and principles behind each of these and a million more fruitful advancements that help man to flourish on the earth. Anything we discover to be true is something God embedded in His creation. Another way to say this is that *all truth is God's truth*.

The fact that the laws of thermodynamics are not in Scripture (but were necessary to invent refrigeration) actually highlights the preeminence of Scripture. I imagine God thinking, *I will let them figure out the laws of thermodynamics themselves*

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<sup>1</sup> Nes Fircroft, "Everything You Need to Know about Penicillin," Nes Fircroft, last modified September 27, 2021, <https://www.nesfircroft.com/resources/blog/everything-you-need-to-know-about-penicillin/>.

*over time, but I really want to make clear My holiness, the gospel, and My love for them in giving Jesus. I will write that down and reveal it in special revelation.*

### **An Integrationist View**

After a studied and thoughtful analysis, I have maintained an integrated approach to Scripture and counseling philosophy. Among my master's at Dallas Seminary (ThM, 2002), twenty years of Spirit-led pastoral counseling, and my study of biblical counseling in the DEdMin program at Southern, I have come to appreciate the strengths of both biblical counseling and an integrated approach.

In my time at Southern, I have become more biblically focused and appreciate that God “has given us everything we need for life and godliness” (2 Pet 1:3). I have grown in awareness of the potential abuses of putting earthly “wisdom” on an even level with God’s Word. However, unless one’s conscience also objects to the use of penicillin or refrigeration (and mine does not), I believe strongly that it is also good and right that we humbly and with submission to Christ assimilate and apply the knowledge God allows us to learn via general revelation about mental health.

The truth of Scripture is always above any discovered counseling approach. If there are conflicts, Scripture is right. If there are ambiguities, God’s Word is true and “every man a liar” (Rom 3:4). But if discovered information is *not* in conflict with Scripture and is useful, I fully believe all truth is God’s truth and we are to use it to enable human flourishing (part of the good works we do to glorify God and provide for people) and to better make disciples in the world. In the realm of human thinking and brain function, there are discovered (not revealed) truths that help integrate what we know from the Bible with the nature of how God made our brains to work.

### **The Mind’s “Operating System”**

All God’s principles from Scripture about the renewal of the mind that were outlined in chapter 2 are God’s Truth about how to think. In essence, these are the



“software” that God uses to sanctify us. But there is another aspect of humanity that is also important to thinking well: the hardware that spiritual thoughts run on—our brains. Although not directly mentioned in Scripture, there are important discovered truths about how our brains work that can help a person seeking to avoid or battle depression. This chapter will summarize three important theoretical and practical aspects of brain health that have been discovered but are no less God’s truth. The three aspects I will illuminate in this chapter are: (1) an overview of basic brain function related to mood and depression, (2) the importance of serotonin and dopamine in maintaining a healthy mood and mindset, and (3) the detrimental effect of stress, rumination, and ANTs (Automatic Negative Thoughts) on serotonin. Each of these are helpful to understand when dealing with spiritual issues of renewing the mind of the person suffering from depression.

### **Basic Brain Function**

The brain is a marvelous electrical, chemical “machine” that, in spite of all that has been learned by science, is still mysterious in its workings. We are indeed “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps 139:14). For the purposes of understanding Paul’s command to “be transformed by the renewing of [our] minds” (Rom 12:2), there are some basic facts about how our brain works that are fundamental to best understand what can be happening in a brain when someone is depressed.

The brain operates via electrical and chemical transmitters. Our experience of emotions can ultimately be traced to the chemical reactions in neurons, the main cells in the brain that carry messages. Dopamine and serotonin, in particular, are two neurotransmitters that are responsible for positive feelings of joy, satisfaction, and happiness.

Lack of these chemical messengers can mediate feelings of disappointment, sadness, and depression. Our neurotransmitter system is designed by God this way. In fact, when we have sinned, placed our hope in something that does not deliver,

experienced a loss, or run our minds and bodies at their limit for too long a time, it is the depletion of these feel-good chemicals that force us to slow down, reflect on our situation, renew our hope in God (as opposed to earthly things that are not reliable), and allow our minds and bodies to recover.<sup>2</sup>

It is an awesome and mysterious electrochemical system that God made for relationship with Him and others. Most of the time, we are oblivious to the chemical workings going on in our brains that regulate our emotions. The brain normally self-regulates. Emotionally healthy people learn from childhood to cooperate with how they are feeling to understand themselves, their relationship with God and others, and how to follow Jesus in concert with their emotions. However, in this fallen world, everything has been broken relative to God's original intent. Healthy brain functioning is no exception. Sometimes a body is not producing enough serotonin, or perhaps it is not effectively using the serotonin it has. In my view, these conditions are like other psychosomatic issues such as diabetes (the body not regulating insulin production well) or hypothyroidism (the brain not producing enough thyroid hormone). Just as the lack of these chemicals can produce physical problems, so the lack of or improper transmission of neurotransmitters can produce emotional problems. It is a result of the Fall that our bodies sometimes do not function as God intended.

Thanks be to God, similar to the discovery of penicillin, the functions of vitamin D, vitamin B12, fish oil, and other minerals have been shown to aid movement of neurotransmitters in the brain (to areas that need them), promote the production of neurotransmitters, and regulate right levels and function of neurotransmitters.<sup>3</sup> In cases where a person is suffering long-term and has not been able to regulate their mood and

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<sup>2</sup> Archibald D. Hart, *Unmasking Male Depression: Recognizing the Root Causes of Many Problem Behaviors Such as Anger, Resentment, Abusiveness, Silence, Addictions, and Sexual Compulsiveness* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 112.

<sup>3</sup> Earl Henslin, *This Is Your Brain on Joy: A Revolutionary Program for Balancing Mood, Restoring Brain Health, and Nurturing Spiritual Growth* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011), 149.

outlook in natural and spiritual ways, it is valuable for him or her to investigate with a medical doctor prescribing bloodwork to see if any brain chemistry is out of balance.<sup>4</sup>

### **Serotonin and Dopamine**

Tommy Nelson, long-time pastor of Denton Bible Church in Denton, Texas, is a passionate preacher and gifted expositor. Nobody was more surprised than Pastor Nelson himself when he began to feel what he called an “emotionless, joyless black hole”<sup>5</sup> that “hijacked” him from an active ministry lifestyle he loved.<sup>6</sup> Nelson described that the stress of his full ministry schedule depleted his serotonin. His experience is extremely common.<sup>7</sup>

Here is what has been discovered just in the last thirty-five years about the brain. Dopamine and serotonin are both chemicals (amino acids) in the brain that contribute to good feelings. Their depletion can lead one to feel numb as Nelson experienced (and many others, including myself). As he discovered, they are often depleted by prolonged stress. SSRIs (Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors) treat depression by increasing levels of serotonin in the brain. SSRIs block the reabsorption (reuptake) of serotonin into neurons. This makes more serotonin available to improve transmission of messages between neurons.<sup>8</sup> That is the key to normalizing your neurotransmitter system if it has been depleted due to stress hormones (adrenaline and

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<sup>4</sup> I have had enough conversations with concerned faculty at Southern to know that this is sensitive territory for a Ministry Project in a biblical counseling school. Let me make clear that I am not qualified to tell someone what they need in the way of brain chemistry. However, I believe it would be wise to encourage someone with long-term depression to see a doctor just as it would be wise to encourage someone with a broken leg or diabetes to seek qualified medical help.

<sup>5</sup> Tommy Nelson, “A Christian Looks at Depression,” Dallas Theological Seminary, March 27, 2007, YouTube video, 31:51, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jXecSlwVBTQ>.

<sup>6</sup> Nelson, “A Christian Looks at Depression, 8:30.”

<sup>7</sup> Tommy Nelson’s experience mirrors my own.

<sup>8</sup> “Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs),” The Mayo Clinic, last modified September 17, 2019, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/in-depth/ssris/art-20044825>.

cortisol) flooding the brain for too long.<sup>9</sup>

Some may argue that natural processes can restore serotonin. That is true, but it may take a long time of healthy living (thinking well, sleeping well, and the removal of undue stress). In a depressed state, many are not able to wait healthily until the brain normalizes. If God has allowed us to discover the function of serotonin and the ability to speed the return to normal neurotransmitter function, it should be encouraged. The potential to reduce unproductive suffering and remove a person from the danger zone of harming himself or his relationships, in big ways and small, is good and right. However, medication alone is not a holistic solution.

### **ANTs Can Ruin a Picnic**

Here is where it gets really interesting. The way a person *thinks* can affect his or her brain chemistry. Specifically, rumination, obsessional thinking where someone repetitively replays thoughts over and over in his mind with a negative or pessimistic outlook,<sup>10</sup> can deplete serotonin.<sup>11</sup> Some people, through nature or nurture, are more prone to negative thoughts. Automatic Negative Thoughts (abbreviated ANTs) are when someone spontaneously thinks negative thoughts, usually about himself or his circumstances, over and over. Everyone is prone to negative thinking occasionally. But the person suffering with ANTs cannot recognize the truth and gets caught in a downward spiral of thinking. Just as worry is negative thoughts about the future, rumination and ANTs are negative thoughts about the past or present. They create stress and insomnia, both of which keep a brain from replenishing serotonin<sup>12</sup> in the way God intended our

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<sup>9</sup> Hart, *Unmasking Male Depression*, 132.

<sup>10</sup> G. R. VandenBos, ed., "Rumination," in *APA Dictionary of Psychology* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2007), 272.

<sup>11</sup> Hart, *Unmasking Male Depression*, 138.

<sup>12</sup> Hart, *Unmasking Male Depression*, 138.

bodies to work.

### **Conclusion**

Recall the analogy of spiritual God-centered, gospel-focused thinking being the “software” God uses to renew our minds, direct our paths, and lead our lives. But if the “hardware,” our brains, that the software is supposed to run on, is damaged or malfunctioning, then the software cannot run as designed.

The point of this chapter boils down to being aware of two concerns to watch out for people with depression. In addition to following biblical mind renewal principles, be sensitive to the needs of their “hardware,” the brain. Sometimes some people may need to reset their serotonin chemically. When someone is suffering, is in danger of harming themselves or their relationships, or has been struggling with depression he cannot shake with biblical mind renewal strategies for over two weeks, he should be encouraged to see his doctor. There should be shame in doing this.

The second concern is to still encourage someone to work on how he thinks, even if he gets a boost of serotonin with medicine. Without changing the way one thinks, learning how not to ruminate and how to combat ANTs, he or she will eventually end up in crisis again as he or she abuses their neurotransmitter system again in the future. Thankfully, God wrote down specific instructions, examples, and principles to help His people know how to think. Although Scripture does not explain the functions of dopamine and serotonin in the brain to healthy functioning, nor does it specifically tell us that *how* we think can affect our brain chemistry, which then affects how we think. But having discovered these truths, they highlight the importance of the biblical mind renewal principles that God has revealed.

## CHAPTER 4

### DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

My ministry project was to develop, facilitate, and assess an online biblical mind renewal resource to help relieve depression in Christians. This chapter outlines the implementation of my project and offers a detailed account of my project goals and results.

#### **Summary of Project Goals**

The purpose of my project was to develop a system for relieving depression by applying a biblical theology of mind renewal. I had four goals: (1) assess the mindset of a subject group composed of Christians with self-described depression symptoms twice (pre- and post-course); (2) develop a ten-session, Scripture-based mind renewal curriculum to equip depressed Christians to retrain their thought patterns in alignment with biblical principles and examples; (3) equip participants to use Scripture application, spiritual disciplines, and sound physiological principles to relieve depression in a weekly synchronous session and continuous virtual community group over social media; and (4) assess the impact of the online mind renewal resource by comparing the pre- and post-survey results.

#### **Project Preparation**

After gaining approval to teach a class from my church leadership and coordinating dates for best attendance, I began my project by recruiting participants starting on June 1, 2023, through church announcements from the stage as well as casting the net wide across my social media network. I was extremely pleased to find great interest and quickly had fifty committed participants.

During this recruitment time, I was also doing two other things. I was finalizing my survey instruments with input from my faculty supervisor Jeremy Pierre and a research consultant he recommended, Scott Moodie. As well, I was refining my curriculum to be true, accurate, relevant to my audience, compelling, and purposeful.<sup>1</sup> I got approval from my church's preaching and teaching leadership. I used them as my expert panel to rate and give feedback on my curriculum.<sup>2</sup> They gave valuable theological and practical input. With my lead pastor's help, I settled on ten one-hour sessions to be taught over five class days. This balanced providing enough time for material I desired to cover with keeping my audience engaged versus scattered to competing demands for their time.

I wrote the initial draft of the curriculum that became *Renew U: Biblical Mind Renewal to Beat the Blues* during my *Foundations of Teaching* course. For two months immediately before the class, I sharpened it, prioritizing foundational passages and concepts, weighing the needs of the students I was recruiting, and trimming it down to a powerful ten sessions of content.

### **Project Implementation**

I taught ten sessions in person and online from July 9 to August 13, 2023, on Sunday afternoons from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. I covered two one-hour sessions per class time. We took a short break in the middle for questions and fellowship. Then we started the next session. This allowed me to have more subject divisions without making the class stretch out in calendar duration. Also, since many of my participants took advantage of the online (and recorded) nature of the class, they were able to catch up on content in hour-long sectional chunks as opposed to having to dedicate two hours for a main idea.

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 5 for the complete *Renew U* curriculum.

<sup>2</sup> See appendix 3 for the Curriculum Evaluation Rubric I used with my church leadership panel.

The month after the class was reserved for survey analysis and write-up of conclusions.

### **Project Assessment: Evaluation against the Goals**

With the resources developed and taught, the next task was to assess how effective the online course was for participants. This section will explain and evaluate whether goals were met by analyzing the findings from the surveys.

#### **Goal 1: Assessment of Depression and Views about Depression**

As previously stated, four goals were essential to develop, implement, and assess the project. The first goal was to assess the mindset of the participants regarding their current state of mind, their initial views about depression, and the strategies they use to battle depressive thoughts. This required an assessment that would reliably surface this data.

To develop the assessment, I researched several mental health intake surveys. I also conferred with Professors Joseph Harrod and Jeremy Pierre, and research consultant Scott Moodie. I selected and adapted survey questions to ones that would most efficiently solicit the data relevant to my project.<sup>3</sup>

**Developing the pre-surveys.** The central need of my project was to have a reliable measure of the degree of depression currently experienced by participants so that I could determine if the biblical mind renewal curriculum made a difference in their condition after participating in the course.

Secondarily, I wanted to know what knowledge and skills from the course contributed to the difference. Thus, I had my own questions I desired to ask in addition to determining depression level. To accomplish both goals, I chose the Patient Health

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<sup>3</sup> Depression diagnostic questions on my Depression Causes and Cures Survey (DCCS) were adapted from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) intake assessments.



Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) as a proven, reliable measure of depression severity and also developed my own Depression Causes and Cures Survey (DCCS) to investigate what specific parts of the course were effective. Finally, I also wanted to see which avenues of help my participants were comfortable pursuing if they were feeling depression, before and after the training intervention. In other words, did they have less embarrassment and more knowledge about fruitful paths of help to pursue after the course?

**The PHQ-9.** The PHQ-9 is a multipurpose instrument for screening, diagnosing, monitoring, and measuring the severity of depression. Developed in the early 2000s, it is a commonly used intake form for mental health assessment.<sup>4</sup> I chose it as my method of assessing degree of depression upon entering and exiting the biblical mind renewal course for three reasons.

First, it is quick. It takes about five minutes to answer the straightforward questions. Second, it is holistic. Scores reveal a range of no to severe depression and cover a variety of symptoms including emotional, physical, and mental manifestations. Third, it is simple. Each of the answers to its nine questions range from 0 to 3. Each question is asking, within the last two weeks, how often the respondent has experienced one of nine symptoms. Zero is the answer for “Not at all,” 1 for “Several Days,” 2 for “More than Half the Days,” and 3 for “Nearly Every Day.” Adding the numbered responses for each of the nine questions yields a score. Total scores of 5, 10, 15, and 20 represent cut-off points for mild, moderate, moderately severe, and severe depression, respectively (see table 1).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> K. Kroenke, R. L. Spitzer, and J. B. Williams, “The PHQ-9: Validity of a Brief Depression Severity Measure,” *Journal of General Internal Medicine* 16, no. 9 (2001): 606.

<sup>5</sup> Kroenke, Spitzer, and Williams, “The PHQ-9: Validity of a Brief Depression Severity Measure,” 610.

Table 1. PHQ-9 survey scoring

Total Score	Depression Severity
0-4	None-Minimal
5-9	Mild
10-14	Moderate
15-20	Moderately Severe
20-27	Severe

Question 9, “Over the last two weeks, how often have you been bothered by thoughts that you would be better off dead or of hurting yourself in some way?” is a single screening question for suicide risk. A patient who answers 1, “Several Days,” or more to question 9 needs further assessment for suicide risk by an individual who is competent to assess the risk.<sup>6</sup> This was an important consideration for me, as my primary motivation is to help those who are hurting or in danger. If someone in the class needed acute help, I wanted this identified right away. This did prove to be important as will be shown later.

**The DCCS.** I learned in *Advanced Empirical Research* to be strategic in creating my survey instrument. I wanted to get as much information as I thought might be significant to answer the research questions I had while also keeping the length as short as possible to increase participation and honor participants’ time. The specific questions in the DCCS will be covered in the findings section later in this chapter.

## Goal 2: Developing the Curriculum

I had been developing the curriculum both before and throughout my doctoral

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<sup>6</sup> K. Kroenke and R. L. Spitzer, “The PHQ-9: A New Depression Diagnostic and Severity Measure,” *Psychiatric Annals* 32, no. 9 (2002): 509.

studies. I knew the focus of the curriculum would be Paul’s command to “be transformed by the renewing of [our] minds” in Romans 12:2. I wanted to explain exactly what Paul meant by the “renewal” of the mind. I wanted to be able to illustrate it clearly so that people would be able to practice it in everyday life. My approach was to illustrate heroes throughout the Bible who used God’s Word to renew their minds as well as provide some negative examples of characters who did not.

This structure lent itself well to follow a biblical theology of mind renewal from Genesis to Revelation. Obviously, to cover this in ten sessions, I had to hit only highlights. However, this also served to be able to issue a challenge that there are many more passages to discover in the future that give believers Truth to meditate on in the Bible. I ended up structuring the ten sessions around one or two key passages for each session.

I implemented many features I learned from my *Foundations of Teaching* course of the DEdMin program. Tactics from structuring lessons around a hook to building review and application time into each class helped make the curriculum effective.<sup>7</sup> See appendix 3 for the *Renew U* course curriculum. Table 2 below is a table of the sessions of *Renew U*, main passage taught, and learning outcome for each session.

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<sup>7</sup> I love how the DEdMin courses build on each other to help complete the ministry project. The *Foundations of Teaching* class and *Advanced Empirical Research* were strategic additions that gave great confidence to tackle the ministry project. Thank you to Dr. Haste and his team for a well-designed program structure that supports its purpose.

Table 2. Renew U course outline

#	Title	Main Passage	Learning Outcome
1	Biblical Mind Renewal	Romans 12:2	<i>Students will know the concept of biblical mind renewal. They will feel appreciation and gratitude that God has given a way to submit our thoughts to Him when we are struggling.</i>
2	Cain's Choice	Genesis 4:1-8	<i>Students will know Cain had a choice to focus on the goodness of God instead of his distressed interpretation of his circumstances. They will be challenged to choose to depend on God during discouraging circumstances.</i>
3	Moses's Meltdown	Numbers 11:1-21	<i>Students will know Moses's meltdown and the godly way to deal depressive thoughts in situations like Moses's. They will also be able to choose to trust God for comfort, mindset, and an improved outcome in similar situations as Moses.</i>
4	(Worship) Music Soothes the Savage	1 Samuel 16:14-23	<i>Students will know the effects of music that worships God and reinforces trust in Him to focus our minds on God's sufficiency for our problems.</i>
5	Elijah's Exhaustion	1 Kings 19:1-21	<i>Students will know the practical needs of the body and soul (food, rest, and Truth) that humans need to keep from being overwhelmed with stress. They will also be able to assess their own stress. Finally, they will be able to plan how to destress in a biblical way.</i>
6	Brain Health Matters	1 Kings 19:1-21 and Neuroscience	<i>Students will have a practical understanding of the importance of healthy brain functioning to good mental well-being.</i>
7	Seek First	Matthew 6:25-33	<i>Students will know Jesus's command to not worry but seek God's Kingdom first. They will know the Lord's promise that He provides what we need. They will be able to apply Matthew 6:33 to their circumstances.</i>
8	Take Thoughts Captive	2 Corinthians 10:3-6	<i>Students will understand the meaning of "take every thought captive to make it obey Christ" in context. They will be able to apply this command to their circumstances.</i>

#	Title	Main Passage	Learning Outcome
9	Give Thanks	Philippians 4:6-9	<i>Students will know how giving thanks to God helps us remember how good God is to us. They will be able to apply gratefulness as a strategy for contentment and peace. They will also know what Paul meant by “whatsoever things are. . . think on these things” and be able to apply this thinking as a discipline of mind renewal.</i>
10	Focus on the Future	Revelation 21-22	<i>Students will know that God has a wonderful and real future planned for believers after this life. They will know that no matter what challenges we face in this life, we are destined for a better home. They will be able to apply God’s provision of a future perfect home as a strategy for contentment and peace during current trials.</i>

Table 3 below contains links to the video recordings of each of the online classes.<sup>8</sup>

Table 3. Renew U online resource

Session	Typeable Link
Renew U Session 1 and 2, Mind Renewal, Cain’s Choice	<a href="https://bit.ly/RenewU1-2">https://bit.ly/RenewU1-2</a>
Renew U Session 3, Moses Meltdown	<a href="https://bit.ly/RenewU3">https://bit.ly/RenewU3</a>
Renew U Session 4, Worship Music Soothes the Savage	<a href="https://bit.ly/RenewU4">https://bit.ly/RenewU4</a>
Renew U, Session 5, Elijah’s Exhaustion	<a href="https://bit.ly/RenewU5">https://bit.ly/RenewU5</a>
Renew U Session 6, Brain Health Matters	<a href="https://bit.ly/RenewU6">https://bit.ly/RenewU6</a>

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<sup>8</sup> The second column contains typeable links, in case the reader is accessing this paper via hardcopy.

Session	Typeable Link
Renew U Session 7 and 8, Seek First and Take Thoughts Captive	<a href="https://bit.ly/3KZe61M">https://bit.ly/3KZe61M</a>
Renew U Session 9 and 10, Philippians 4 and Revelation 21	<a href="https://bit.ly/45PTMs1">https://bit.ly/45PTMs1</a>

### **Goal 3: Equipping Participants**

Fifty participants began and participated through some percentage of the course. Twenty-two completed the course as evidenced by their completion of both post surveys. I taught ten sessions live and online over five class days.

### **Goal 4: Assessing Effectiveness**

However, the real measure of success for the ministry project is whether participants are actually better equipped to battle depression and renew their minds than before the course. Let us turn to assess that now. For this, we will rely on survey results. First, I will share a deep dive on pre-survey results with commentary. Following that, we will similarly analyze corresponding post-survey results.

### **Pre-Survey Results from the PHQ-9**

Forty-three people completed the PHQ-9 pre-survey. Only 22 of them (52 percent) completed the entire course (and post-survey), but there is still value in understanding the initial state of the larger group of participants. The pre-survey total respondents represent Christians' attitudes and knowledge in general about depression.<sup>9</sup> So, how did they feel and what did they think before the course started?

### **Finding 1. Degree of Depression**

Using the PHQ-9 assessment criteria, 69.7 percent of my 43 initial respondents

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<sup>9</sup> One of the 43 respondents indicated he was not a Christian.

had mild or greater depression starting the course (see figure 2). At first glance, this could seem to be suspect because only 22 percent of Americans typically report being depressed at a snapshot in time. However, do not forget the circumstances under which these respondents were recruited.

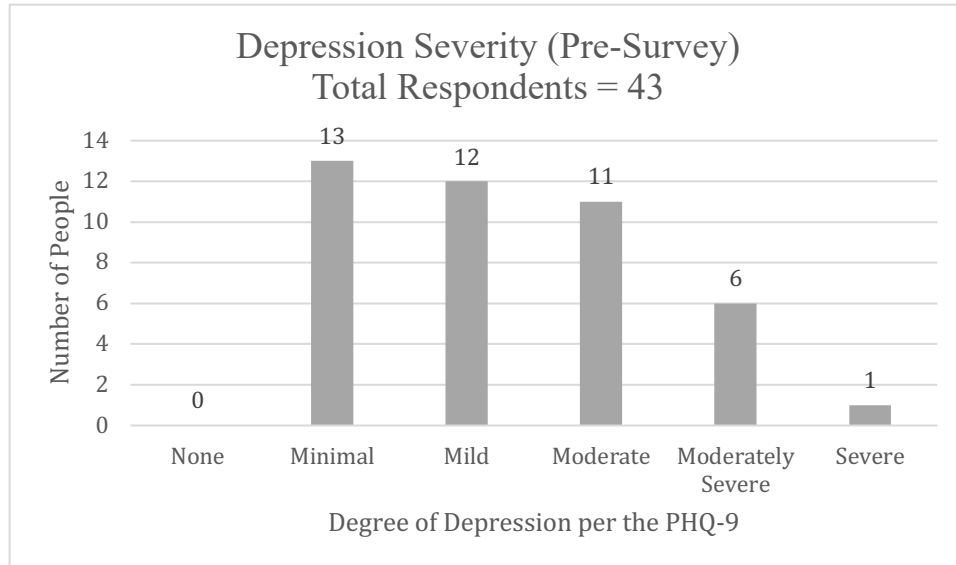


Figure 2. Depression severity of pre-survey respondents

The respondents who completed a survey were the people who responded to my church announcement or social media announcement (with a video of the church announcement embedded) in which I invited people to attend the course *Renew U: Biblical Mind Renewal to Beat the Blues*. Significantly, I shared a short testimony of how I had wrestled with depression in the past. Thus, all survey respondents were people who had some interest because they had a felt need to find solutions for depression. Thus, with approximately 70 percent entering the class with mild or greater depression severity, I count this as a significant indicator that I reached the right group to equip with biblical mind renewal.

## Finding 2. Most Common Symptoms of Depression

A benefit of administering the PHQ-9 to a large group is that I was able to determine particularly what depression symptoms the participant group were struggling with the most. Several insights are evident from figure 3 below.

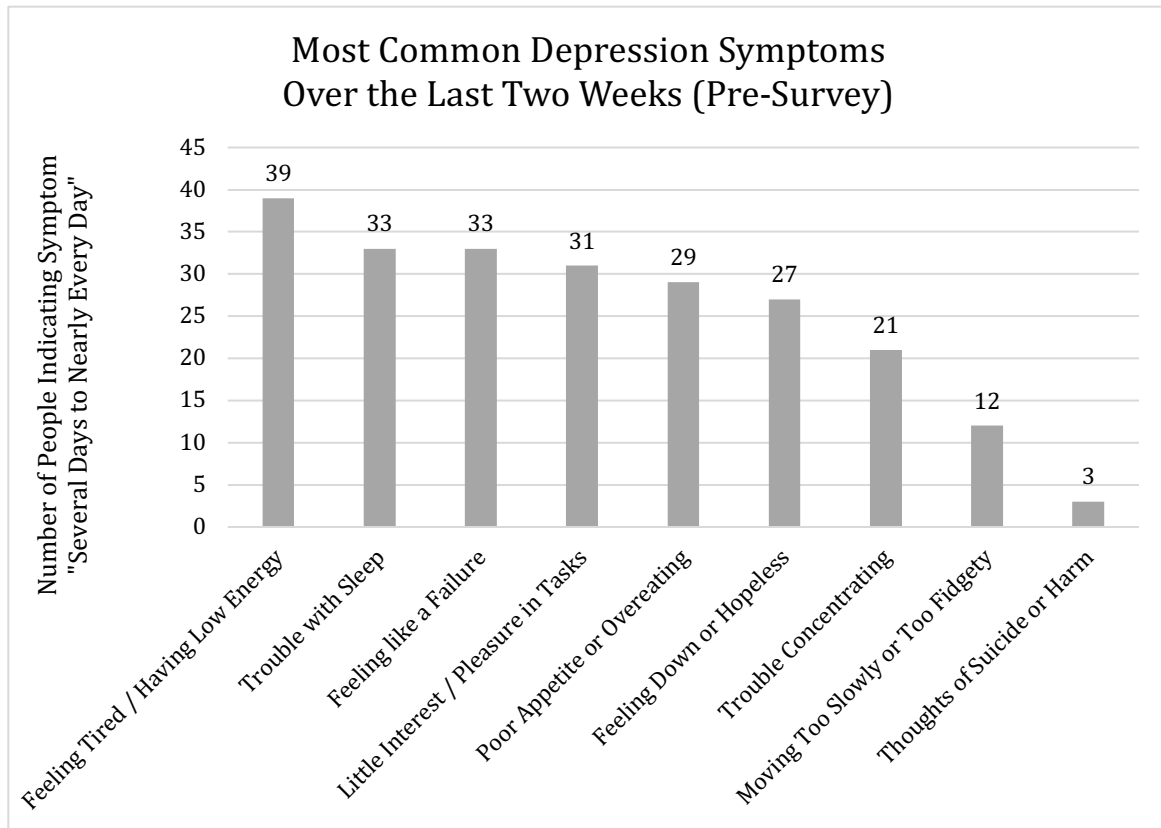


Figure 3. Histogram of most common depression symptoms (pre-survey)

First, the most common symptom, experienced by over 90 percent of respondents (39 out of 43), was fatigue/low energy. Seventy-seven percent reported trouble with sleeping (not sleeping well or sleeping too much). Likewise, 77 percent reported feeling like a failure or like they have let themselves or someone important to them down. Three other symptoms each plagued over 50 percent of the respondents, including having little interest in tasks, poor diet practices, and feeling down or hopeless.



As I planned my ministry project, I considered which biblical mind renewal passages might be a help to these specific symptoms. As one example, in Psalm 43, the Sons of Korah specifically addresses the feeling of hopelessness by reminding one's own soul to "put your hope in God" (Pss 42:5, 11; 43:5). Similarly, God points out the need for rest and proper food to Elijah in 1 Kings 19. Knowing the symptoms participants were struggling with helped me design the curriculum to meet them at their point of need.

In addition to knowing the most common symptoms, figure 4 provides insight on how frequently each symptom is experienced (see figure 4). There is a high occurrence of symptoms being experienced over half the time or nearly every day. The more orange and red in the chart below (the two right bars in each set), the more often participants are experiencing the represented symptom. This was a group experiencing a lot of pain.

### **Finding 3. People in Serious Need**

Finally, there is one more very important factor to notice from the PHQ-9 pre-survey. Three people out of the forty-three pre-survey respondents indicated that, over the last two weeks, they have been "bothered by thoughts that [they] would be better off dead or of hurting [themselves] in some way" several days, more than half the days, or nearly every day. It is recommended that anyone who answers "Several Days" or more to this diagnostic question needs further assessment for suicide risk by someone who is competent to assess the risk.

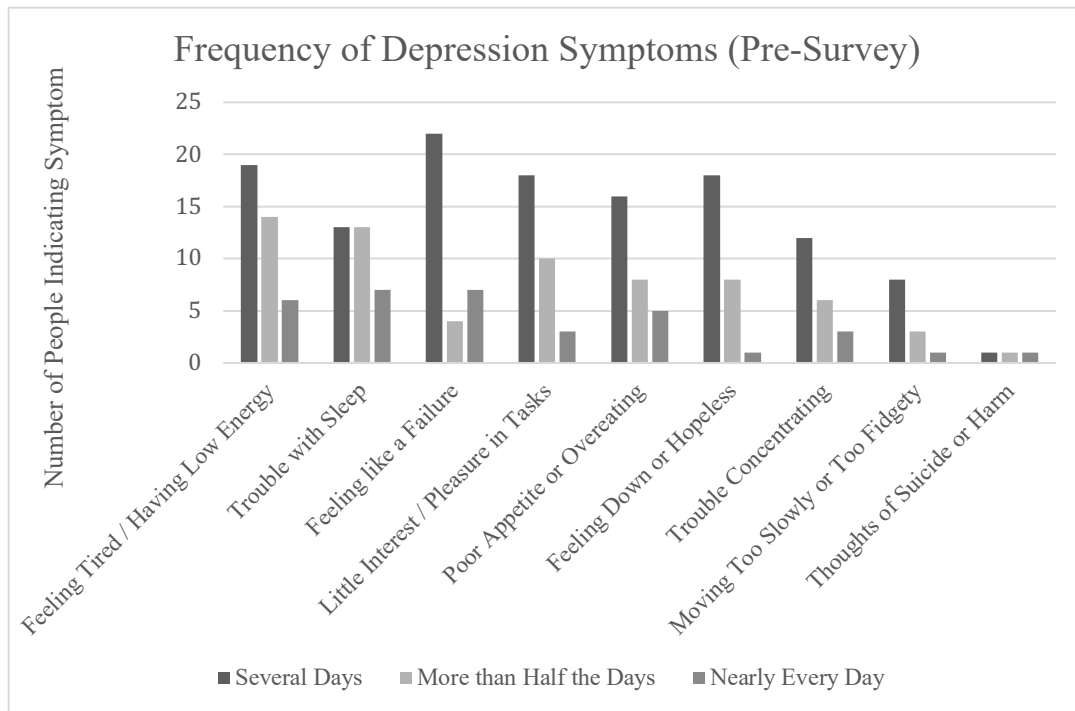


Figure 4. Frequency of depression symptoms (pre-survey)

One of these respondents emailed me right after they completed the survey. She shared that she was struggling. She said the survey made her realize the seriousness of her state. She had some special needs and was under the care of her mother and a doctor. I spoke with her on two occasions and spoke with her mother. Her mother was grateful for the information and assured me they would speak with her doctor immediately. My new friend in crisis participated in four of the ten class sessions. She shared openly in class about her struggles and was cared for by me and the rest of the class. She ultimately did not complete the course, but I have stayed in contact with her mother.

The other two respondents who gave concerning answers to question 9 have chosen to remain anonymous. In my first session, I shared my story of having felt “like dying” at one point several years ago and illustrated how I got help. I have also encouraged everyone each week that if they would like to talk to me privately that I was

glad to do so. Several people have spoken to me after each class and shared openly about some serious struggles. I have prayed for all participants throughout the class, especially those who are struggling.

### **Pre-Survey Results from the DCCS**

Thirty-eight people completed the DCCS pre-survey.<sup>10</sup> Only 22 of them (58 percent) completed the entire course (and post-survey), but there is still value in understanding the initial state of the larger group of starting participants. The pre-survey total respondents represent Christians' attitudes and knowledge in general about depression.<sup>11</sup> So, how did they feel and what did they think before the course started?

#### **Finding 1. Summary of Knowledge and Attitudes**

The reader will recall that using the PHQ-9 assessment criteria, 69.7 percent of the 43 initial respondents had mild or worse depression using that scientifically based and validated tool. However, asking the simple question, "How would you rate your outlook on life?" only 40 percent self-rated themselves as worse than Neutral (see figure 5). Even 40 percent (16 out of 40 respondents on this question) self-reporting as depressed is double the national average of 1 out of 5. This again confirms that I recruited the right group for my course.

My theory on why only 40 percent consider themselves depressed versus the PHQ-9 results (69.7 percent) is two-fold. First, I think people often do not have a clear insight into how they feel. A tool (the PHQ-9) that asks how you are sleeping, eating, concentrating, etc. over the last two weeks is more concrete than one's own general abstract assessment. Second, if you add in the "Neutral" responses, you get within 10

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<sup>10</sup> The DCCS survey was much longer and took about 25 minutes to complete. That explains the drop from 43 PHQ-9s completed to 38 DCCSs, even though they were requested on the same day.

<sup>11</sup> One of the 43 respondents indicated he was not a Christian.

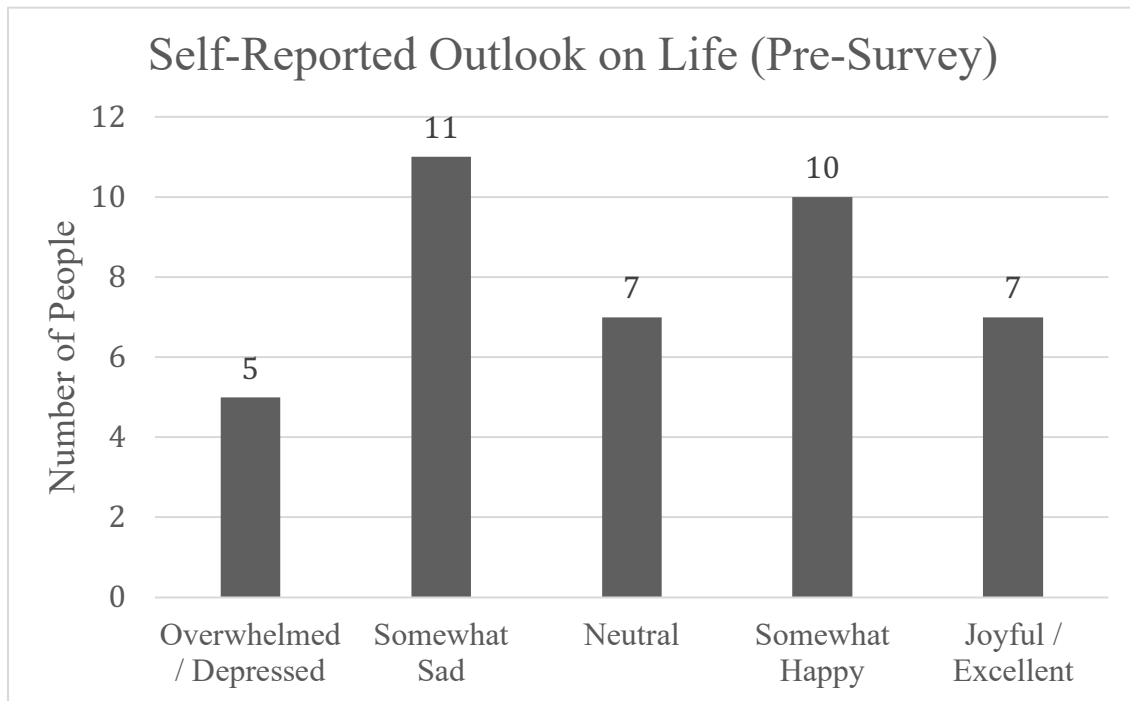


Figure 5. Self-reported outlook on life (pre-survey)

percent of the PHQ-9 assessment which included “Mild” depression. Thus, I believe the scales of the PHQ-9 and my simple one-question assessment overlap.

It is sobering that fully 12.5 percent of my class rated themselves as “Overwhelmed” and another almost third of the class (28 percent) were “Somewhat Sad.” Again, the class was made up of people who expressed an interest in learning about biblical mind renewal to “beat the blues.”

When asked “how often have you felt particularly low or down for more than 2 weeks in a row?,” 27 percent answered “Often” or “Almost Always” on a 5-point Likert scale (see figure 6). Let that sink in. Over one out of four in this group struggles with depression regularly or continuously. Over half (53.6 percent) of the respondents indicated that their mental outlook had hurt their relationships in the past month (see figure 7).

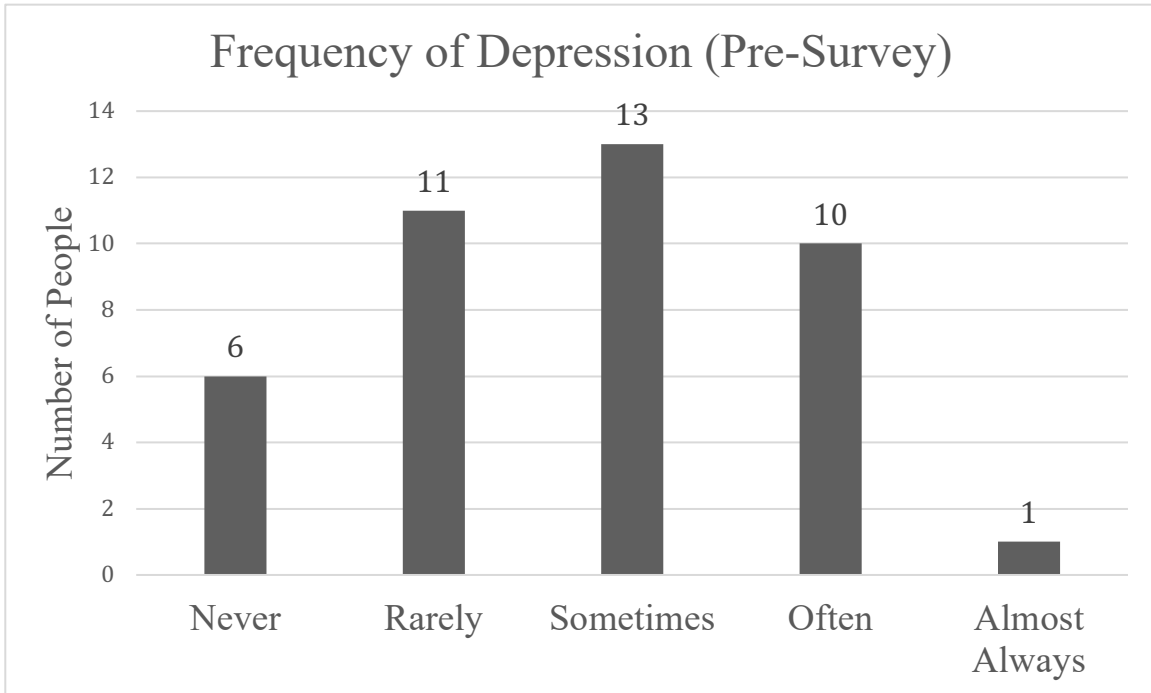


Figure 6. Frequency of depression (pre-survey)

Before the course, where would these Christians (who are mostly rural) go for trusted solutions to their depression? Almost four out of ten (39 percent) said they would first turn to Scripture and prayer for help if they “felt very sad or depressed.” This is encouraging! However, another one-third of Christians (31.7 percent) said their first choice would be to “Handle It Myself” (see figure 8). Unfortunately, almost half (46 percent) listed a medical doctor as their last resort. This could be a reflection of the cost of medical care, the stigma of needing mental health assistance, or a lack of recognition of physiological contributors to depression. This would be a worthy area for further research.

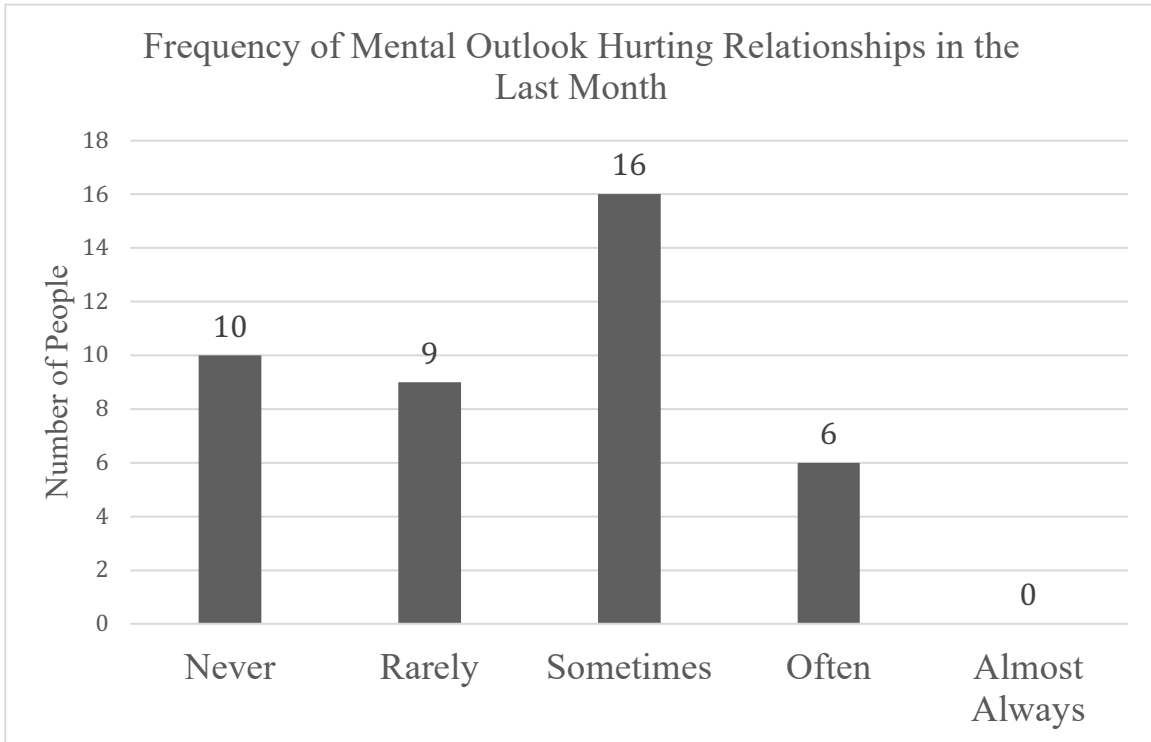


Figure 7. Frequency of mental outlook hurting relationships in the last month

Also significantly, rural Christians were twice as likely to prefer “Handle It Myself” versus seeing a pastor or counselor. This aligns with my experience as a pastor. I believe it is driven by the cost of counseling, availability of truly helpful counsel, and the stigma associated with pursuing help. These would all be areas worth further research.

Finally, among my group of rural Christians coming into the course, 54 percent felt that the primary cause of depression in their lives was due to circumstances that cause grief. Thirty-one percent attributed to depression primarily to thinking that is contrary to God’s will, and 15 percent to chemical imbalances (see figure 9). I have no reason to disagree with these. Each can be an influencer of depression, and the proportions seem reasonable.

I also asked what specific circumstances drove their most recent depression.

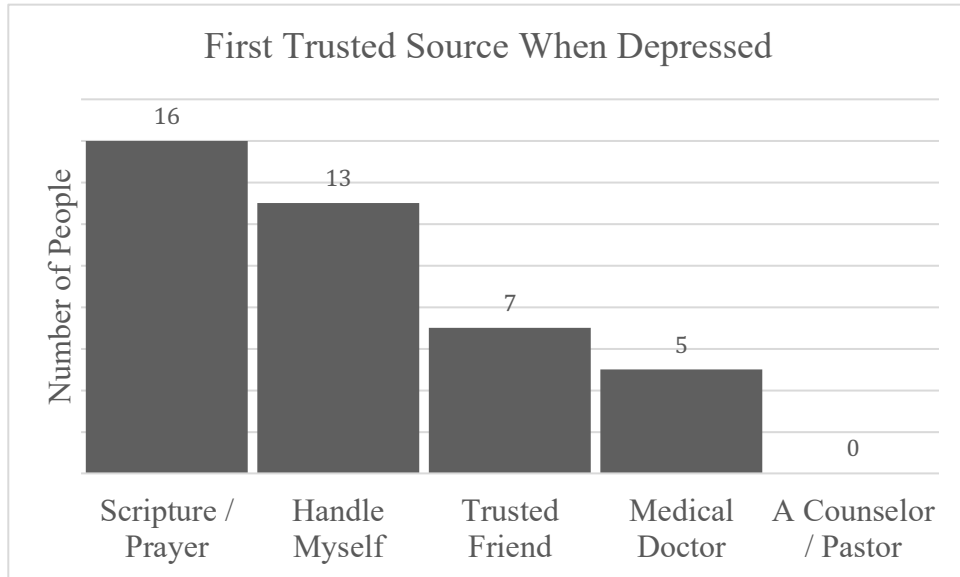


Figure 9. First trusted source when depressed (pre-survey)

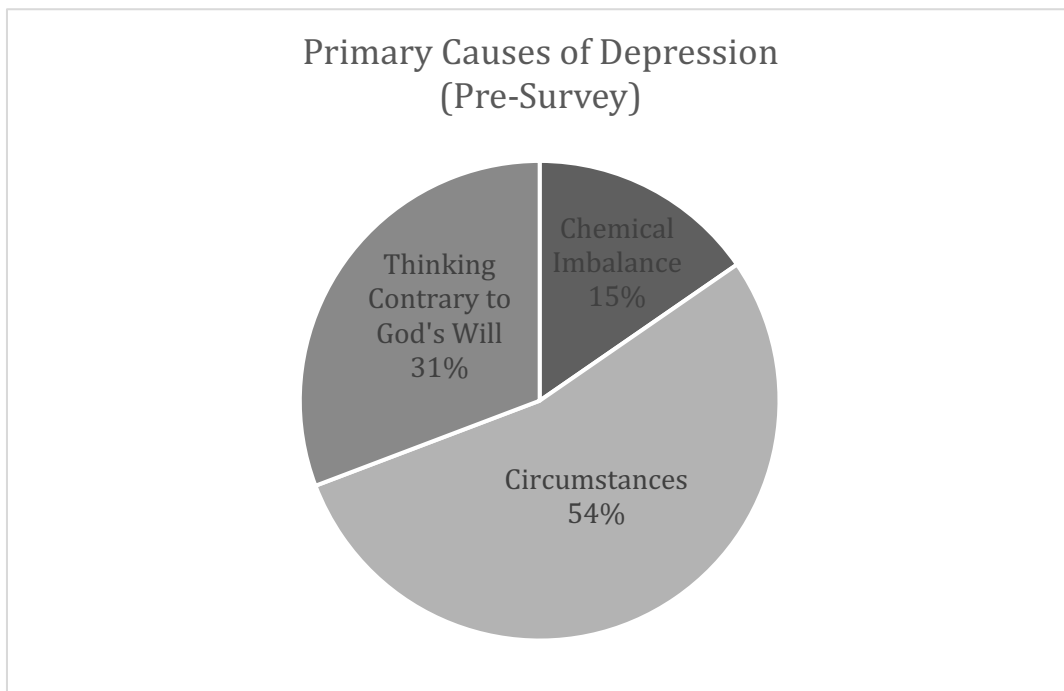


Figure 8. Primary causes of depression (pre-survey)

Those answers are illustrated in the word cloud in figure 10 (larger text illustrates repeated themes).



Figure 10. Word cloud of “Other Factors” leading to students’ depression

### Post-Survey Results from the PHQ-9

The analysis above provides a vivid picture of the pre-survey state of all the participants before they were taught a biblical theology of mind renewal. Six weeks later, with ten sessions emphasizing biblical truth, Scripture meditation, and God’s help available for His people who need their mind renewed, let us see if and how their mindsets, attitudes, or actions changed. What follows is a description of the conditions and contexts of the twenty-three participants who completed the course.

#### Finding 1. Degree of Depression

Twenty-three participants completed the post-survey. Nineteen of them attended at least 70 percent of the ten sessions.<sup>12</sup> Compared to figure 2 (Depression severity, pre-survey), it is evident below (see figure 11) that post-survey respondents have shifted much less severe in their depression, with none reporting moderately severe to severe depression on the PHQ-9 scale. In fact, the proportion of participants experiencing depression reduced to half compared to the group’s mindset at the start of the course (69.7 percent to 31.8 percent). If there were no paired t-test performed, this *could* be a good result. However, since we lost over twenty participants who did not finish the course or do the post-survey, it is possible that the most depressed participants did not

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<sup>12</sup> The post-survey results cited in the rest of this chapter will reference 19 to 23 respondents for any particular finding. The reason for the variability is sometimes due to some participants not answering every question. Additionally, in some cases, I left out the respondents who attended less than 70 percent of the sessions. I make that clear when this is the case.



finish the course or that other factors apart from the course could have shifted moods (e.g., what if the post-survey was completed right after payday). I bring this up to emphasize that the paired t-test result is imperative to determine if the course made a difference. The results of the t-test are covered in chapter 5, Evaluation of the Project. Until then, the most I can say is that the depression curve of post-survey participants did shift much less depressed than the normal curve of the pre-survey. Compare figure 2 and figure 11.

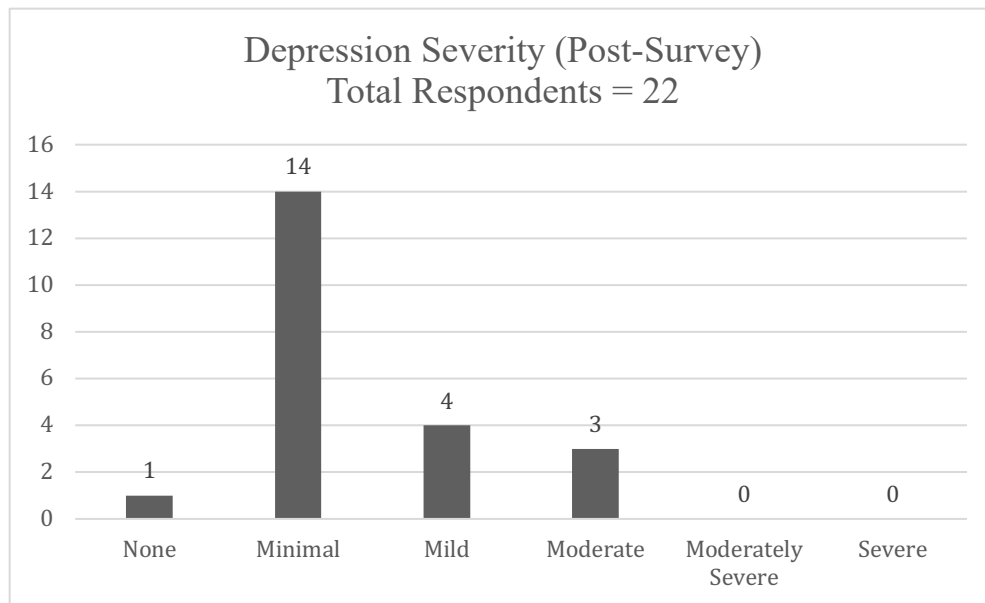


Figure 11. Depression severity (post-survey)

### **Finding 2. Frequency of Symptoms**

When asked after the *Renew U* course, “how often have you felt particularly low or down for more than 2 weeks in a row?,” 15 percent (4 out of 26 respondents) answered “Often” versus 27 percent answering “Often” or “Almost Always” before the course (compare figure 11 and figure 6). Again, the curve has shifted toward less frequency of depression.

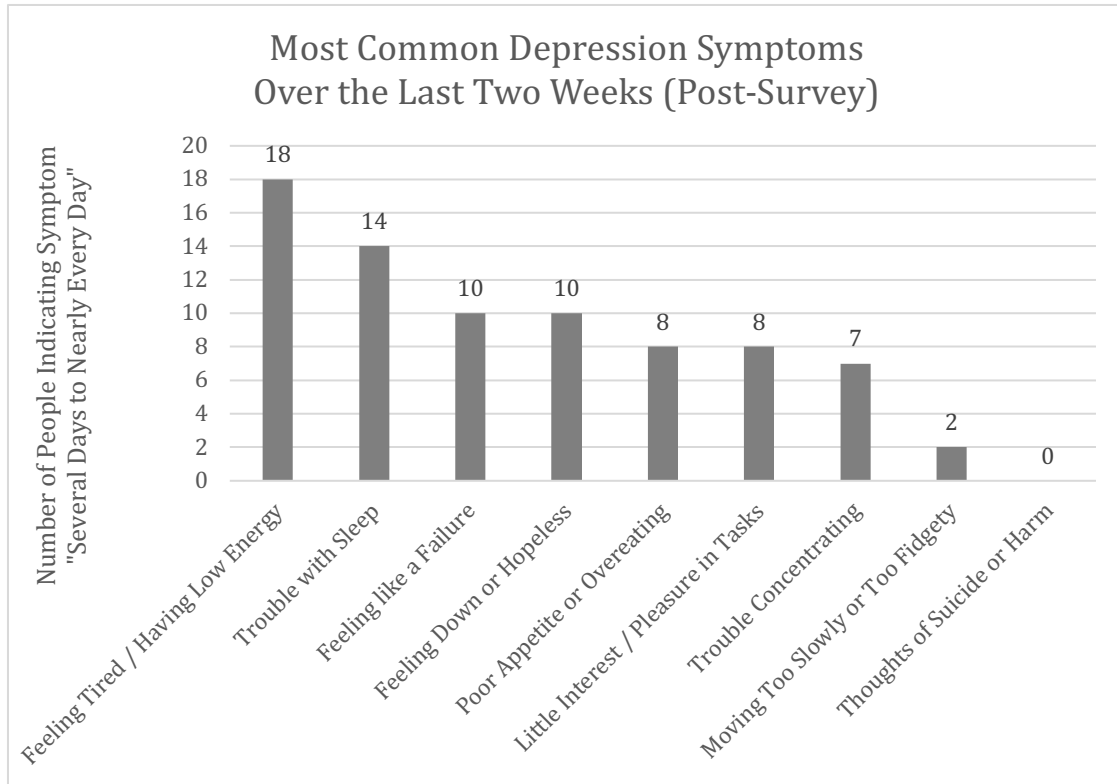


Figure 12. Histogram of most common depression symptoms (post-survey)

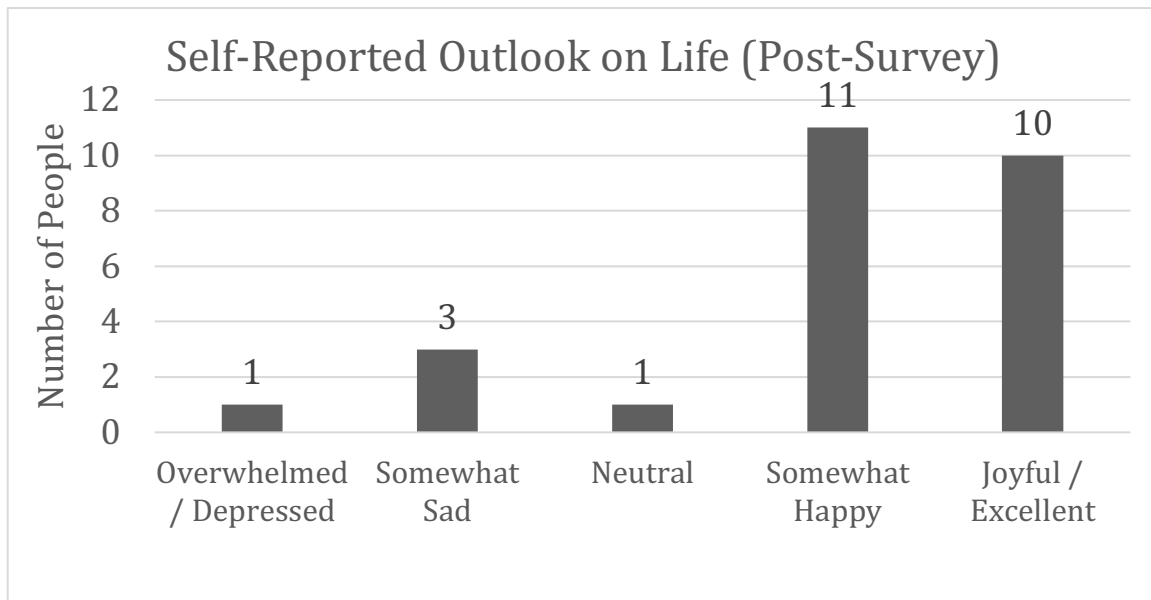


Figure 13. Self-reported outlook on life (post-survey)

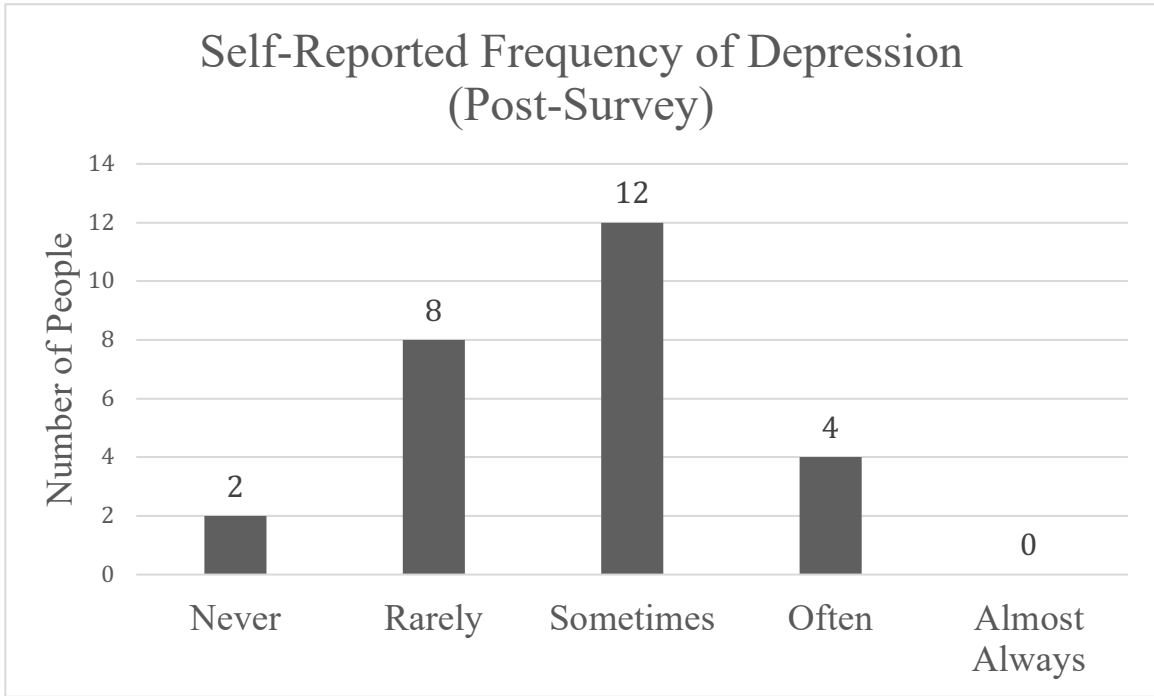


Figure 14. Self-reported frequency of depression (post-survey)

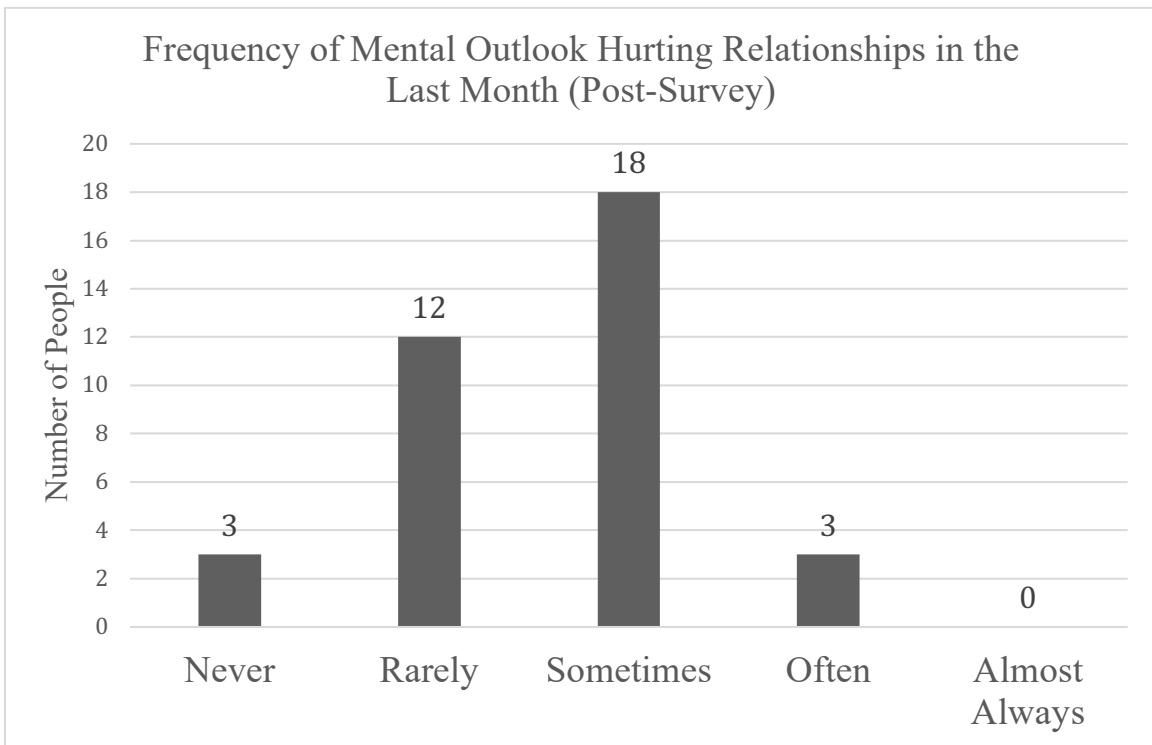


Figure 15. Frequency of mental outlook hurting relationships in the last month

Over one out of four in this group struggles with depression regularly or continuously. Over half (53.6 percent) of the respondents indicated that their mental outlook had hurt their relationships in the past month (see figure 15 above).

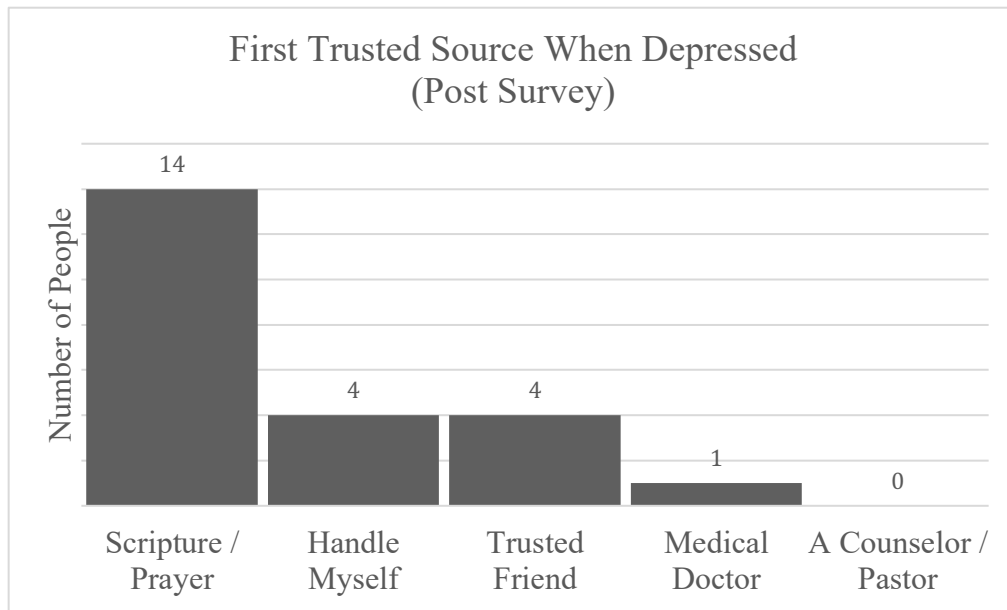


Figure 16. First trusted source when depressed (post-survey)

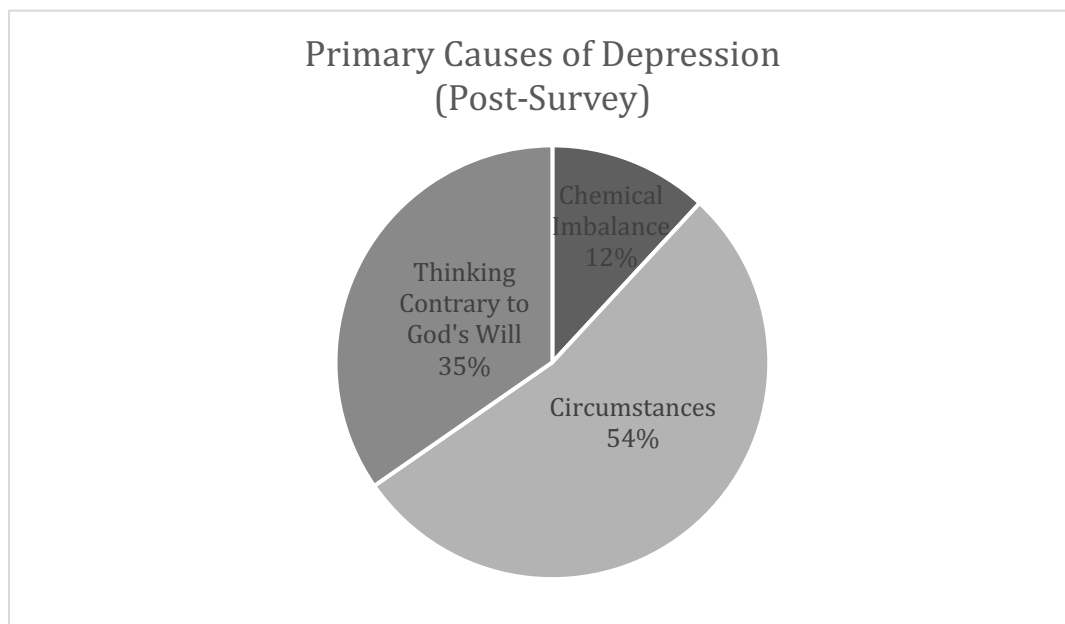


Figure 17. Primary causes of depression (post-survey)

One more finding worth noting is that the number of Scriptures that participants could recall in a crisis when needed went from an average of 4 pre-course to 8 post-course. Having “go-to Scriptures” were an emphasis in the course, and each passage that anchored a session was a Scripture that provided comfort, direction, or reminder of God’s power to help. We reviewed previous passages and the main point of it each week. I consider this 100 percent increase in available Scripture to meditate on one of the best outcomes of the curriculum.

### **Conclusion**

So far, many significant insights into the mindset, attitudes, and strategies of the participants in the Renew U course have been shared. The greatest question still remains. Was it the Renew U course (more specifically, having a robust theology of mind renewal) that made a difference for participants? We will explore that in the next chapter, Evaluation of the Project. Let us turn to that now.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

As I complete this significant journey, it is worth evaluating the value of my ministry project and how it might be improved to be more helpful to more people going forward. Here I will assess the purpose, goals, strengths, and weaknesses of the *Renew U* course and, particularly, its delivery as an online resource.

Then, I will outline possibilities for strengthening the curriculum based on my assessment and how to make it more accessible and sustainable to promote a biblical theology of mind renewal. Finally, I will reflect on the experience of teaching biblical mind renewal to my brothers and sisters in need.

#### **Evaluation of the Purpose**

My ministry project was to develop, teach, and assess an online biblical mind renewal curriculum to help relieve depression in Christians. This was in support of the purpose to develop a system for relieving depression by applying a biblical theology of mind renewal. This purpose is in line with the Great Commission. Teaching a biblical theology of mind renewal is an application of Jesus's command to "make disciples," specifically "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt 28:18-19). It is also obedience to "Study to show yourselves approved" (2 Tim 3:16-17), a form of meditating on God's Word ("Thy word have I hidden in my heart, that I may not sin against thee" [Ps 119]), and certainly direct adherence to Paul's command to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom 12:1-2).

This is a lofty goal that will make a meaningful and significant difference in the individual life of a participant and collectively in the body of Christ if Christians have

a biblically informed, Spirit-empowered, and systematic way to battle the factors of depression we all face. So, how successful was the project?

### **Evaluation of Project Goals**

Succeeding in my project depended on completing on four goals. The goals were: (1) to assess the initial mindset of a subject group composed of Christians with self-described depression symptoms via a pre-survey; (2) to develop a ten-session Scripture-based online mind renewal curriculum to equip depressed Christians to retrain their thought patterns in alignment with Scriptural principles and examples; (3) to equip participants to use Scripture, spiritual disciplines, and sound physiological principles to relieve depression in a weekly synchronous session and continuous virtual community group over social media; and (4) to evaluate the effectiveness of the online mind renewal resource by comparing the pre- and post- survey results.

#### **Goal 1**

The first goal was to assess the mindset of participants pre- and post-course for three primary reasons. First, I wanted to discover attitudes about and strategies for dealing with depression among Christians. Is there shame that hinders people from getting help? Is there a holistic understanding of why we get depressed? Do Christians have effective, biblical strategies to avoid and battle depression?

Second, I wanted to assess the effectiveness of my biblical mind renewal course, specifically whether the biblical mind renewal course I taught and encouraged students to apply “moved the needle” in helping relieve depression and move to healthier ways of coping with depressive thoughts.

Success was measured by two metrics. First, regarding attendance, I wanted to have at least twenty people who attended at least seven out of ten of the sessions and completed the pre- and post-surveys. I ended up with 23 participants who completed both the pre-and post-surveys. Those 23 had an average attendance of 9 out of the 10 sessions.

I was very pleased with this result. This healthy participation provided a comprehensive data set to evaluate the curriculum. It also meant that the content, delivery, and Christian community with others engaged many of my brothers and sisters well enough that they persevered until the end.

The second major metric to measure the success of my first goal is the result of a paired sample t-test directly on the PHQ-9 Depression Severity score. There is a significant difference ( $t_{(19)} = 3.92, p < .05$ ) in the participants pre- and post- PHQ-9 scores.<sup>1</sup> The null hypothesis (that the pre- and post- score variations are due to sampling error or individual differences) value for t would be 2.09; thus, there is a strong improvement in depression severity. Overall, the grouped averaged in the “Mild Depression” range pre-course (the average was 8.75 with 5-9 ranking as “Mild Severity” and moved to a “None-Minimal” amount of depression after the course) averaging 3.75 with 0-4 as the “None-Minimal” range.

Additionally, there was a tighter variance in scores in the post-survey (variance of 29.78 pre-survey vs. 6.93 post-survey). This indicates that the common curriculum became a shared source of knowledge that informed and equipped people with strategies to control their depression. Perhaps most significant to me personally, all seven participants who initially scored from “Mild” to “Severe” depression improved by the end of the course. Five of them got remarkably better, moving to “None-Minimal” on the PHQ-9 scale. This is clear and compelling evidence that teaching a theology of biblical mind renewal equips believers to overcome depressive thoughts.

## **Goal 2**

The second goal was to develop a ten-session Scripture-based mind renewal curriculum to equip depressed Christians to retrain their thought patterns in alignment

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<sup>1</sup> The difference in the 23 surveys referenced as completed earlier and 19 degrees of freedom in my t-test calculation are due to removing respondents who attended less than 70 percent of the sessions for the t-test.



with Scripture. This goal was to be measured by an expert panel who would utilize a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, accuracy, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum. This goal was to be considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. This goal was met.

I actually had two evaluations of the curriculum. Dr. Mathew Haste gave me a rubric grade of 94 percent when he scored my *Renew U* curriculum in *Foundations of Teaching* in December 2022. I also used the top preaching and teaching leadership at my church as my expert panel. With some revisions, I scored 100 percent of my curriculum meeting or exceeding the sufficient level.

### **Goal 3**

The third goal was to equip participants to use Scripture and spiritual disciplines to relieve depression in a weekly session and continuous social media community group. This goal was to be measured by having at least fifteen people complete 70 percent of the ten-session course. Twenty-three people completed the course and post-surveys. Nineteen of those indicated they attended synchronously or caught up on content asynchronously to consume seventy percent or more of the content. Most of them indicated they completed one hundred percent of the course.

### **Goal 4**

The fourth goal was to evaluate the effectiveness of the online resource in relieving depression. This goal was to be measured by comparing the results of pre- and post-surveys (the PHQ-9 and the Depression Causes and Cures Survey) to assess the participants' levels of knowledge, daily application, and motivation to meditate on biblical principles and course content to improve mood, outlook, and hope in God. This goal was to be considered successfully met when a t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey

scores for the respondents who self-identified as depressed. As noted previously, this was accomplished with the significant difference, ( $t_{(19)} = 3.92, p < .05$ ). The critical t value to reject the null hypothesis (i.e., the reduction in depression severity is due to random chance or sampling error) was 2.09.

Beyond several positive changes in metrics (outlined in chapter 4), I would also like to share some verbatims on the anonymous post survey. Here are some meaningful comments:

This class was extremely helpful to me. I have made improvements in my daily food choices, increased my water intake and cut back on wine. I am less stressed and overall in a better place both physically and mentally.

I learned a lot and have gained important resources. Thank you for making a difference in my life.

I really enjoyed your class! It was relevant and full of practical information that I could apply to my daily walk with the Lord. A lot of information I knew in my head but didn't really apply it in my daily life. The biggest thing has been revisiting the act of worship as a daily exercise, not just on Sunday!

David, I have been more engaged in the class than I expected to be. You did a great job, and I am glad I could be a part of it.

I was pleasantly surprised that I was able to grasp that worship songs/Scripture could make a difference. I enjoyed the class.

Your description of the impact of serotonin was eye-opening for me. It brought back to mind the most difficult time I had with depression (age 25) that now seems certain to have been greatly influenced by low serotonin. After almost a year of full-time work, full-time college, and taking care of a baby during the night, I was overwhelmed and hopeless to the point of dropping out of college for a year. For over 25 years, I have rarely slept more than two hours without a bathroom trip. I plan to ask my doctor about changing my anti-depressant meds to include serotonin. Thanks for a very important and well-done series.

These sessions have been helpful in how to live a victorious Christian life. The material will be beneficial for church congregants and others who are struggling emotionally. I wish this had been available 40+ years ago during a difficult season in my life. It is my prayer that you will find many avenues to communicate this vital information. Blessings to you and your family.

Thank you for being open about your own experiences and shedding light on biblical characters. The sessions were practical and helpful. The visual of the two spirals stick with me.<sup>2</sup>

A little more insight—I selected “generally happy” and think about the future “about half the time” simply because there is sooo much “life” going on right now (aging/ill mom, difficult marriage, kid in his senior year, etc). I believe wholeheartedly God is in control. What I struggle with is the need to think on that first (in the moment) when the fifth unexpected thing of the day comes out of left field. Thank you for giving me more tools!

I would be interested in some more external resources such as referrals to a reputable Christian psychiatrist.

Since the class started, I have started to listen to Scripture daily.

These comments are humbling to me and prove to me that my project was successful in the eyes of those whom I wanted to help.

### **Weaknesses**

There are a few weaknesses that kept the course from being as effective as I envisioned. I imagined that the group would really bond together and engage each other with encouragement. I envisioned that after introductions and my demonstrated vulnerability that everyone would openly share with each other. I thought the group would function as a support group for each other.

However, there was almost no social (chat) interaction. We did not become a community helping each other, although many felt a very strong connection to me. I believe there a few reasons for this. First, we had an odd mix of in-person and online participants. My original goal was to conduct it *only* online, but so many of my participants (about half) signed up through my church. The leadership encouraged me to have it at church to keep them engaged. This worked very well for the in-person participants; however, it was hard to connect with the people online when I had a live audience in the room.

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<sup>2</sup> The commenter is referring to “The Death Spiral” and “The Life Spiral” I developed in the session about Moses in Numbers 11:1-24.

On one class day when I was out of town, we only met virtually, and the online interaction was much greater (like a normal Zoom or Teams meeting when all participants are remote). I believe a hybrid format is worse than all in-person or all online. It would be better to focus on one audience all together.

I also think that the nature of the subject (depression) means people are less energetic to share, more ashamed to speak up and generally not in a mood to “put themselves out there.” I think a smaller class would allow a facilitator to encourage more class interaction.

The other weakness was that it was always a race to be prepared to teach each week. I have a full-time job and am in a busy season at work. Although I always had about 85 percent of my teaching lesson complete, I was often scrambling to make the slides, strengthen the illustrations, nail the exegesis, or personalize the application right up until time to start teaching. As such, that last 10 percent of effectiveness was often lacking versus what I know I am capable of. I have been out of the habit of weekly teaching for a while, and each week I felt I could have done better.

I would like to make this content available as a YouTube series and audio podcast, but I think it needs that last 10 percent of polish to be effective as a purely online resource. For those coming after me, start earlier and work all the way along on your teaching content. I needed more time to marinate with my content.

### **Strengths**

There are some things I think I did very well. First, I am really pleased with the interest I had in the class. I believe I struck the right balance in understanding and appealing to the depressed person’s felt need and making each class have a meaningful takeaway. I received so many positive comments about the insights I provided from Scripture, a layman’s overview of relevant neuroscience, and actionable application to anyone’s life. I love teaching from the Bible and making it real for others.

My passion and genuine heart for believers to overcome depression came through and was contagious. I prayed for the group, kept in touch with them during the week, and walked with them as they allowed. I think this life-on-life aspect of the group (even virtually) made me fast and close friends with some people who needed a friend. Praying for your group each day helps you prepare to teach what they need and to show up whole-hearted, ready to pour out.

Here is a final very practical issue that I consider a strength: limiting the number of class days by conducting two sessions per day with a short fellowship break (with provided snacks) in between. In my Ministry Project preparation, I had read of many who lamented that they had a long class and ended up with a poor completion rate. I agonized over the right amount of time to meet each week, how many weeks to meet, and how much content was the right amount of content to produce effective life change. I settled on ten one-hour sessions over five class days. Based on the experience of others, I believed every week longer was a potential hit to the number of people who would complete the course.

As well, if I kept people for two hours, I made the most of their investment to drive or log in. I kept the class time tight, tried to make each session a stand-alone hit, and worked hard to provide value with each lesson. Also, because my project was about creating an online resource, people who missed a session could watch it on their own and catch up before the next week. I published links to the recordings the day after the session and urged people to watch it before the next session if they had missed.

### **Ways to Improve the Project**

There are several ways my project could be improved to add more research value as well as provide more practical help to participants. First, including control groups during my treatment would have helped narrow down the precise factors within my course that improved the severity of depression in students. A control group of

participants with no treatment (but pre-and post-surveys given at the same time interval) would show whether time itself was helping (or hurting) depression severity. Similarly, a control group of participants who simply met together for community and general encouragement versus the biblical mind renewal content would separate the Hawthorne effect from the impact of the specific curriculum.

Next, instead of relying solely on a paired t-test to measure improvement in depression severity, it would have been insightful to have more qualitative measures. Pre-and post-interviews/testimonies with participants and even their spouses or close friends or family could have helped determine which aspects of the class had the most positive impact.

One of the best ways to improve my project's usefulness to others is to make it scalable. I believe there is a massive need across America for Christians to develop a biblical theology of mind renewal. I am planning in 2024 to release the content in a YouTube series and an audio podcast. I would like to record the sessions and make them free along with slide decks. As I previously said, they need a little more polish, but the good news is that the polish is all they need now. Most of the content is ready to go.

The other way to make it scalable is that there should be a shepherd-hearted facilitator. I have often done this one-on-one with someone the Lord brought into my path. I would like to multiply my influence by being able to bridge time and space constraints with a scalable online resource.

### **Reflection on My Project**

Completing this work has been a great reminder of how far I have come personally in "changing how I think." These truths have transformed my life to remember that God is in control, Jesus's yoke is easy, and His burden is light (Matt 11:30). When I feel the weight of the world on my shoulders, I am not living out of a renewed mind that trusts God. These days I quickly "take my thoughts captive to make them obey Christ" (2

Cor 10:3-6).

At the beginning of *Renew U*, I shared that Paul commanded that we are to “be transformed by the renewing of [our] minds” (Rom 12:2). The “working definition” of the “renewal of the mind” (after some careful exegesis) is “*restoring our thinking to its pre-fallen condition where we saw accurately and clearly, trusted God, believed the Truth, and walked in light of it.*” This includes: (1) meditating on God’s Word, (2) trusting the Lord instead of ourselves, (3) praying to bring our thoughts into alignment with God’s, and (4) submitting our thinking to the rule of Christ. Renewing one’s mind is not something one does alone. It is a joint venture with the Holy Spirit. Renewal of the mind is both a given reality by the Holy Spirit as well as a participation by a yielded Christian submitting him or herself to God’s Word and rule in their life.

I shared with my *Renew U* participants that my favorite quote outside Scripture is by A. W. Tozer. He said, “The most important thing about you is what you think about God . . . because that determines everything else about you.”<sup>3</sup> If we think God is weak, uncaring, unwise, or cruel, then we will be prone to depression. But if we know God is powerful, loving, and wise, then we can put our hope in Him. Isaiah said, “Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint” (Isa 40:31).

I spent too many years, even as a believer and pastor, with unrenewed thinking and a deficient view of God. Those were hard years. I have now spent many years being transformed (by the Spirit) by the renewing of my mind. The joy, freedom, and lightness of life trusting God is far more fulfilling than before. No believer should walk alone.

Though this project focused on making helpful biblical teaching and practices available virtually, the success of it actually highlights the need for the church to provide

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<sup>3</sup> A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy: The Attributes of God, Their Meaning in the Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 6.

practical biblical discipleship and involvement in Christian community. Church leaders should emphasize biblical mind renewal and go after those who are “harassed and helpless” to bring them into the light and Truth of Jesus (Matt 9:36).

### **Conclusion**

Depression is robbing the body of Christ of some of its best servants. But renewing the mind is the path to righting this tragedy. Basic discipleship ought to include how to meditate on Scripture, how to guard our thoughts against rumination, and how to apply Paul’s admonition: “Whatsoever is lovely, true, noble . . . think on these things” (Phil 4:7-8).

It is my great hope that *Renew U* can be used for the glory of God and good of my brothers and sisters to battle the black dog, as far as the curse is found until Jesus comes and makes all things new. Even so, come Lord Jesus. Selah.



APPENDIX 1

PATIENT HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE-9 (PHQ-9)

Dear Friend,

Serious depression affects one out of five people in the United States, including Christians. Mild depression strikes almost all of us at one time or another. Three out of five will wrestle with it periodically. Thus, it is very likely that you or someone you know has been impacted by depression. Often, people do not have accurate information about the causes of and cures for depression. This can lead to hesitation to get help. I am researching how to best help Christians who suffer from depression. I would love your help.

**Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to:

- 1) understand what normal people think about the causes of depression,
- 2) provide aid on knowing if you need help,
- 3) show where to get help from God's Word or other sources when needed, and finally,
- 4) see how effective this help is in battling depression.

This research is being conducted by me, David Reid, as part of my doctoral ministry project at Southern Seminary. I am asking you to complete two surveys before attending the course **Renew U: Biblical Mind Renewal to Beat the Blues** and then complete the same two surveys after the course. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, nor will your name be identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of the **PHQ-9** and **Depression Causes and Cures Survey**, and signing your name below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you so much for your participation. I look forward to our time together, and I hope this material is helpful to your life and those you love.

Sincerely,

*David B. Reid*

David Reid

## Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9)

Over the **last 2 weeks**, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?

**0** = Not at all

**+1** = Several days

**+2** = More than half the days

**+3** = Nearly every day

1. Little interest or pleasure in doing things

**0 +1 +2 +3**

2. Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless

**0 +1 +2 +3**

3. Trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or sleeping too much

**0 +1 +2 +3**

4. Feeling tired or having little energy

**0 +1 +2 +3**

5. Poor appetite or overeating

**0 +1 +2 +3**

6. Feeling bad about yourself - or that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down

**0 +1 +2 +3**

7. Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television

**0 +1 +2 +3**

8. Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed. Or, the opposite - being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual

**0 +1 +2 +3**

9. Thoughts that you would be better off dead or of hurting yourself in some way

**0 +1 +2 +3**

PHQ-9 score obtained by adding score for each question (total points)

## APPENDIX 2

### DEPRESSION CAUSES AND CURES SURVEY (DCCS)

The Depression Causes and Cures Survey is a simple diagnostic tool to assess attitudes about and approaches to depression before and after a biblical curriculum being taught. There are items to assess demographics, thoughts about depression, personal experience with depression, and strategies to deal with depression. In addition, it also allows participants to provide information regarding any need for mental health help beyond the Ministry Project curriculum.

The DCCS begins on the next page.

## Depression Causes and Cures Survey

Dear Friend,

Depression affects one out of five people in the United States, including Christians. It is very likely that you or someone you know has been impacted by depression. Often, people do not have accurate information about the causes of and cures for depression. This can lead to hesitation to get help. I am researching how to best help Christians who suffer from depression. I would love your help.

### Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to:

- 1) understand what normal people think about the causes of depression,
- 2) provide aid on knowing if you need help,
- 3) show where to get help from God's Word or other sources when needed, and finally,
- 4) see how effective this help is in battling depression.

This research is being conducted by me, David Reid, as part of my doctoral ministry project at Southern Seminary. I am asking you to complete a survey before attending the course *Renew U: How to Beat the Blues with a Biblical Theology of Mind Renewal* and then complete the same survey after the course. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, nor will your name be identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this **Depression Causes and Cures Survey**, and signing your name below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you so much for your participation. I look forward to our time together, and I hope this material is helpful to your life and those you love.

Sincerely,

*David B. Reid*

David Reid

## About the Survey

This survey is a simple diagnostic tool to assess attitudes about and approaches to depression before and after our curriculum. There are items to assess your demographics, thoughts about depression, your experience with depression, and your strategies to deal with depression.

The more honest you are as you respond to the items below, the better the data will be. Good data will help me understand what you and others really think and will help me shape the curriculum to help those who suffer with depression find relief. So, please answer what you really think and not what you may think is the answer I am looking for.

Please take a few minutes to fill out this survey. Your responses will be kept confidential. Thank you very much for your input. I value it greatly.

Finally, if any of the questions prompt you to think that you may need some immediate personal help, please reach out to me. I care and I would love to help.

1. I agree to participate: \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
2. Personal ID# \_\_\_\_\_ (Please use your date of birth in the format of MMDDYYYY [e.g., 06151980 would be June 15, 1980]). You will use this Personal ID# again on your post-survey.
3. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female
4. Age: \_\_\_\_\_ (in years)
5. Do you consider yourself a Christian? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
6. If you answered yes to #5 above, how long have you been a Christian?  
\_\_\_\_ 0-5 years \_\_\_\_ 6-10 years \_\_\_\_ 11-15 years \_\_\_\_ 16-20 years \_\_\_\_ >20 years
7. During the past 4 weeks, have you had any problems with your work or daily life due to your physical health?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Don't Know
8. During the past 4 weeks, have you had any problems with your work or daily life due to any emotional issues, such as feeling depressed, sad, or anxious?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Don't Know
9. Overall, how would you rate your outlook on life currently?  
\_\_ Overwhelmed or Depressed \_\_ Somewhat Sad \_\_ Neutral \_\_ Somewhat Happy  
\_\_ Joyful/Excellent
10. In your life, have you ever felt particularly low or down for more than 2 weeks in a row?  
\_\_\_\_ Never \_\_\_\_ Rarely \_\_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_\_ Often \_\_\_\_ Almost Always

11. During the past month, how often has your mental outlook affected your relationships negatively?

Never  Rarely  Sometimes  Often  Almost Always

12. If you felt very sad or depressed (either now or in the past), where would you turn for help (please rank from 1-5 where you would turn with 1 being your most preferred/first choice and 5 being your least preferred/last choice)?

Medical Doctor  A Trusted Friend  Scripture/Prayer  A Counselor/Pastor  Handle Myself

Rate how comfortable you would feel getting help from each of the sources below if you were very sad or depressed for over two weeks:

13. Medical Doctor

Very Uncomfortable  Uncomfortable  Neutral  Comfortable  Very Comfortable

14. A Trusted Friend

Very Uncomfortable  Uncomfortable  Neutral  Comfortable  Very Comfortable

15. Scripture/Prayer

Very Uncomfortable  Uncomfortable  Neutral  Comfortable  Very Comfortable

16. A Counselor/Pastor

Very Uncomfortable  Uncomfortable  Neutral  Comfortable  Very Comfortable

17. Handle It Myself

Very Uncomfortable  Uncomfortable  Neutral  Comfortable  Very Comfortable

How often have you seen the following professionals for help with sadness or depression (including follow-ups)?

18. Medical Doctor

Never  1-2 times  3-4 times  5-6 times  7 or more times

19. A Counselor

Never  1-2 times  3-4 times  5-6 times  7 or more times

20. A Pastor

Never  1-2 times  3-4 times  5-6 times  7 or more times

If you chose to seek counseling for depression, please rank what would be most important to you in good counseling:

21. Counselor Has Good Rapport with Me

Extremely Unimportant  Not Important  Neutral  Important  Very Important

22. Counselor Shares From Field of Psychology (Study of the Mind and How it Affects Behavior)

Extremely Unimportant  Not Important  Neutral  Important  Very Important

23. Counselor Shares From a Biblical Worldview (Principles from the Bible)

Extremely Unimportant  Not Important  Neutral  Important  Very Important

24. Counselor Shares From Field of Psychiatry (Medical Knowledge of the Brain and Can Prescribe Medicine)

Extremely Unimportant  Not Important  Neutral  Important  Very Important

Thinking about times that you have been depressed, how often do you think each of the below was the primary cause of the depression?

25. Chemical Imbalances in the Brain

Never  Once in a While  About Half the Time  Most of the Time  Almost Always

26. Circumstances in Life that Cause Grief

Never  Once in a While  About Half the Time  Most of the Time  Almost Always

27. Thinking that is Contrary to God's Will for Me

Never  Once in a While  About Half the Time  Most of the Time  Almost Always

28. Other: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please specify if possible.)

Never  Once in a While  About Half the Time  Most of the Time  Almost Always

How often do you experience the feelings below?

29. Calm and Peaceful

Almost Never  Once in a While  About Half the Time  Most of the Time  Almost Always

30. Energetic

Almost Never  Once in a While  About Half the Time  Most of the Time  Almost Always

31. Gloomy

Almost Never  Once in a While  About Half the Time  Most of the Time  Almost Always

32. Angry

Almost Never  Once in a While  About Half the Time  Most of the Time  Almost Always

33. How many hours do you sleep per day?

Less than 4  4-6  7-9  9+

34. How is your quality of sleep?

Very Poor  Poor  Normal  Good  Very Good

35. How often do you feel positive about your life?

Almost Never  Once in a While  About Half the Time  Most of the Time  Almost Always

36. How often do you ruminate (replay past events in your mind negatively)?

Almost Never  Once in a While  About Half the Time  Most of the Time  Almost Always

37. How often do you worry about the future?

Almost Never  Once in a While  About Half the Time  Most of the Time  Almost Always

38. How often do you read the Bible?

Almost Never  Once in a while  1-3 times per week  4-6 times per week  Usually Daily

39. How often do you practice being grateful?

Almost Never  Once in a while  1-3 times per week  4-6 times per week  Usually Daily

40. How often do you listen to worship music outside of weekly church?

Almost Never  Once in a while  1-3 times per week  4-6 times per week  Usually Daily

41. Do you have “go-to” Scriptures that bring you comfort when stressed?

Yes  No

42. If you answered yes above, how many? (call them to mind right now to count them).

1  2 to 4  5 to 7  8 to 10  More than 10



43. On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your mood over the last four weeks?

- 1 Poor / Depressed
- 2 Very Bad / "The Blues"
- 3 Neutral / "Even Keel"
- 4 Good / Generally Happy
- 5 Excellent / Joyful

44. On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your mood right now?

- 1 Poor/Depressed
- 2 Very Bad / "The Blues"
- 3 Even Keel / "Blah"
- 4 Good/Generally Happy
- 5 Excellent/Joyful

45. Have you had thoughts of suicide, cutting, or otherwise harming yourself in the last four weeks?

Yes     No

46. Is there anything you would like to comment on or make sure I know?

Comments (Optional)

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## APPENDIX 3

### CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC (CHURCH)

This Curriculum Evaluation Tool is a rubric to provide feedback to the teacher by an expert panel on the curriculum to be taught to ministry plan participants. For my project, my expert panel was my church's preaching and teaching leadership.

The rubric is on the next page.

Name of Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Renew U: Biblical Mind Renewal to Beat the Blues</b>					
<b>Curriculum Evaluation Tool</b>					
<b>1 = Insufficient 2 = Requires Attention 3 = Sufficient 4 = Exemplary</b>					
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Biblical Accuracy</b>					
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
<b>Scope</b>					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical pedagogical methodology.					
<b>Pedagogy</b>					
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.					
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					
<b>Practicality</b>					
The curriculum clearly details why thinking patterns are important and how to change them for better mental health.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to use Scripture to help battle depressive thoughts.					

Other Comments:

## APPENDIX 4

### CURRICULUM EVALUATION TOOL

This Curriculum Evaluation Tool is a rubric to provide feedback by the faculty supervisor on the curriculum to be taught to ministry plan participants. For my project, Dr. Matthew Haste scored my curriculum during the 80960WW Foundations of Teaching course in December 2023 (rubric and score are below). Professor Jeremy Pierre has also reviewed my curriculum as Faculty Supervisor.

Renew U: Biblical Mind Renewal to Beat the Blues  
 Course Curriculum Plan Rubric  
 (Evaluation by Dr. Matthew Haste on December 3, 2022)

Criteria	Scale	Pts
<b>Content Outline</b> Reflects a theologically-robust plan for addressing a topic from a biblical perspective	20 pts Exceeds expectations 18 pts Meets expectations 15.5 pts Partially meets expectations 0 pts Fails to meet expectations	20 / 20 pts
<b>Lesson Outcome Outline</b> Reflects a clear understanding of what the student wants his/her participants to learn in each lesson	20 pts Exceeds expectations 18 pts Meets expectations 15.5 pts Partially meets expectations 0 pts Fails to meet expectations	20 / 20 pts
<b>Course Description</b> Provides an adequate summary of the key ideas and arguments of the course	20 pts Exceeds expectations 18 pts Meets expectations 15.5 pts Partially meets expectations 0 pts Fails to meet expectations	18 / 20 pts
<b>Lesson Plans</b> Presents a systematic plan for teaching the curriculum that incorporates the resources needed, desired outcomes, and key points of each of the 8 lessons	40 pts Exceeds expectations 36 pts. Meets expectations 31 pts. Partially meets expectations 0 pts. Fails to meet expectations	36 / 40 pts
		Total: 94 / 100 pts

## APPENDIX 5

### RENEW U COURSE CURRICULUM

#### Context

- Introduction to Biblical Mind Renewal Strategies to manage mood and treat depression.
- Delivered hybrid (in person and online so it can be available on demand)
- Students are primarily Christian but also geared for seekers.

#### Content

- An introduction to a biblical theology of thinking centered on how to use the Scriptures to renew one's mind and manage depressive and anxious thoughts. This course will focus on: (1) an exegesis of Romans 12:2 and how the mind is renewed; (2) exegesis of several foundational passages explaining biblical strategies to renew the mind and find hope in God; and (3) practical application of the foundational passages in one's own life.

#### **Renew U: Biblical Mind Renewal to Beat the Blues**

<b>Session 1</b>	<b>What is Biblical Mind Renewal?</b>	<b>Romans 12:1-2, Ge 4:1-8</b>
<b>Session 2</b>	<b>Fix Your Eyes on Jesus</b>	<b>Hebrews 12:1-3</b>
<b>Session 3</b>	<b>Moses's Meltdown</b>	<b>Numbers 11:1-21</b>
<b>Session 4</b>	<b>(Worship) Music Soothes the Savage</b>	<b>1 Samuel 16</b>
<b>Session 5</b>	<b>Elijah's Exhaustion</b>	<b>1 Kings 19:1-21</b>
<b>Session 6</b>	<b>Do Not Worry; It Is Sin</b>	<b>Matthew 6:25-33</b>
<b>Session 7</b>	<b>Taking Thoughts Prisoner</b>	<b>2 Corinthians 10:3-6</b>
<b>Session 8</b>	<b>Get Out of Your Head, Give Someone a Hand</b>	<b>Philippians 2:1-13</b>
<b>Session 9</b>	<b>Give Thanks</b>	<b>Philippians 4:6-9 et. al.</b>
<b>Session 10</b>	<b>Focus on the Future</b>	<b>Revelation 21-22</b>

## Lesson Plan – Week 1

### 1) What is Biblical Mind Renewal?

- a) Week 1 will introduce the concept of biblical mind renewal that Paul calls for in Romans 12:1-2. It will be demonstrated that biblical mind renewal is a spiritual discipline that involves meditating on Scripture to orient our minds toward the goodness and grace of God as a help against the world, the flesh, and the Devil's attacks against the thinking of Christians. Special attention will be given to mind renewal as a relief to anxiety and depressive thoughts.
- b) ***Learning Outcome: By the end of this session, students will know the concept of biblical mind renewal. They will feel appreciation and gratitude that God has given a way to submit our thoughts to Him when we are struggling.***

### 2) Key Resources

- a) Romans 1:1-2

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

- b) Genesis 4:1-8

<sup>1</sup> Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man." <sup>2</sup> Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. <sup>3</sup> In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. <sup>4</sup> And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, <sup>5</sup> but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So, Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. <sup>6</sup> Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? <sup>7</sup> If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it." <sup>8</sup> Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

### 3) Outline

- a) **Introduction**

My favorite quote outside Scripture is by A.W. Tozer.

- (1) The most important think about you is what you think about God...because that determines everything else about you.
- (2) What do you think that means? Do you think it is true?
- (3) Unfortunately, our thinking has been affected by the Fall.
  - (a) "Darkened"

- (b) “Heart is deceitful” (Jeremiah)
- (c) World, Flesh, the Devil
- (4) Can lead to depression, anxiety
  - (a) My Story – Church Planter Depression
  - (b) I learned to “change the way I think”
  - (c) I want to share it with you.

**b) “Be Transformed by the Renewing Your mind”**

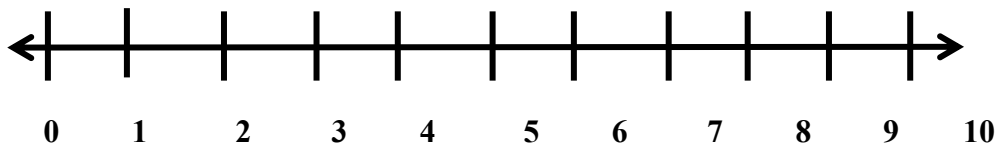
- (1) Foundational spiritual process of discipleship/sanctification.
- (2) The Holy Spirit does it (Passive Voice)
- (3) We learn how to trust God
- (4) It is a normal, daily process in the life of the believer.
- (5) It is also a supernatural process accomplished by the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives.
- (6) We need to elevate this spiritual discipline to be a priority in our lives.

**c) What is “Renewing your mind”**

- i) Exegete “ ἀλλὰ μεταμορφοῦσθε τῇ ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νομοῦς ”
- ii) Working Definition: “Renewal of the mind”: Restoring our thinking to its pre-fallen condition where we saw accurately and clearly, trusted God, believed the Truth, and walked in light of it.
- iii) Meditating on God’s Word
- iv) Trusting the Lord instead of ourselves
- v) Praying to bring our thoughts into alignment with God’s
- vi) Submitting our thinking to the rule of Christ

**d) Examples of “Renewing Your Mind”**

- i) Moses, Numbers 11
- ii) Elijah, 1 Samuel 18-19
- iii) Peter, John 20



- iv) Paul, Act 8
- v) Who do you know who lives out “a Renewed Mind”
- vi) On a scale of 1-10, how regularly are you “transformed by the renewing of your mind”?

**e) Renewal of the Mind can be applied to every area of life**



- i) Stewardship – how you think about and handle money
- ii) Relationships – how you think about and relate to others
- iii) Etc.
- iv) In this class, we are going to focus on applying renewing our minds around Depressive thoughts and anxiety

#### **4) Conclusion: Cain’s Challenge (Genesis 4:1-8)**

- a) “So, *Cain was very angry*,<sup>1</sup> and his face was *downcast*.<sup>6</sup> Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? <sup>7</sup> *If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?* But if you do not do what is right, *sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.*”<sup>8</sup> Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.”
- b) Cain had a choice to focus on the goodness of God instead of his distressed interpretation of his circumstances
- c) Make the choice to depend on God. Cain had a choice. You have a choice.

#### **5) Review, Prep, and Active Learning**

- a) Have students read Numbers 11:1-25 for next week and highlight anything that stands out to them, especially words and phrases that give insight to Moses’s mood.
- b) Assign students to memorize Romans 12:1-2 and or Genesis 4:5-8 (Have Scripture memory cards available for download)

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<sup>1</sup> Italics added to emphasize portions of the text.

Lesson Plan – Week 2

**1) Moses's Meltdown**

- a) Week 3 will consider an exegesis of Numbers 11:1-25, showing the downward spiral of Moses thoughts in the face of criticism from the children of Israel. Special attention will be given to how God brought Moses out of his funk with Truth and guidance to rely on the support of others.
- b) ***Learning Outcome: By the end of this session, students will know Moses's meltdown and the godly way to deal depressive thoughts in situations like Moses's. They will also be able to choose to trust God for comfort, mindset, and an improved outcome in similar situations as Moses.***

**2) Key Resource – Numbers 11:1-33**

**3) Outline**

**A) Review and Active Learning**

- a) Quiz class on what we learned last time:
- b) What is Biblical Mind Renewal? (Take several answers, praising the ones that hit on an aspect we covered)
- c) Show: “Renewal of the mind”: Restoring our thinking to its pre-fallen condition where we saw accurately and clearly, trusted God, believed the Truth, and walked in light of it.
- d) Last Week, we saw Paul’s command to “allow ourselves to be transformed (by God) through the means of our mind being renewed”
- e) We also saw a negative example of Cain who did not take God’s warning to renew his mind.

**B) Our Flesh are the patterns we learned to cope with life before we knew God.**

- 1) Whether it is alcohol, overspending, control, addiction to entertainment, however you deal with life...that is what you learned to do before you know there was a God in Heaven...
- 2) I want to talk to you about the way you think that is not good. If it is not you who thinks this way, then it is probably your spouse, or your child, or your parent, or your brother or sister, so if I miss you with the message this morning, then it is for somebody you know close to you.
- 3) Most great lessons started with a pastor preaching to himself. So, let me tell you about me. I believe there are four basic temperaments, and each plays a big role in how you think.
- 4) Death Spiral is a term I use to describe pattern of melancholy thinking.

- 5) However, when studying the life of Moses, I found that God had already identified the Death spiral and its component parts long ago.
- 6) Furthermore, in addition to describing it in Numbers 11, God also gave us an antidote for it.
- 7) Moses had a problem in how he thought.
- 8) Jesus said there would be days like this. (John 16:33)

### C) **Anatomy of a Death Spiral**

#### 1) Context of Num 11

a) The Book of Exodus begins with God's people having been in slavery in Egypt for 400 years.

- People escaped through the power of God.
- People were backed up against the Red Sea.
- If God does not show up, we are dead. And HE DID!
- Numbers 11 is two weeks after that.
- But that is not all! 10 Plagues, each one mocking the Egyptian gods
- Pharaoh said take your people and go, and they took all the gold of Egypt
- If ANYBODY has seen the power of God, it is Moses and the Israelites
- And He is about to take the people to the Promised Land. Pillar of Cloud, Pillar of Fire (Protection, provision, and guidance)

#### 2) Situation: No Food

D) **Troubling Circumstance (v.10a)** – the people are complaining because they do not like manna.

- a) Gossiping – I do not know if Moses knows what he is doing.
- b) There is a circumstance in your life. If you really are in between them right now, then you have something to look forward to, because it is coming! There is always a circumstance.
- c) What is yours right now?

E) **Emotional Viewpoint (10b)** “This is BAD!” – This is the moment when I take it into my control. What can I do about this?

### F) **Self-Focus (11)**

- a) It is all about me. Who has the problem? The people...yes. God...yes
- b) Does Moses have a problem? NO
- c) Can God deal with His problems?

**G) Truth Distortion (11b)**

“Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that put the burden of all these people on me?”

**H) Emotional Escalation (12)**

- a) “Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their forefathers?” Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, “Give us meat to eat!”
- b) Moses is saying, “I am not these peoples’ mama.”
- c) Note: God did NOT say “Carry them in your bosom”

Super-responsibility – when I take on more responsibility that God has given me. I am responsible for what God has told me to do and nothing more.

**I) Hopelessness (14)**

- a) **I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me.** If this is how You are going to treat me, put me to death right now—if I have found favor in your eyes—and do not let me face my own ruin.”

**J) Feel Alone (14)**

- a) “I cannot carry all these people by myself”
- b) That is a true statement, but the burden is not on Moses by himself.

**K) Overwhelm (14b) – “the burden is too heavy for me”**

**L) Better to be Dead (15)**

- a) This is Moses, the most important, greatest servant of God, second only to Jesus, maybe Paul, in the entire Bible of biblical heroes.
  
- b) Do not think you cannot get there. Do not think someone you love cannot get there.

- I have done two funerals of people who have taken their lives and have known people who have both friends of friends and famous people.
- I will be honest with you. I have been there a couple of times in my life. And when I think in the clear light of truth of all the pain I would have caused on those who love me and all the amazing joyful moments I would have had forfeited from then until now and I think of the statement I would be making to the world that God was not strong enough to take care of me. It is tragic to think of.
- Robin Williams – the funny man, the amazing talent, people LOVED him, and somehow, he got to this place.
- Would anybody else be willing to admit that they are wired like this? That you go down the Death Spiral. I call it the death spiral because the end of it is death.
- But there is one thing everyone of you need to know, and especially if you are prone to thinking like this.

### **3) Conclusion:**

#### **A) But God...**

- a. Let me tell you a story. I have got three kids. If we spent the night camping as a family, my kids would not be scared. But if they were alone...
- b. The difference is that they knew Daddy is with them, they will be all right.
- c. My brother-in-law knows what to do in any situation...
- d. That is what Moses needed...and that is what God gives him.
- e. Read vs. 16-18a "...we were better off in Egypt." THAT WAS NOT TRUE
- f. Read 18b-20
  - i. Why does God deal so harshly with the Israelites? They insulted His character. Be content with what He has given you. Wants to teach them to keep the focus on Him not just the blessings He gives.
  - ii. Like the sin in the Garden. They want the one thing they have not been given.

#### **B) Moses still has not learned who God is... Read 21-22**

- g. "God, this is three million people."
- h. My boss writes checks I am going to have to cash. God can cash his own checks.

- i. Here is the question of the Chapter, Verse 23: “Is the LORD’s arm too short? Now you will see whether or not what I say will come true for you.”
- j. God is able to do what you need. Read v. 24-25
- k. Go to v. 31-32. Quail Migratory Route
- l. Vs. 33
- m. God was trying to teach them, even if you have meat, but you do not have a relationship with Me, it is not enough to satisfy.

**C) But here is the lesson for today:**

- n. At this point, Moses knew God could do it.
- o. When things look bad in your life. You can down the Death Spiral, OR you can remember: **“But God” What makes this okay is that God is in the middle of it with you.**
- p. So, when you come against a circumstance that seems hard...
- q. Instead of going down the Death Spiral, let us go up the Life Spiral.
- r. This is part of Mind Renewal. “But God” makes everything better.

Lesson Plan – Week 3

**1) Worship Music Soothes the Savage**

a) Week 4 will consider an exegesis of 1 Samuel 16:14-23, showing the effects on worship music and the Psalms on Saul's spirit and behavior in the face of spiritual attack. Special attention will be given to how worship music can be used today to renew the believer's mind.

**b) Learning Outcome: *By the end of this session, students will know the effects of music that worships God and reinforces trust in Him to focus our minds on God's sufficiency for our problems.***

**2) Key Resource**

a) 1 Samuel 16:14-23

<sup>14</sup> Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him. <sup>15</sup> Saul's attendants said to him, "See, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you." <sup>16</sup> **Let our lord command his servants here to search for someone who can play the lyre. He will play when the evil spirit from God comes on you, and you will feel better.** <sup>17</sup> So Saul said to his attendants, "Find someone who plays well and bring him to me." <sup>18</sup> One of the servants answered, "I have seen a son of Jesse of Bethlehem who knows how to play the lyre. He is a brave man and a warrior. He speaks well and is a fine-looking man. And the LORD is with him." <sup>19</sup> Then Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, "Send me your son David, who is with the sheep." <sup>20</sup> So Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread, a skin of wine and a young goat and sent them with his son David to Saul. <sup>21</sup> David came to Saul and entered his service. Saul liked him very much, and David became one of his armor-bearers. <sup>22</sup> Then Saul sent word to Jesse, saying, "Allow David to remain in my service, for I am pleased with him." <sup>23</sup> **Whenever the spirit from God came on Saul, David would take up his lyre and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.**

Outline

**3) Review / Prep for New Content**

- a) What was one thing you took away from our last session?
- b) What is your favorite worship song (hymn or contemporary)?
  - i. Why did you choose that song?

**4) Exegete 1 Samuel 16:14-23.**

- a) Read the passage.
- b) Explain that in the OT, the Holy Spirit came upon God's servants, but was not always with them.

c) Since Pentecost, believers always have the Holy Spirit.

d) Explain Saul's specific situation (the theology that God is revealing in 1 Samuel that Saul is rejected in favor of a man after God's heart. Thus, 1 Samuel is showing how Saul (not seeking God), left to his own devices, will fall further and further from God's plan.

e) Saul's situation does give us insight into the role of Truth and music on our thinking and mood.

f) When young David played the harp (most likely also singing the Psalms he had written to this point), Saul felt relief.

g) This principle of meditating on God's Truth through song is found throughout Scripture (Exod 15, Judg 5, Ps 100, Ps 126, Luke 1:46-55).

h) Ask why this is true. Get participant interaction.

i) Answers: Puts our mind on God, takes our minds off our circumstances, reminds us how big God is, Helps us Remember (**zakar**) / Worship God for all He has done.

ii) Relate this to Philippians 4:8-9:

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. <sup>9</sup> Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

## 5) Review, Prep, and Active Learning

a) Brainstorm a playlist together of songs that can help students meditate on God's goodness, power, and provision. Play clips of each song they recommend from Spotify.

b) Play for them clips of "Jesus Strong and Kind," Andrew Peterson's "Worthy," Here Be Lions "I Speak Jesus," and a few other of my favorites.

c) Assign students to build a playlist of 10 worship songs that help them focus on God and His Truth.



## Lesson Plan – Week 4

### 1) Elijah's Exhaustion

a) Week 5 will consider an exegesis of 1 Kings 19:1-21, showing the spiritual depression Elijah experienced after the showdown with the prophets of Baal. Special attention will be given to how God treats his depression and cares for Elijah's well-being. Additionally, we will distill principles we can use to treat our own bouts with anxiety and depression.

*b) Learning Outcome: By the end of this session, students will know practical needs of the body and soul (food, rest, and Truth) that humans need to keep from being overwhelmed with stress. They will also be able to assess their own stress. Finally, they will be able to plan how to destress in a biblical way.*

### 2) Key Resources

a) 1 Kings 19:1-21

<sup>1</sup> Now Ahab told Jezebel **everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword.** <sup>2</sup> So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, **“May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them.”** <sup>3</sup> Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, <sup>4</sup> while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and **prayed that he might die.** “I have had enough, LORD,” he said. “Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.” <sup>5</sup> Then he lay down under the bush and **fell asleep.** All at once an angel touched him and said, **“Get up and eat.”** <sup>6</sup> He looked around, and there by his head was **some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.** <sup>7</sup> The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, **“Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.”** <sup>8</sup> So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until **he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.** <sup>9</sup> There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the LORD came to him: “What are you doing here, Elijah?” <sup>10</sup> He replied, **“I have been very zealous for the**

**LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.**" <sup>11</sup> The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. <sup>12</sup> After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. <sup>13</sup> When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" <sup>14</sup> He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. **I am the only one left,** and now they are trying to kill me too." <sup>15</sup> The LORD said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. <sup>16</sup> Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and **anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet.** <sup>17</sup> Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. <sup>18</sup> **Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him.**" <sup>19</sup> So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him. <sup>20</sup> Elisha then left his oxen and ran after Elijah. "Let me kiss my father and mother goodbye," he said, "and then I will come with you." "Go back," Elijah replied. "What have I done to you?" <sup>21</sup> So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they

ate. **Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his servant.**

### **3) Outline**

#### **a) Introduction**

“I just feel like dying. . .” That is what I said to my wife one sunny day in the summer of 2009. After seven years of church planting, and specifically a very tough financial year for Peachtree Church due to the Great Recession, I felt a depression and a numbness about life that I had never experienced before. Despite knowing God’s grace, having a beautiful wife who is a constant blessing, the two best kids you can imagine, the most important job in the world, and a church who loved me dearly and where we saw miraculous life change on a regular basis—despite all that, I felt empty and hopeless. Never since I had been called as a church planter had I considered doing anything else. But in 2009, if I had had the energy, I would have left the ministry.

I have never met anyone (older than a child) who has not abused some aspect of his or mental health navigating life in this fallen world.

Anybody want to share a situation where you knew were not in a good place?

#### **b) Elijah’s Exhaustion**

Elijah’s bout with depression in 1 Kings 19 provides holistic insight into the importance of taking care of ourselves. You know his story—after defeating the prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel, Jezebel threatens Elijah, and he flees for his life. Come with me behind the scenes.

Read 1 Kings 19:1-21

Can you imagine the adrenaline pumping through Elijah as he challenged the people of Israel: “How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.”

Think about the excitement of the test of Baal versus the Lord. Elijah preached his heart out. He was funny and motivational: “And at noon Elijah mocked them saying, “Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened.” That is good preaching!

Next, the thrill of God sending fire down from Heaven—that was a moment any pastor would have loved to be a part of. You think you have it bad, church planter, having to preach two services and work tear down afterward—Elijah prayed for rain and had to kill the 450 prophets of Baal after his day-long sermon. An Old Testament prophet’s work is never done.

It has been said that thirty minutes of public speaking produces the same amount of adrenaline as eight hours of work. If you preach twice on Sunday, you are expending a LOT of adrenaline. It is a great system—it gives you the energy to tell that illustration with just the right “oomph,” and quite literally, you are pumped up. But it comes at a price. After an adrenaline rush, a brain needs to crash.

And Elijah’s crashed hard. Jezebel made an idle threat (considering God could send fire from Heaven) (19:2), but emotionally for Elijah, it was the straw that broke the camel’s back. I believe it was largely due to Elijah’s adrenaline crash. It is a fact that most preachers quit on Monday. Quite often, pastors feel down and overwhelmed on Sunday afternoon. It is a chemical phenomenon tied to the brain’s letdown after preaching. It affected Elijah so much that he says, “It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life...” (19:4).

Look what God does to take care of Elijah.

He steps in, providing rest (19:5) and food and drink (19:6). Elijah sleeps, and God begins to counsel him.

Drawing on Elijah’s experience, here are the top things necessary for good mental health that our modern lifestyles tend to neglect.

1) *Take care of your body.* Rest and healthy food are needs that during crisis, we often overlook.

2) *Focus on only what you are called to do (Look at the Lord, not the waves).* God has given Elijah success, but he is listening to Jezebel. Is he letting his mind be renewed?

3) *Take care of your brain.* This was the greatest lesson of my personal Great Depression of 2009. After my comment about feeling like dying, I realized something was seriously wrong.

Through the encouragement of some godly friends, I visited my doctor and a Christian psychiatrist. Seven years of church planting, a particularly stressful year financially, and a high intake of caffeine had affected my sleep schedule to the point that my brain was not replenishing itself.

The psychiatrist explained that a good night’s sleep (for good brain health) is 1) seven hours 2) of uninterrupted sleep 3) with dreams. You need *all three* of those components for your brain to replenish depleted serotonin. Depleted serotonin can be a result of adrenaline rush from preaching and prolonged stress, two staples of ministry. Most church planters I know report waking up in the middle of the night with mind racing. That was certainly my pattern.

In my case, the psychiatrist prescribed six weeks of a mild SSRI.<sup>2</sup> I quit Dr. Pepper cold turkey, began taking fish oil and Vitamin D daily, and took up jogging. I call it “running for my life.”

Two months later, I loved life again. I have created long-term habits to keep me from ever getting that close to the brink again. Two books were extremely helpful for me during this time of realizing I was not invincible: *This is Your Brain on Joy* (Dr. Earl Henslin) and *Unmasking Male Depression* (Dr. Arch Hart). I will never abuse my brain like that again.

4) *Avoid rumination.*

Note the start of Elijah’s death spiral in verse 10...”: I am the only one serving God.”

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<sup>2</sup> Serotonin reuptake inhibitor.

Remember what a death spiral is.

Define catastrophize:

Catastrophizing is **when someone assumes that the worst will happen**. Often, it involves believing that you are in a worse situation than you really are or exaggerating the difficulties you face.

Note how God replaces Elijah's false thinking with the truth: "I have 7000 who have not bowed to Baal."

*4) Take advantage of Sabbath rest!* Everything will conspire against you doing this, but taking a day of Sabbath rest every week is a critical way to care for your emotional health. A real Sabbath means you do not do low-level work, make a few phone calls, or check email at home (especially check email!).

In the beginning of Peachtree Church, the church office was in my basement, and my laptop was Peachtree Central. Completely unintentionally, I did not take a day off those first two years.

In the spring of our second year, I discovered the joys of renovating rented space. I chose a handyman in our congregation to lead the project. To protect his time, I picked up our Home Depot list during the week on top of being a one-man church staff. Two weekends in, the handyman realized he was a better doer than leader, so I became in charge of construction.

I found a funny thing. If I was there working, we would have eight guys work all day. If I left early to wrap up my sermon, so did everyone else. What I thought was a three-weekend project lasted four months! (What do I know about construction?) Between buying the weekly material list, running the office, ministry, construction all day and coming home to finish off the sermon into the late evening every Saturday, I was emotionally wiped out.

Though I have never struggled with cussing in my life, I began to get angry and curse when I was alone. Honestly, I became afraid that I was going to lose it in a sermon and tell the congregation exactly how I felt, in not-so-nice terms. Once I realized this crisis, I immediately had a leader step in and preach for me, and I took my wife out of town to visit close friends.

I started seeing a counselor (who diagnosed overstress, plain and simple). That was the beginning of the slow journey back to health and peace. But it took over a year to feel good again. You can burn the candle at both ends but only for half as long.

Rick Warren says to avoid burnout, we must "divert daily, withdraw weekly, and abandon annually." I have found that I need at least an overnight getaway about every seven weeks. It recharges my batteries, it helps me reconnect with God or my wife, and it reminds me that I am a person apart from the golden eggs I produce.

#### **4) Review, Prep, and Active Learning**

a) Look back at 1 Kings 19 and write down a short sentence of the practices for good mental health you need to remember for your life.

b) Journal this week about the principles you learned from 1 Kings 19.

c) Read Matthew 6:25-33 for next week and highlight anything that stands out to you, especially words and phrases that you believe God is telling you.

Lesson Plan – Week 5

**1) Do not Worry; It is a Sin**

a) Week 6 will consider an exegesis of Matthew 6:25-34, showing Jesus’s command regarding worry and his promise regarding provision and care of the Father for the believer. Special attention will be given to applying Jesus’s command not to worry to specific life domains people often worry about.

b) *Learning Outcome: By the end of this session, students will know Jesus’s command to not worry but seek God’s Kingdom first. They will know the Lord’s promise that He provides what we need. Students will be able to apply Matthew 6:33 to their circumstances.*

**2) Key Resource**

a) Matthew 6:25-34

<sup>25</sup> “Therefore I tell you, **do not worry about your life**, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air; **they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?** <sup>27</sup> **Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?** <sup>28</sup> “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. <sup>29</sup> Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? <sup>31</sup> So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ <sup>32</sup> For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup> **But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.** <sup>34</sup> Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Outline

**3) Review / Prep for New Content**

a) What was one thing you took away from our last session?

b) If you feel comfortable, share what is the biggest thing you worry about? (take answers from the group)

i) How often do you worry about it?

**4) Exegete Matthew 6:25-33.**

- a. Define μεριμνάω (“worry”).
- b. Why should we not worry?

- i. You tend to worry / care about the wrong things (25b)
  - ii. Your Father has you covered on the things you worry about (26).
  - iii. Worrying does not solve the problem (27).
  - iv. Worrying puts you in the same class as the unbeliever (who does not know God is there to help you).
- c. The Antidote to Worry
- i. Seek first the Kingdom of God

**5) Application: Put God's reign first in your life.**

- a. What does this mean?
- i. Seek – pursue
  - ii. First – Above everything else, it is your priority
  - iii. The Kingdom of God – God's rule in your life
  - iv. All these things will be added – God will take care of all the things you are worried about.
    - 1. If you get this, it should be liberating. You do not have to worry. God has got you taken care of. . .if you will pursue his rule in your life above all else.
- b. How do I actually do it?
- i. When a thought of worry (about money, kids, job, relationship), comes into your mind:
    - 1. Do not worry – (Realize it is worry and it is sin)
    - 2. But seek first
      - a. Pray and submit yourself to God's reign.
      - b. Confess the sin of worry.
      - c. Ask God to keep His promise.
      - d. Rest in His promise.

**6) Review, Prep, and Active Learning**

- a. Take questions from the group.
- b. Take 2 minutes and write down your prayer to God / any decision you need to make about worry. (Submit the thing you worry about most to God (that you shared at the beginning of our meeting) to God.
- c. Post Matthew 6:25-33 on your bathroom mirror and read it every morning. (Note to David: Have a PDF of a memory verse for each week and encourage everyone to post all of those on their mirror).



Lesson Plan – Week 6

**1) Taking Thoughts Prisoner**

a. Week 7 will consider an exegesis of 2 Corinthians 10:3-6, “take every thought captive to make it obey Christ,” showing what Paul meant by this command. Special attention will be given to how believers can take their negative, anxious, depressive, and faithless thoughts captive to make them obey Christ.

***b. Learning Outcome: By the end of this session, students will understand the meaning of “take every thought captive to make it obey Christ” in context. They will be able to apply this command to their circumstances.***

**2) Key Resource**

a. 2 Corinthians 10:3–6

<sup>3</sup> For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. <sup>4</sup> The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. <sup>5</sup> We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and **we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.** <sup>6</sup> And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.

Outline

**3) Review / Prep for New Content**

- A) Pray for the session.
- B) How is it going with worry? Does anybody have any victories to share from this week?
- C) Today I am going to teach you a powerful principle to take control of your thoughts.
- D) Talk about the Screwtape Letters by C.S. Lewis. (Hook)
  - a) An older demon teaching a younger demon how to get a believer’s focus off Jesus.
  - b) There is a spiritual battle going on.

**4) Exegete 2 Corinthians 10:3-6.**

- a) We have spiritual weapons for spiritual warfare.
  - i) Belt of Truth (Eph 6)
  - ii) Helmet of Salvation (Eph 6)
  - iii) Sword of the Spirit (Eph 6)

b) With these, we defeat the strongholds/fortresses that set themselves up against the “knowledge of God”

i) Paul is talking about false teachings, things that separate us from believing in God (Evolution, Humanism, Self-Reliance, etc.)

ii) Apply this to our thinking

1. Fortress of Thinking You are Alone

2. Fortress of Thinking God does not love You or will not take care of you

c) We take these thoughts prisoner.

i) Do not let them roam free in our minds to keep doing damage.

ii) Image of the “Wave of Steel” tanks riding through Iraq in the First Gulf War

iii) Opposite Being “Undisciplined” in our thinking (Undisciplined soldier vs. disciplined soldier)

## **5) How do we do this?**

a) Is this thought I just had obeying Christ?

b) Jesus, put that thought in jail.

i) Rumination

ii) Worry

iii) Negativity

iv) Ungratefulness

v) Comparison

vi) Lust / Envy / Coveting

## **6) Review, Prep, and Active Learning**

a) Take questions from the group.

b) Ask them what specifically they need to apply this Truth to.

- c) Take 2 minutes and write down what thoughts need to be taken captive in your life.
- d) Post 2 Corinthians 10:3-6 on your bathroom mirror and read it every morning.

Lesson Plan – Week 7

**1) Get Out of Your Head and Give Someone a Hand**

a. Week 8 will consider an exegesis of Philippians 2:1-13, showing the example of Christ's selfless service and lack of focus on Himself. Special attention will be given to how to turn our attention outward to the service of others.

***b. Learning Outcome: By the end of this session, students will consider Jesus's selfless service. They will know that serving others is a healthy and biblical way to reduce anxiety over own situation. They will love that Jesus emptied Himself and served us instead of focusing on His needs.***

**2) Key Resources**

a. Philippians 2:1-13

<sup>1</sup> Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, <sup>2</sup> then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. <sup>5</sup> In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; <sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! <sup>9</sup> Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. <sup>12</sup> Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

**3) Review / Prep for New Content**

a) Pray for the session.

b) Who all has seen The Chosen? Do you love the portrayal of Jesus?

i) What do you like about it?

ii) Show a video clip of Jesus in the Chosen.

- a. The one where the disciples are arguing around the campfire and Jesus stumbles in after ministering all day. The disciples suddenly realize they have been selfish.

#### 4) Tell the story of Jesus.

- a) He left Heaven, gave up His riches.
- b) He loved with His whole heart, gave Himself up for us.
- c) He went to the cross for us.
- d) In His hardest moments (Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross), he took his concerns to God and prayed.
- e) With the heaviest load a human ever carried, “a man of sorrows,” Jesus remained steadfast, faithful, and joyful.
- f) I believe the reason for that is because He was not here for Himself, he was Here for God and for others. He did not expect this life to be easy, comfortable or the end. He was playing the long game.

#### 5) Application

- a) “Let this mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus...” (Philippians 2)
- b) “ Hebrews 12:1–3

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, **let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, <sup>2</sup> fixing our eyes on Jesus**, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup> **Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.**

- c) When we stop focusing on ourselves and focus on the needs of others, we are doing what we were created to do (“Created in Christ for good works which he prepared in advance that we should walk in them”).

#### 6) Review, Prep, and Active Learning

- a) Show the meme pic of Jim Caviezel dressed as Jesus sitting with Mel Gibson: Me telling Jesus how hard my life is.
- b) Pray and thank Jesus for going to the cross for us and providing everything we need for life and godliness.
- c) Take 2 minutes and write down who and how you need to serve someone else.

Lesson Plan – Week 8

**1) Give Thanks (Colossians 3:2; Philippians 4:6-9)**

a) Week 9 will consider an exegesis of Colossians 3:2 and Philippians 4:6-9 as a formula for peace. Special attention will be given to how to apply it daily.

***b) Learning Outcome: By the end of this session, students will know how giving thanks to God helps us remember how good God is to us. They will be able to apply gratefulness as a strategy for contentment and peace.***

**2) The Power of Being Grateful / Giving Thanks**

Giving Thanks to God (εὐχαριστέω) is:

<sup>21</sup> For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. – Romans 1:21

a) an antidote to idolatry, because it puts Him in His Place as Creator.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. <sup>4</sup> Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. – Ephesians 5:3-4

b) the guard against lust because it forces me to think about what I do have instead of what I do not have (Reminds us He is our provider.)

<sup>16</sup> Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray continually, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. – 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

c) the cure for anxiety and worry, because we remember we belong to a good God who is in control.

<sup>18</sup> Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup> speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, <sup>20</sup> always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. – Ephesians 5:18-20

e) a check for whether I am being controlled by the Spirit.

f)

**3) Application**

a) Consider this quote:

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<sup>3</sup> *The Power of Giving Thanks* sermon was preached by Louie Giglio of Passion City Church. I have used it as a Thanksgiving sermon twice and given him credit.

Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. It turns problems into gifts, failures into successes, the unexpected into perfect timing, and mistakes into important events. It can turn an existence into a real life, and disconnected situations into important and beneficial lessons. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow. - Melody Beattie

- b) What do you think of it? [Encourage discussion.]
- c) Commit to start a Gratitude Habit and Journal
  - i) Make a list of 1-5 things you are grateful for today. (Katie told me there is a brain rewiring connection – ask the source on this)
  - ii) Keep a list.
  - iii) Ask the people in your life what they are grateful for (and share yours).
  - iv) Replace complaining with gratefulness.

#### **4) Review, Prep, and Active Learning**

- a) Go around the room and share one thing you are grateful for.
- b) Thank God for our blessings with prayer.
- c) Take 2 minutes and write down that you will write down something you are grateful for every day this week.

Lesson Plan – Week 9

**1) Focus on the Future (Romans 8:18, 1 Corinthians 2:9, Revelation 21-22)**

a) Week 11 will consider an exegesis of Revelation 21 and Romans 8:18, showing the promise of the New Heavens and the New Earth together with God as a comfort for all the trials and challenges believers face today. Special attention will be given to how to practically apply this truth to minimize anxiety and depression.

***b) Learning Outcome: By the end of this session, students will know that God has a wonderful and real future planned for us after this life. They will know that no matter what challenges we face in this life, we are destined for a better home. They will be able to apply God’s provision of a future perfect home as a strategy for contentment and peace amid current trials.***

**2) Key Resources**

Alcorn, Randy C. *Heaven*. Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale House, 2004.

a) Romans 8:18

<sup>18</sup> I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

b) 1 Corinthians 2:9

<sup>9</sup> However, as it is written: “What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived”— the things God has prepared for those who love him—

c) Revelation 21-22

<sup>1</sup> Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” <sup>5</sup> He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” <sup>6</sup> He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. <sup>7</sup> Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. <sup>8</sup> But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who



practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”<sup>9</sup> One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”<sup>10</sup> And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.<sup>11</sup> It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.<sup>12</sup> It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.<sup>13</sup> There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west.<sup>14</sup> The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.<sup>15</sup> The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls.<sup>16</sup> The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long.<sup>17</sup> The angel measured the wall using human measurement, and it was 144 cubits thick.<sup>18</sup> The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass.<sup>19</sup> The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald,<sup>20</sup> the fifth onyx, the sixth ruby, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth turquoise, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.<sup>21</sup> The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass.<sup>22</sup> I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.<sup>23</sup> The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.<sup>24</sup> The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.<sup>25</sup> On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there.<sup>26</sup> The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.<sup>27</sup> Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

<sup>1</sup> Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb<sup>2</sup> down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.<sup>3</sup> No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.<sup>4</sup> They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.<sup>5</sup> There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.<sup>6</sup> The angel said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place.”<sup>7</sup> “Look, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll.”<sup>8</sup> I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me.<sup>9</sup> But he said to me, “Don’t do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your fellow prophets and with all who keep the words of this scroll. Worship God!”<sup>10</sup> Then he told me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this scroll, because the time is near.<sup>11</sup> Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and let

the holy person continue to be holy.”<sup>12</sup> “Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.”<sup>13</sup> I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.<sup>14</sup> “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.”<sup>15</sup> Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.<sup>16</sup> “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.”<sup>17</sup> The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.<sup>18</sup> I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll.<sup>19</sup> And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll.<sup>20</sup> He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.<sup>21</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen.

Outline

### **3) Review / Prep for New Content**

- a) What is your picture of Heaven? (Good or bad)
  - i) Share Randy Alcorn’s perspective that the Enemy would want you to think Heaven is no fun and not as good as Earth.
  - ii) Today, I want to change your view of Heaven.

### **4) Exegete Revelation 21-22.**

- a) “He will wipe away every tear.”
- b) “Leaves are for the healing of the nation”
- c) Share the Gospel. – Salvation based on faith, not works.
- d) Reunited with those who have gone on before.
- e) Imagine a world without sin.
- f) Still having adventures. All the good things on earth plus things you cannot even imagine.

## **5) Application**

- a) How long are we on earth? How long will be in Heaven?
- b) Can you hold on just a little longer?
- c) Tell Elizabeth Elliott Dream Story.

## **6) Review, Prep, and Active Learning**

- a) Take questions from the group about Heaven.
- b) Do a Review of all the principles we have learned over the weeks.
- c) Show a slide of all the Scriptures, terms, and principles we have discussed.
  - i) Ask people to call out principles that have been meaningful to them.
  - ii) Mark them off after reviewed.
  - iii) Make sure all get reviewed.
  - iv) Challenge everyone to make a 3-step action plan to review the principles of Renewing Your Mind and practicing them daily.
    - a) Take 2 minutes to write down three step Action Plan, for example:
      - b) Read Scriptures on my mirror every day.
      - c) Pick one principle that God puts on my heart.
      - d) Actively apply or share it with someone each day.
- d) Complete post-Class Survey.
  - i) Get two CFA meal cards if you complete the class and survey.

## APPENDIX 6

### RENEW U MIND RENEWAL SCRIPTURES

#### Romans 12:1-2

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

#### Genesis 4:5b-7

So, Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. <sup>6</sup> Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? <sup>7</sup> If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it."

#### Numbers 11:23

<sup>23</sup> The LORD answered Moses, "Is the LORD's arm too short? Now you will see whether or not what I say will come true for you."

#### 1 Samuel 16:23

<sup>23</sup> Whenever the spirit from God came on Saul, David would take up his lyre and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.

#### 1 Kings 19:7-8

<sup>7</sup> The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, "**Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.**" <sup>8</sup> **So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food,** he traveled forty days and forty nights until **he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.**

#### Matthew 6:31-34

<sup>31</sup> So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup> For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup> **But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.** <sup>34</sup> Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

#### 2 Corinthians 10:3-6

<sup>3</sup> For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. <sup>4</sup> The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power

to demolish strongholds. <sup>5</sup> We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and **we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.** <sup>6</sup> And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.

#### Philippians 2:3-8

<sup>3</sup>Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. <sup>5</sup> In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; <sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

#### Philippians 4:6-9

<sup>6</sup> Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. <sup>9</sup> Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

#### Hebrews 3:1-3

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, <sup>2</sup> fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup> Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

#### Revelation 21:3-5

<sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup> ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” <sup>5</sup> He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

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## ABSTRACT

### CREATING AN ONLINE RESOURCE TO FACILITATE BIBLICAL MIND RENEWAL TO RELIEVE DEPRESSION IN CHRISTIANS

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2023  
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Jeremy P. Pierre

This project aims to equip Christians to relieve depression through an online biblical mind renewal curriculum. Chapter 1 introduces the context, rationale, and goals of the project. Chapter 2 provides the biblical and theological foundation for biblical mind renewal, including an exposition of Romans 12:1-2.

Chapter 3 addresses theoretical and practical issues related to relieving depression. Specifically, the physiological aspects of healthy brain function are introduced as a core consideration in relieving serious depression.

Chapter 4 explains the implementation of the project. The project included conducting two pre-course surveys, teaching a ten-session curriculum, and conducting two post-series surveys to determine improvement of depression severity as well as improvement in equipping to relieve depression. Chapter 5 evaluates the effectiveness of the project based on achievement against the original goals. The key result is the positive statistically significant difference in participant well-being (depression severity) before and after the course:  $t_{(19)} = 3.92, p = .05$ .

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BS, Georgia Institute of Technology, 1995  
ThM, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2002

#### PUBLICATIONS

“Creating Value: A Blueprint and Case Study to Apply the ISE Skillset in Any Domain.” In *Maynard’s Industrial and Systems Engineering Handbook*, edited by Bopaya Bidanda, 982-90. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2022.  
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With Katie Reid. *Leading to the Bedroom: The Christian Couple’s Path to Greater Sexual Intimacy and Freedom*. Carrollton, GA: InnerMan Resources, 2010.

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