

Words Of Life, Words Of Death

Cognitive Distortions

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When I talked to Diane several weeks ago, I mentioned that an alternative title I had considered was "Bringing Every Thought Into Captivity" echoing II Corinthians 10:5. My purpose this morning is to give you a practical overcoming tool to eventually enable you to gain control over what I characterized two years ago as our most dangerous battlefield. Some might ask, "Is Dave Maas back on that old theme?" As motivational specialist Paul Meyer would say, "Not back on it—still on it." By the time we conclude today, I hope to help all of us make this horrendous struggle against our human nature a little easier. I had intended that this sermon be a nuts-and-bolts study on overcoming our stubborn human nature.

The one measurable characteristic which distinguishes a human being from an animal is his ability to use vocal and written symbols—in other words, language. With this remarkable ability he can store experience like putting up "time preserves," enabling him to savor the good times in the midst of adversities, or perhaps to enhance the pleasure of the good times by making comparisons to memories of harsher or more unpleasant times.

Using these "time preserves" a human being may have a continuous feast regardless of the circumstances." (Proverbs 15:15)

Curiously, this capacity to manipulate oral and written symbols has a double-edged positive and negative side. God's Word tells us that both "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit." (Proverbs 18:21) The father of General Semantics, Count Alfred Korzybski, once marveled, "Man is the only creature who can talk himself into a nervous breakdown and the only creature who can talk himself out of it." One of my former associates, Susan Kodish, recently wrote a book entitled, *Drive Yourself Sane*, exploring techniques for keeping sane through the hygienic use of language.

One of my former psychology professors, Dr. Donovan Coleman at the University of Wisconsin, once reported a number of incidents in which the "symbol" played a greater role in the perception of reality than the reality itself. In one incident a man in the old Soviet Union died in a refrigerator car, suffering the classic hypothermia and frost bite symptoms. The amazing thing about this incident was that the freezer unit was not turned on. The temperature in the refrigerator car remained at a life sustaining 65

degrees.

In the second incident, a woman appeared to be ironing clothes. When her husband walked through the door with just a swimsuit and bare midriff, she playfully lobbed the iron against his stomach and said, "Hi Honey!" Blisters and welts appeared with the impression of the iron. The amazing thing was the iron was not plugged in.

In both incidents, the symbolic significance overpowered the reality. I have, in the past, experienced the same kind of tricks played on me by my nervous system when I cross the Rio Grande from Brownsville to Matamoros, Mexico. Before I have even started to eat or drink anything, my intestines would begin to cramp, anticipating the onset of Montezuma's Revenge. Based upon nothing but vocal symbols, my nervous system had manufactured the dreaded symptom.

Our reality, or should I say, our perception of reality, is determined by the vocal symbols (oral or printed) which we feed our nervous systems. This understanding adds a new dimension to the proverb, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23).

In other words, we need to be careful what we put into our minds. In terms of self-talk, "You are," in the words of motivational specialist Paul Meyer, "what you think about all day long." The understanding about symbols gives a new dimension to the proverb, "He who guards his mouth preserves his life. But he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction" (Proverbs 13:3; 21:23). These proverbs could also implicate the destructive self-talk we level against ourselves on a daily basis.

Guarding our heart or guarding our spirit we could consider equivalent to guarding the written or oral symbols which we feed it.

Proverbs 15:4 A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.

Conversely we learn:

Proverbs 16:24 Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones.

The power of the word (printed and spoken) can be used to heal or destroy.

Proverbs 12:18 There is one who speaks like the piercing of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health.

The Scriptures make it clear that both physical and spiritual health stem from proper use of the tongue.

John Ritenbaugh has made it clear over the preceding months that life-saving faith comes from the continuous intake of life-giving words. The apostle Paul reminds us that, "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Our elder brother adds to this understanding, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life (John 6:63).

The Scriptures are replete with examples where people have used words to both encourage and discourage other people. We learn about the healing quality of Job's words:

Job 4:4 Your words have upheld him who was stumbling, and you have strengthened the feeble knees.

Isaiah used his power of speech to give strength to the weary:

Isaiah 50:4 The Lord God has given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak in season to him who is weary.

Some words have the power to revitalize life. My mother years ago used to read a story about a horse that had been mishandled and abused for many years and finally sold to a dirt-poor farmer, who had used this animal for plowing. On one occasion the horse had a great difficulty maneuvering around a boulder in the field. Exhaustedly, he cringed, expecting a lash of the whip. Instead, the farmer gently said, "Come Bob." The horse, infused with new energy from those gentle words was renewed with energy.

For years I have taken my son's cat, Matt, on a walk several times a week through the University nature trail. He braces his back paws against my abdomen, extending his claws only enough to get anchorage on my shirt. His front paws he allows to hang limp over my hand while I cradle his ribcage between my thumb and forefingers, allowing me to monitor his heartbeat.

The University power plant with its noisy dynamos and the high-pitched whine of its diesel driven turbines provides a formidable racket, scaring both man and beast. At first, little Matt's heart would race like a jackhammer and his claws would extend further into my skin while he struggled to get away. I would then, after the manner of the horse whisperer, speak with *soto voce* (soft voice) into Matt's ears, "Daddy's baby. Daddy loves the kitty," gently stroking him at the same time under his throat and around his neck.

After months and months of this kind of repeated reinforcement, Matt learned to relax when we passed the power plant. All I needed to say was, "Daddy's baby. Daddy loves the kitty." and Matt would settle right down.

About two months ago a man with a large German Shepherd was approaching me and the cat on the trail. I gently said to Matt: "Daddy's baby. Daddy loves the kitty." The German Shepherd gave a series of full-throated barks. Matt did not flinch a muscle, but proceeded to look down with a disdainful eye on this noisy barbarian. The owner remarked, "I have never seen such a calm cat."

During the past few weeks, Matt and I have walked many miles through the East Texas woods on the network of Mobil-Exxon pipelines. We have encountered fox, deer, raccoon, skunks, flocks of crows, and other critters. Matt turns his head in interest, but he does not become startled because he knows Daddy will protect him.

Proverbs 12:25 suggests that anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad.

The Scriptures also contain many examples of the power of the spoken word to intimidate, causing an epidemic of panic and discouragement. One of the classic examples we read about concern the evil report of the ten spies Moses had commissioned to spy out the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy 1:27-28 And you have murmured in your tents and said, "Because the Lord hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us. Where can we go up? Our brethren have discouraged our hearts saying, "The people are greater and taller than we; the cities are great and fortified up to heaven; moreover we have seen the sons of Anakim [giant-like human beings] there."

In Joshua we read Rahab's account of the words about the exploits of Israel on the

inhabitants of Jericho.

Joshua 2:11 And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.

One of the most dramatic examples of the power of both the written and spoken word to discourage is found in Nehemiah 6:6 as Sanballat, after four times failing with four or five slanderous oral distractions, sends a libelous letter.

Nehemiah 6:6 It is reported among the nations and Gishem says, that you and the Jews plan to rebel; therefore, according to these rumors, you are rebuilding the wall, that you may be their king.

Nehemiah replies to that liar Sanballat:

Nehemiah 6:8-9 No such things as you say are being done, but you invent them in your heart. For they all were trying to make us afraid, saying, "Their hands will be weakened in the work, and it will not be done."

A certain modern day Sanballat, the freckle-faced representative of St. Louis, Richard Gephardt, pulled a similar tactic when the timid and irresolute, though well-meaning, majority party tried to slow down the rate of growth of the Medicare entitlement program to save it from bankruptcy. Both Representative Gephardt and Senator Boxer of California irresponsibly referred to this responsible move as a draconian cut aimed at hurting and starving old people. In the words of Dick Cheney, "The only thing that Gephardt and Boxer can offer is fear itself."

Representative Gephardt and Senator Boxer have the remarkable talent of pitting one economic class against another, one ethnic group against another, one gender against another, and one age group against another. Unfortunately they are not the only modern Sanballats around.

Proverbs 25:28 Whoever has no rule over his own spirit [Remember the admonition in Proverbs 4:23 to guard our thoughts] is like a city broken down, without walls.

Brethren, are we inadvertently carrying around our own Sanballats in our own nervous systems?

We have been called upon to repair and fortify our spiritual walls. We must fortify ourselves against the negative self-talk generated in our own nervous system. The apostle Paul in II Corinthians 10:5 admonishes us to "bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

Twenty years ago Dr. David Burns wrote a popular self-help book called *Feeling Good*, desiring to make a psychological approach called cognitive therapy "user friendly" for the lay person. I first saw David Burns on Good Morning LA with Regis Philbin and Cindy Garvey when they were local talk show hosts over Channel 7 in Los Angeles. I found David Burns' technique for combating depression fascinating. In my evaluation of that work (which appeared in the Summer 1997 ETC journal of General Semantics) I wrote an evaluation of this self-help book mentioning that I regard it as one of the most valuable books I have ever read. I have purchased and given away many copies of this book to friends and relatives, including my 31 year old son, who used it to help bring himself back from the brink of suicidal depression.

Dr. Burns states that, "The first principle of cognitive therapy is that all your moods are created by your cognitions or thoughts. A cognition refers to the way you look at things—what you say about something or someone to yourself." A cognition, in other words, refers to the self-talk that we carry on inside of our nervous systems.

Dr. Burns has suggested that all human beings unfortunately engage in a great deal of what he refers to as "cognitive distortions" or in other words, "**twisted thinking.**" Believing human nature to be remarkably standardized, Dr. Burns has identified ten cognitive distortions that entrap every human being. Burns insists that "every bad feeling you have is the result of your distorted negative thinking." I have included a synopsis of these ten cognitive distortions in a handout for each of you, along with scriptural examples, illustrating each of these cognitive distortions, or twisted thinking.

By becoming more aware of these predictable cognitive distortions, it will help all to "bring every thought into captivity" and get rid of the internal Sanballats which vex and annoy us on a daily basis. Martin Collins last spring referred to a similar list of such twisted thinking patterns.

1. The first cognitive distortion is called **All or Nothing** thinking. In this pattern, you see things in black and white categories. If your performance falls short of perfect, you see yourself as a total failure. In general semantics we refer to this pattern as polarization,

"either-or" or two-valued thinking.

Cain fell victim to this all-or-nothing thinking distortion.

Genesis 4:3-7 And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."

It was not a matter of Daddy or Momma likes my brother more than me. It was a matter of variable conditions over which Cain did have some control. As John Ritenbaugh stated on Trumpets, Cain knew the preconditions. There was a wide spectrum of choices Cain could use, rather than the simple, He likes me/He does not like me.

The same principle applies with the parable of the talents. The wicked lazy servant could only think in terms of success/failure, rich/poor, exhibiting a streak of class envy. (If I cannot be Bill Gates or Donald Trump, then I am a failure.). It also applies to the class envy which Representative Gephardt peddles on a daily basis.

Matthew 25:18, 24-27 But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. . . . Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. 'So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest.

Success is not a matter of having great largess or stakes of wealth. We do not have to be Rockefellers, Duponts, Ross Perots, or Bill Gates. We can be landscape workers, or guard rail contractors—or even obscure English teachers in deep East Texas.

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Other either/or distortions come in the form of dichotomies such as Liberal/Conservative, Protestant/Catholic, Fundamentalist/Orthodox. Former news commentator Harry Reasoner said, "I dislike labels. They put me in a category with people with whom I share only one thing in common."

Someone might ask, "Are you people in the church of God Protestant or Catholic?" In one context the churches of God are Protestant in the sense that they protest the authority of Rome. In another context, they are Catholic in that Catholic implies "universal"—suggesting God's one universal truth.

Peter fell into the either/or trap the evening of the Passover.

John 13:5-9 After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this." Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!"

We see this cognitive distortion at work in the Corinthian congregation when the matter of degree could not be seen in the punishment/forgiveness dichotomy. (II Corinthians 2:6-8) Ironically these same people thought they were loving this man by tolerating his sin. Now when the man had genuinely repented, the Corinthians congregation went to the opposite extreme of hard-nosed intolerance.

2. The second cognitive distortion David Burns identifies as **over-generalization—or seeing a single negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat**. Our forebears on the Sinai easily fell into this pattern of twisted thinking at the least sign of frustration.

Exodus 16:3 And the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

One negative event which the whole assembly sees as one continuous pattern of defeat. This past summer Dave Maas, as he had to replace three motors this year (long

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story) in his Chevy Lumina, sounded just like the whining children of Israel on the Sinai Peninsula. Ken Giese once remarked that he could sure see why God called them the "children" of Israel.

3. David Burns identifies the third pattern of twisted thinking as **Mental Filter**: You pick out a single negative detail and dwell on it exclusively so that your vision of all reality becomes darkened, like the drop of ink that discolors the entire beaker of water.

Our mother Eve in the Garden of Eden was given 10,000 options, but decided to obsess on the one she could not have.

Genesis 3:1-3 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" [God had just given Adam and Eve the privilege of eating from 99.99999999% of the trees in the Garden. Satan diverted Eve's attention to the one exception.] And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

(You remember on Trumpets, John pointed out that Eve fabricated the portion about not touching it.) Several times, on tests I have constructed, students try to get me to throw the whole test out because of one bad question.

Last year, Julie and I had a fabulous and productive Feast of Tabernacles. 99.999999% went well. Unfortunately, when I played the music for the offertory, I made some embarrassing clinkers. Instead of ruminating on the pleasant times at the Feast, all the way through the state of Oklahoma I obsessed upon my goofs and how I would never be able to look the musicians in the eye. By the time we entered Texas, Julie said, "I'm glad you keep obsessing on this. I *had thought* this had been one of the best feasts ever, but now that you go on and on I now see how horrible and awful the whole thing was. Thanks for straightening me out!" (Of course she was teasing .)

Another biblical example of the mental filter appears in the example of the Prodigal Son's older brother.

Luke 15:29-32 "So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry

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with my friends. 'But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' "And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. 'It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'"

4. David Burns identifies the fourth pattern of twisted thinking as **Disqualifying the positive**; you reject positive experiences by insisting they "don't count" for some reason or other. In this way you can maintain a negative belief that is contracted by your everyday experience.

Moses engaged in this pattern of twisted thinking when God asked him to be a spokesman

Exodus 4:10-14 Then Moses said to the LOORD, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." So the LOORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the LOORD? "Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say." But he said, "O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send." So the anger of the LOORD was kindled against Moses. . .

Now there is certainly a time and place for genuine humility. Humility is a Godly trait. But feigned humility or self-deprecation is not appropriate to make light of a spiritual or physical gift that has freely given us.

I have heard many beginning sermonette speakers begin their homily by referring to Balaam's ass. I, myself, back in Ralph Levy's Homiletics class began my first message, "If God can make Balaam's ass speak, He may be able to help Dave Maas." In retrospect, I think we pay too much homage to Balaam's ass.

Wednesday at the Millard Apple Farm, Bill Keesee dropped on the piano what I assumed to be a tip. He said it was not a tip, but tuition money for voice lessons. Now I may not be as good as Gene Autry or Darwin Keesee, but I know I can hold my own against Balaam's ass. I prefer instead the stance of one prominent Missourian who acknowledges, "Talent on loan from God."

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5. David Burns identifies the fifth pattern of twisted thinking as **Jumping to Conclusions**: You make a negative interpretation even though there are no definite facts that support this conclusion.

He subdivides this distortion into two points:

a. **Mind-reading**: You arbitrarily conclude that someone is reacting negatively to you, and you do not bother to check it out. General Semanticists refer to this pattern as the Inference-Observation Confusion.

The second subdivision he terms the:

b. **Fortune-telling** error. You anticipate that things will turn out badly, and you feel that your prediction is an already established fact.

Eli was guilty of mind reading when he watched the behavior of Hanna.

I Samuel 1:12-14 And it happened, as she continued praying before the LOORD, that Eli watched her mouth. Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk. [And he did not bother to check his inferences.] So Eli said to her, "How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!"

We have already seen the deplorable example of our forebears on the Sinai imputing sinister motives upon God Almighty.

Deuteronomy 1:27 And you complained in your tents, and said, 'Because the LOORD hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us.'

Mind reading went into the misevaluation about the eighteen killed by the falling tower of Siloam. Jesus rebuts this assumption.

Luke 13:4-5 "Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

On the first Pentecost, some of the crowd in Jerusalem fell guilty of this distortion as they accused the disciples of being drunk much the same as Eli had accused Hanna.

Acts 2:12-13 So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?" Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine." [Again, not bothering to check their inferences.]

We remember also that Job's counselors also jumped to conclusions about the cause of his affliction. Assuming or making an inference, Eliphaz jumps to the conclusion that Job had sinned.

Job 4:7-8 Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off? Even as I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same.

Job fell into the fortune telling distortion when he suggested,

Job 3:25 For the thing I greatly feared has come upon me, and what I dreaded has happened to me.

We increase the likelihood of calamities when we dwell on pictures of calamities and adversities in our heads.

Proverbs 10:24 The fear of the wicked will come upon him, and the desire of the righteous will be granted.

A somewhat humorous example of the fortune-telling distortion we read about in II Chronicles 18.

II Chronicles 18:7 So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "There is still one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD; but I hate him, because he never prophesies good concerning me, but always evil. He is Micaiah the son of Imla." And Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say such things!"

6. David Burns identifies the sixth pattern of twisted thinking as **Magnification**

(Catastrophizing) or Minimizing: You exaggerate the importance of things (such as your goof-up or someone else's achievement); or you inappropriately shrink things until they appear tiny (your own desirable qualities or the other fellow's imperfections). This is also called the "binocular trick."

The classic magnification distortion occurred with our forebears on the Sinai.

Numbers 13:31-33 But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. "There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

7. David Burns identifies the seventh pattern of twisted thinking as **Emotional Reasoning:** You assume that your negative emotions necessarily reflect the way things really are: "If feel it, therefore it must be true."

I feel like an idiot; therefore I must be an idiot.

I do not feel like going to class; therefore, I will not go to class.

Our mother Eve used emotional reasoning to justify her transgression.

Genesis 3:6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

Esau succumbed to emotional reasoning when he let his hunger pangs override what should have been his better judgment.

Genesis 25:30-32 And Esau said to Jacob, "Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary." Therefore his name was called Edom. But Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright as of this day." And Esau said, "Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?"

8. David Burns identifies the eighth pattern of twisted thinking as **Should Statements**: You try to motivate yourself with "shoulds" and "shouldn'ts", as if you had to be whipped and punished before you could be expected to do anything. "Musts" and "oughts" are also offenders. The emotional consequence is guilt. When you direct should statements toward others, you feel anger, frustration, and resentment.

Psychologist Albert Ellis has referred to this twisted thinking pattern as "Must-urbation".

Paul refers to this twisted thinking pattern as he warns the Corinthians against worldly sorrow.

II Corinthians 7:10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

Motivational specialist Paul Meyer suggests the most useless time thief of all is regret. Meyer asks, "What if you could go back and change or make right the things you did wrong? Think of the valuable lessons we have learned from making mistakes, and learning from them." Are we going to regret that too?

9. David Burns identifies the ninth pattern of twisted thinking as **Labeling and Mislabeling**: This is an extreme form of over-generalization. Instead of describing your error, you attach a negative label to yourself. "I'm a loser." When someone else's behavior rubs you the wrong way, you attach a negative label to him: "He's an idiot." Mislabeling involves describing an event with language that is highly colored and emotionally loaded.

We have already heard about Moses labeling himself a stutterer. Jeremiah labeled himself as a "youth" and got the same kind of rebuke which Moses has received:

Jeremiah 1:6-8 Then said I: "Ah, Lord GOOD! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth." But the LORD said to me: "Do not say, 'I am a youth,' for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you," says the LORD.

10. David Burns identifies the final pattern of twisted thinking as **Personalization or Blame**: "You blame yourself for something that did not prove entirely your fault, or you blame others, overlooking ways in which your own behaviors and attitudes contributed

to the problem."

Moses, by assuming the responsibility for judging and counseling all the people fell into this personalization, twisted thinking pattern.

Exodus 18:13-17 And so it was, on the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people; and the people stood before Moses from morning until evening. So when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?" And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. "When they have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws." So Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you do is not good."

What? "Making known the statutes of God" is not good? No, what was not good was Moses' self-absorbed misguided conscientiousness which prevented him from delegating responsibility. Jethro continues,

Exodus 18:18 Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself.

An old folk cliché (which most of us have already heard) says; "If you ever want to find out how indispensable or irreplaceable you are, just stick your hands in a pail of water and then remove them suddenly. The space that is left will show you how important you are."

When I left Texas College to assume my new responsibilities at Jarvis, I agonized that no one would be able to carry on the work I left behind. My replacement turned out to be a former colleague from Ambassador, Randy Urwiler, a very capable and competent teacher and administrator. I thanked God for leaving it in good hands.

As I was preparing this message last month, I was feverishly planning materials for my students and my substitute teachers, enabling me to attend the Feast without worrying about glitches. One strategy I used was to prepare power-point demonstrations, a technique of preparing slide-show instructional programs by means of computer. Each program was extremely labor intensive, taking four to five hours apiece. I laboriously

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made eight of these presentations.

When I read the account in Exodus 18, I suddenly blurted out, "Thank you, Jethro." I made eleven more introductions to the PowerPoint demonstrations, trained my students to make PowerPoint demonstrations, and turned the work over to them. As I deliver my message right now, my students are working on their PowerPoint demonstrations, supervised by a colleague who has to do nothing but take roll.

Brethren, I have come nowhere close to creating an exhaustive inventory of the cognitive distortions or twisted thinking patterns illustrated by certain characters and groups in the Bible. Hopefully, with this outline pattern, you can find further examples of these distortions, but more importantly, I hope I have shown you the ten most common forms of twisted thinking which afflict people and by so doing, "bringing every thought into captivity" and in the process turn the self-imposed words of death into words of life.