

# Life Groups

TOUCHING YOUR WORLD

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## November 2011 Lesson

### Renewing Your Mind

Thank you for being a part of this month's LIFE Group lesson. On behalf of our Pastors David and Diane Demola I welcome you and pray that you will have a great time as we study God's word. This month's lesson is entitled: **Renewing Your Mind**. Before we begin today's lesson I would like your LIFE Group to take this time and reflect on the goodness of the Lord as we play this worship video clip. I will see you in a little bit.

[Worship Video]

Many of us are very careful to take care of our bodies. We try our best to eat right, exercise, and sleep. Time and attention is focused on how we look. As much as these are important we need to focus on taking care of our mind. We can try to revitalize and change our appearance in every so way. But if our mind is not catered to we begin to mask issues that lay within that will eventually affect our body. It is God's desire that we *renew* our minds and as we do so we'll begin to enjoy the journey towards fulfilling God's purpose for us.

The mind is the gateway to our life and the thoughts that we entertain can either help build us or break us. Thoughts that are not aligned to God's Word are to be dealt with immediately before it consumes us and become a part of us. Today we're going to expose a few of these contaminating thoughts. As we do so my prayer is that these contaminating thoughts are abandoned and we embrace the truth of God's Word.

**Contaminating thought # 1 – God is the cause of all both good and evil.** Unfortunately, this perception has brought confusion and distorted the truth of who God is for many Christians. When tragic events occur - the religious community tries to explain it by saying that God was teaching them a lesson. This perception is totally unfounded in God's Word. This distorted image of our Lord causes people's eyes to be blinded to really love the Lord and experience His love. The Bible says in Psalm 34:8 – "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" God is a good God and He's not the cause of evil. He is not bi-polar to have a personality shift every other moment. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. His love for us is eternal and is not dependent on us. His grace abounds and His faithfulness is based on the covenant made on the cross for us! Both good and evil cannot come from our Lord.

The Bible says in James 1:17 – “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.” The Lord desires to give us all that He has provisioned for us and they are for good and not for evil. God is not mad at us and He certainly doesn’t sit there with a stick looking for the opportunity to punish us. He is our Heavenly Father and He desires for us to have fellowship with Him and He desires to love on us. The Bible says in Matthew 7:9-12 that if a son asks for bread will a father give him a stone? If the son asks for a fish will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!” It’s not that we deserved any of this but He has given them to us because we are His dear children. Jesus said in John 10:10 “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” Does this mean as Christians we are exempt from going through situations? That would be completely inaccurate. The Bible says in Psalm 34:19 that “Many are the afflictions of the righteous...” but the good thing is that the verse doesn’t end there. The verse continues to say, “... but the Lord delivers him out of them all.” In whatever circumstance we may be going through today – at the end we WIN because Jesus paid the price in full for us on the cross so that we may have victory in area of our life.

**Contaminating thought # 2: Anger, bitterness, and hatred toward others.** We all have at some point in our life have been offended or hurt by others. What others have done is personal so the extremity of the pain can only be measured by you. But if these offenses or situations are not dealt with, bitter emotions will begin to bear root in us. Thoughts of anger and hatred will arise in us because we chose to not forgive and harbor the pain. The Lord desires for us to be healed through His name. The world’s view would be to justify the anger and bitterness because it wasn’t rightfully deserved. But what they fail to understand is that we are empowering these contaminating thoughts to overcome us. The harmful affects can be great. We become reluctant to love others because we wonder if we will get hurt again. There is always a guard that is put up versus having the love of God flow in us and through us to others. It can get worse when these thoughts become part of our nature. We are then hot-tempered, lash out on others, and spiteful to the point that we care less about the feelings of others. All that matters at that point is that we are okay. At that point we have moved from defending ourselves to becoming an offense to others. Pride will be the only factor that will keep us from being liberated from these thoughts. Today, you can be healed ... its time to let go and purposely forgive even if they haven’t apologized and LOVE. As you do so those contaminating emotions that you have been entangled with will be loosed off you in Jesus name! Our vertical love which is our love to the Lord should be reflective to our horizontal love which is our love to others. 1 John 4:20-21 puts it like this – “If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.” Abandon those contaminating thoughts today and receive the healing that is available for you today. Jesus took upon Himself your pain on the cross so that in exchange you can be healed and made whole.

**Contaminating thought # 3: Intimidation.** The result of Intimidation is having a sense of inferiority due to insecurities that have been caused by others or circumstances. Others may have labeled you due to your current situation or even your past. These thoughts may even arise due to your background, education, or the way you look. When these thoughts bear root we start believing them and it becomes a part of us. We then feel like a minority. It debilitates us from releasing the God-given potential in us. As much as God given abilities lay within us, intimidation becomes a road block for us. These thoughts are unfounded when we realize who we are in Christ Jesus. The moment we have received Jesus Christ in our life, there is greatness inside of us. The Holy Spirit now resides in us forever. We are now part of royalty because of the work on the cross. We are not considered by the Lord as “step” children but as His dear children. Although many people in the Bible were labeled by others, it did not prevent them from pursuing God’s purpose. They had even labeled Jesus as “Mary’s son”... “the carpenter’s son” ... they even went so far as questioning “can anything good come out of Nazareth?” But these words did not affect Jesus to fulfill His ultimate purpose. Take a look at the life of Jabez. His mother bore him in pain and so she named him Jabez which means to make sorrowful. He was labeled with “sorrow” at birth which was a constant reminder – unfortunately initiated by his own mother. But Jabez chose to not be entrapped and live by what he was named. He chose to contradict that contaminating thought. The Bible says Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, “Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!” So God granted him what he requested. God blessed him so much that Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. Today we need to abandon the thoughts of intimidation and think above our current circumstance and what others have labeled us. Allow the Spirit of God to arise within us and realize who we are because of what He has done for us.

**Contaminating thought # 4: Fear.** Although concerns and worries are feelings that we will all have at some point, those thoughts can escalate to fear and anxiety. Fear can truly be a debilitating experience. But today let’s unveil what fear really is. It is an emotion that has no foundation on anything tangible. It is a concern of the possible future and not of the present. As we spend time and energy on worrying about what’s ahead we lose sleep and sight of what’s going on today. God desires that we cast our cares upon Him because he cares for us. Allow the Lord who is the Prince of Peace to fill our hearts with His peace that goes beyond what we can comprehend. The Bible says over and over, “Fear not for I am with you”. Let’s hold on to that Word. We are not on this journey alone. He remains not only with us but in us forever. Starve those thoughts of worry and concern by putting your trust in the Lord and resting in Him. Psalm 46:10 says, “Be still, and know that I am God.”

**Contaminating thought # 5: Loneliness.** We have all felt alone at some point in our life. The people we were dependent may have not fulfilled our expectations. As time goes on and our situation does not change it can become frustrating. Some of us have even wondered - Has God forgotten me? But today these thoughts can be abandoned because of what the Lord has promised us.

He has promised to never leave us or forsake us. The Bible says in **Isaiah 49:15-16**, “Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands...” We are never alone because the Lord is closer than we can ever imagine. He has chosen to dwell in us the moment we receive the gift of salvation. Today the void in our life can be removed and we can be filled with His love and His presence. Let’s acknowledge His presence that is in us and allow the Lord to reveal Himself to us. The Lord desires that we have a living relationship with Him. We have the incredible privilege to speak to Him as a friend speaks to a friend. So let’s abandon the false perception that you are by yourself and no one is with you. You and the Lord make the majority and His promise to be with us is for eternity.

We have gone over just a handful of thoughts that are contaminating and I’m sure there are yet more. When we entertain these thoughts in our mind and harbor them over a long period of time there are harmful consequences. Some of these consequences can be clinical and can lead to depression, heart problems, obesity etc. These contaminating thoughts begin to affect our body and even our behavior.

The solution is to refuse to entertain these harmful thoughts and to renew our mind. The Bible encourages us in **Romans 12:2** “**And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**” We need to breakaway from the mindset of the world and begin to mould our mindset around God’s Word. As thoughts enter our mind we are to identify if they are of God and deal with them accordingly. The mindset of the world thinks on those that are natural and present. It can even extend to the future but they are followed by concern and worry. We can use Jeremiah 29:11 as a gauge to identify if those thoughts are from the Lord or not. The Bible says, “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.” Anything outside of that would have to be not of God.

How can we renew our mind? It certainly does not come overnight. But we are to work towards aligning our mindset to God’s Word. This can be done by **mediating on scriptures** that show who God is and His will for us. The bible says in **Philippians 4:8** “...whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.” When we study and focus on who God is – He becomes the focal point and there is none that can compare. He becomes bigger than any situation that we may be going through. We’ll begin to see the Lord as our everything – our Creator, Healer, Provider, Savior, Protector, Deliverer, Advocate, and the list would go on because He is GOD. Those contaminating thoughts will begin to be meaningless as we allow God’s character to become meaningful to us. Mediate on scriptures about the Lord that will directly help in the areas where it will be applicable for you. For example if you are struggling in your mind about healing – don’t focus on scriptures related to God’s provision and finances. But focus on how He is the Healer and the Lord who healed in the Scriptures is still healing today!

Meditate on the Scriptures that reveal His will for our life. When we do so we will begin to realize His purpose for our life versus the will and perception of others. His will for us is not for evil but for good so that we might have a hope and future. What we deposit in our mind is what we withdraw. If we have not deposited the Word of God in our minds those contaminating thoughts would take precedence over all. The Word of God is like a compass that will give us focus and direction. The Bible says in **Psalm 119:105** "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

Along with meditating the Word of God we need to choose to **believe** it. God's Word doesn't change. The Bible is not made up of passages that were relevant once upon a time. It is relevant and applicable for us today and now! God is faithful to fulfill His Word. By faith we can receive all that God has provisioned in our life. Our level of confidence in the Lord should not be partial. We cannot rely on ourselves or other and on God. We need to know that God is the source and not ourselves or others. The Bible says in **James 1:6-8** "... But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; *he is* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." The Bible encourages us to not be conformed to the world which includes the world's mindset. The world's mindset always takes into consideration the "reality" factor. But the Lord we serve cannot be contained in a box. The same Lord who did miracles in the past is doing them even today. Let's not limit God for what He can do. But let's believe like a child who doesn't have any pre-notions but would believe with a pure heart.

As we mediate and believe in God's word we should allow it to become part of **our conversation**. Avoid conversations that would empower these contaminating thoughts. Speak on those that will bless yourself and others. The words that come out of our mouth should bring life and not death. Speak on things that are hopeful and not of discouragement and disappointment. Our words should reflect on the Word that we mediate on and have our faith in. As we choose to speak life, those situations we may have lost hope on will change and God will cause life to those dead situations.

Today let's actively choose to abandon those contaminating thoughts. It's time to change the channel to the world's mindset and tune into God's will and remain there! Today the Lord desires for you to be liberated from those thoughts so you can experience all of what God has in store for you.

### ***Let's pray!***

**Heavenly Father, I thank you for who you are and for your perfect will for each of us. I thank you that they are for good and not for evil. So today we ask you to liberate us from the world's mindset and allow the mind of Christ to overtake us. We choose to abandon those thoughts that are not of you. We thank you for victory over each of them in Jesus name!**

You may have never made Jesus the Lord of your life. Today is your day to have a brand new start and have a relationship with your Heavenly Father. What he has done for you is incredible and today I encourage you to pray this prayer out loud along with everyone in your group. Dear Heavenly Father, today I pray that you would be my Lord and Savior, Come into my life and change me and make me your child. I give my life to you. I confess with my mouth and believe with my heart that you died for me and that you rose again. In Jesus name! Amen.

If you had prayed that prayer for the first time, let me be the first to say: Welcome to the family of God! I'm excited for what God is about to do in your life! God bless you!

### **Discussion Questions**

- Share personal testimonies on how renewing your mind has changed your life.
- Discuss how thoughts can affect your body and behavior.
- Discuss how to align your mindset to the Word of God.

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