

Summary

- a) This session is the seventh of ten sessions that looks at a vital principle that fosters Spirit-led living. The seventh principle that we will examine is this: Renewing your mind comes from meditation, and meditation always determines your orientation, whether you live from the spirit, soul, or body.
- b) This session looks at mental strongholds and the need to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. More specifically, this session looks at the stronghold of unworthiness, guiding you to the truth that leads to victory and freedom.

Taking Every Thought Captive

- a) In John 15:9-10, Jesus said, “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”
- b) Obedience to Jesus’s commandments is crucial to abiding in Him.
- c) In 2 Corinthians 10:3-6, Paul said, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.”
- d) Notice that obedience to Christ is linked to how you think: “We are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.”
- e) Complete obedience is bridal readiness. Therefore, a key part of making yourself ready as a bride for Jesus Christ is waging war against the mental strongholds that block or hinder Christ’s life from flowing within you.
- f) Summarizing these two passages, obedience to Christ’s commandments is crucial to abiding in Christ and producing the fruit of the Spirit. To obey like this is accomplished one thought at a time. Taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Destroying mental strongholds results in obedience, obedience leads to abiding, and both obedience and abiding produce bridal readiness.

Mental Strongholds

- a) In these three verses, Paul used fortresses as a metaphor for thinking patterns. Specifically, these are speculations, imaginations (KJV), or arguments (NKJV).
- b) The Greek word for *speculations* is *logismos*, which means “reckoning, computation, and reasoning.” These are mindsets of the flesh which contend against the knowledge of God.
- c) Since Paul’s audience was quite familiar with fortified cities, this analogy certainly struck a chord with the Corinthians, providing a powerful visual cue of how soulish reasoning and carnal mindsets block the release of God’s inward life.
- d) Fleshly thinking patterns are like ramparts, defensive walls of a city, typically between 15 to 25 feet thick and over 25 feet high. These massive constructs kept the citizens of the city insulated from outside attack. But when applied to believers, mental strongholds don’t keep the enemy out; these keep God out, preventing the release of Christ’s life from within.
- e) Hopefully this helps you visualize how soulish and carnal thinking patterns work. When you develop fleshly mindsets—mental strongholds of the soul and body coupled together—these obstruct the

release of the Spirit from within you. As a result, the indwelling life of Christ, meant to fill your heart, permeate your soul, and harness your body, lies suppressed and dormant within you.

- f) Applying lessons from previous sessions, mental strongholds usually have a heart-mind connection. Heart beliefs feed the mind, and the mind, in turn, forms arguments and reasonings supporting the heart beliefs, further cementing mental strongholds, and keeping Christ's life from flowing freely within you.
- g) "The weapons of our warfare" that are "divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses" is the two-edged sword of God's living and active Word. This anointed sword divides between soul and spirit.

Complex Root Systems

- a) This complex web of heart beliefs and thinking patterns are like root systems of a tree. This reminds me of the redwood trees in Northern California.
- b) In 2008, Angie and I went to Muir Woods in San Francisco, home to some of the most massive redwood trees in the world. These trees grow to 200 to 240 feet high with diameters of 10 to 15 feet.
- c) But even more impressive are the root systems of these redwoods. Though the root systems are relatively shallow, often only 5-6 feet deep, the roots span outward over one hundred feet from the base, often intertwining with the roots of other redwoods.
- d) By joining with the root systems of other trees, the base of each tree is further strengthened by the larger, wider system of roots, providing stability, and keeping the trees from falling during strong winds and fierce storms.
- e) Mental strongholds work in a similar way. These are complex thinking patterns—an intertwining of heart beliefs, mental arguments and reasonings, emotions, desires, bodily cravings, and demonically-inspired thoughts.
- f) Like the root systems of redwood trees, mental strongholds are often reinforced by other, different patterns of thought, forming a redwood tree forest in the mind of interconnected mindsets.
- g) Whatever metaphor you use, whether ancient city walls or the root systems of redwood trees, mental strongholds must be torn down if you want to live from your spirit by the power of the indwelling Spirit.

The Mind Set on the Flesh

- a) The reason why believers are carnal, still living from their soul or body, is because their mind is focused on things related to the soul or the body.
- b) Paul made this point clear in Romans 8:5, where he said, "For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."
- c) The person who sets their mind on things of the flesh will live from the flesh. Conversely, the person who sets their mind on the things of the Spirit will live from the Spirit.
- d) Paul also added, "The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6).
- e) If your mind revolves around things of the flesh, which could literally be a thousand different things, you will live in spiritual death, even though Christ's indestructible, overcoming, resurrection life resides in your spirit. On the other hand, if your mind reflects upon the indwelling Spirit and how He has transformed your spirit into a new creation, you will live in peace and be filled with Christ's life.

- f) Always remember: Meditation determines orientation. Whether you live from the cravings of the body, the reasonings, emotions, and preferences of the soul, or the revelation, intuition, and conscience of the spirit is determined by your thinking.
- g) Going further, Paul said, “The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God” and is unable to “subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:7-8).
- h) What does it look like when the mind is set on the flesh? If you closely examine the actions of the flesh, which Galatians 5:19-21 describes in detail, it becomes clear. These deeds of the flesh are “immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these.”
- i) Lurking underneath these actions of the flesh, like a gigantic iceberg buried beneath deep waters, are mindsets of the flesh, which empower these deeds.

Carnal Mindsets

- a) In this session and the next several sessions, I will describe a number of mental strongholds. These mindsets of the flesh function like ancient city walls, keeping Christ out while keeping self-life insulated.
- b) Like the root systems of redwood trees, these complex thinking patterns intertwine with other mindsets, shaping, strengthening, and establishing a complex web of mental strongholds.
- c) The key to living a victorious, Spirit-led life is deconstructing these fleshly thinking patterns one lie at a time. How? By confronting each lie with truth.
- d) Jesus said, “You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:32).
- e) Knowing the truth always brings freedom from mental strongholds, paving the way for Christ in you to live His life through you.
- f) As I explain these mental strongholds, time won’t allow a thorough explanation of each. In reality, entire books could be written on each one. So, for the sake of time, I will try and keep it simple. My goal is to give you a good idea of each mindset. And then later, you can take the truths you gleaned, and go deeper, if necessary.
- g) If it makes you feel better, I have struggled with each of these mindsets in the past. So, speaking from experience, you, too, can overcome these fleshly, soulish thinking patterns.
- h) If any or all these mindsets describe you:
 - Don’t get discouraged or condemned.
 - Stay confident—you really can be set free if you will learn to meditate on the truth.
 - Take responsibility for the thoughts in your mind and the beliefs in your heart.
 - Don’t put all the blame on the devil.
 - Jot down areas in your life that need to change.
 - Ask the Holy Spirit to identify the heart beliefs that have led you to where you are.
 - Change your heart beliefs by spending time meditating upon the truth where lies have prevailed.
 - If you have done all this and still struggle to overcome, you might need deliverance from demons.

1. A Stronghold of Unworthiness

- a) Psychiatrists teach that most of the lies we believe are rooted in one of these three beliefs:

I'm helpless.

I'm worthless.

I'm unlovable.

- b) An unworthy mindset believes the lies that you are worthless and unlovable. This could stem from a thousand different experiences.

Unworthiness Rooted in Deep Sin

- a) Whether you sinned before you were saved or after, perhaps you believe your past too dark, too deep, and too prolonged for God to love you, accept you, and forgive you.
- b) Maybe you were involved in a lengthy affair, had an abortion, or instigated a divorce. Perhaps you are addicted to pornography, enslaved by homosexual desires, imprisoned by perverted fantasies, or in bondage to alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs. The list is almost inexhaustible.
- c) Whatever you may have done, it's easy to believe your past sins are too wretched for a holy God to pardon. As a result, you are assaulted with nonstop thoughts of guilt, shame, and condemnation.
- d) Your mind is dominated by thoughts that make you feel worthless and unlovable.
- e) Strongholds of sin have made you feel like a hopeless hypocrite who could never please God. Your mind is plagued with continuous thoughts of guilt for what you have done and shame for who you are. Or maybe you have struggled with one sin for years after you were saved, even for decades, and feel unworthy of God's acceptance.
- f) If you have a deep, dark past of prolonged sin and feel unworthy of God's forgiveness, love, and grace, spend ample amounts of time meditating on justification by grace alone through faith alone part from works.
- g) Revisit session 13 which talked about living from victory.
- Reflect upon the blood of Jesus Christ cleansing your conscience to its very core.
 - Ponder how justification—where God declares you righteous in Christ apart from any works—breaks the power of sin and precedes sanctification and obedience.

Unworthiness Rooted in Abuse

- a) An unworthy mindset can also be rooted, not in what you have done, but in what was done to you.
- b) If you have been the victim of verbal, sexual, emotional, or physical abuse, it would be natural for you to struggle with thoughts of unworthiness. You can feel shame for what was done to you, and as a result, battle feelings of disgrace, even extreme embarrassment for who you are.
- c) If you have experienced some type of abuse, it's important to remember that hurting people hurt people and you are not the reason for the abuse.
- d) If you have an unworthy mindset, then you might even believe what happened to you was well deserved.

- e) A mindset of unworthiness makes people feel ugly and dirty, causing them to withdraw from people and even the presence of God.
- f) If your unworthy mindset stems from what has been done to you, go deep into God's love for you—that He enjoys you, likes you, and loves you, even in your weakness, stumbling, and sin.
- g) Think deeply upon the truth that the Father loves you like He loves Jesus and Jesus loves you like the Father loves Him (John 17:23; John 15:9).
- h) Pray daily for a revelation of the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you would be rooted and grounded in the length, width, breadth, and height of Christ's unfailing love (Eph. 3:17-19).

Unworthiness Rooted in Rejection

- a) Rejection can also trigger a mindset of unworthiness.
- b) If you have been the victim of infidelity, abandonment, withheld love, condemning words, oppressive parental discipline, spousal control, or trauma, then you might struggle with rejection, low self-esteem, and a mindset of unworthiness.

Identify What Makes You Feel Unworthy

- a) Whatever the cause of an unworthy mindset, people tormented with thoughts of guilt, shame, condemnation, low self-esteem, and self-hatred will find it more difficult to live from their spirit.
- b) If you have an unworthy mindset, it's impossible to live fully from your spiritual union with Christ until you are convinced Jesus' imputed righteousness has made you righteous and His love has healed your brokenness and wounds.
- c) If you have an unworthy mindset, identify what lies make you feel worthless and unlovable.
- d) If you constantly battle thoughts of unworthiness, your ultimate victory will come as you look away from yourself and your unworthiness and look to Christ, who alone is worthy.
- e) If you struggle with low self-esteem, this is actually a subtle form of pride focused on your worthlessness rather than gazing upon the worthy One in you.
- f) Overcoming an unworthy mindset can be as simple as renewing your mind in the truth that Christ has recreated your spirit in righteousness and holiness, and you are now a partaker of Christ's divine nature in your spirit.

Verses Focused on God's Love for You

- a) John 17:23 – "You . . . loved them, even as You have loved Me."
- b) John 15:9 – "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you."
- c) Ephesians 3:17-19 – "That you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God."
- d) Psalms 91:14 – "Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him securely on high, because he has known My name."
- e) Song of Solomon 7:10 – "I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me."
- f) Romans 8:31-39 – "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all

things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, 'FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.' But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Verses Focused on the Gift of Imputed Righteousness and Justification

- a) Romans 4:6 – "David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works."
- b) Romans 5:17-18 – "For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men."
- c) Romans 5:1 – "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."
- d) Romans 5:9 – "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him."
- e) Romans 5:16 – "The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification."

Verses Focused on You Being God's Child

- a) Luke 15:21-24 – "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate."
- b) Ephesians 1:5 – "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will."
- c) Romans 8:16-17 – "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him."
- d) Galatians 3:26 – "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."

A Prayer for Victory

- a) Take these verses and turn them into your own prayer that you pray regularly.
- b) Here's an example.

Father, I come to You in the name of Jesus Christ. I thank You Father that You love me just as much as You love Jesus. Lord Jesus, I thank You that as the Father has loved You, You have loved me. No matter what I have done in the past, I am forgiven, justified, and declared righteous because of the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Father, I am Your child with the spiritual DNA of Jesus Christ. Jesus, I

am Your beloved whom You desire. Lord God, I declare that You are for me and not against me. Nothing shall ever separate me from the love of God that is in Jesus Christ my Lord. Father God, You declare me righteous in Christ, destroying all guilt, shame, and condemnation. Therefore, there is no one who can condemn me. Father God, I pray that You would root and ground me in the love of Christ. Let me experience Your love that is beyond explanation. Let me experience the length, width, breadth, and height of Your infinite love for me. Even though I don't feel worthy to be called your child, you have adopted me as Your very own. I am a son of God through faith in Christ Jesus. And because of Your great love for me, you put the best robe upon me, a ring on my finger, and sandals on my feet. You celebrate Me with joy. You like, love me, and enjoy me. Thank You Lord God. In Jesus' name, amen.