

The Mind of Christ

Wellspring Community Church

2020

**“We have the mind of Christ.”
1 Corinthians 2:16**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Week I	3
Your Identity	5
Your Story	7
Scary Close Circle	10
Story Turns	12
Your Timeline	20
Finding Redemptive Perspective of Your Negative Turns	26
Healing and Transformation	30
Week II	33
God-Moment/Joyful Memory Exercise	33
Trauma	35
Taking Thoughts Captive	36
Centering Prayer	37
Lectio Divina (Sacred Reading)	39
Week III	40
Anxiety	40
Strategies for Amygdala-Based Anxiety	41
Feelings Wheel	43
Strategies for Cortex-Based Anxiety	44
Immanuel Journaling	45
Depression and Its Antidotes	47
Week IV	48
Next Steps	49
Helpful Resources	50
Tips for Discerning/Testing Thoughts	50

WEEK I

Welcome to the Mind of Christ class! We are so glad that you're joining us on this journey. Great things are in store for you as you seek to better understand how to live out the Mind of Christ. If you're here today, there's a good chance that you've probably listened to some of our sermons on this topic over the past couple of weeks. We will be studying some great content together, but we'll also focus on giving you space to process what you're learning, help you partner with others on this journey and give you helpful tips and practical resources to better live out the Mind of Christ. We will ask you to do things that might be out of your comfort zone and we will also give you some assignments. As with anything in life, you'll get out of this what you put into it. Even if you're here mostly to learn how to better support a loved one who struggles with their thoughts, we encourage you to dive in fully and be an active participant as well. We can't make you do anything, but those that dive with an open heart and are willing to put in the work will certainly benefit the most. NOTE: we can't encourage you enough to connect with a trusted, compassionate friend each week between our meetings to help you process what you're learning, how God is speaking to you and help you consider what God might want you to do about it.

Now before we move forward, it's important to take some time to process what God has been speaking to you and what you've taken away from the teachings so far.

So, right now we'd like to give you a few minutes of silence to write down 1-2 of your biggest takeaways from the sermons on the Mind of Christ. **What stood out to you most from the messages? And what might God be asking you to do about it?*

Now we want to give you a few minutes of silence to write down why you're here. **Why are you joining us for this class? What are you hoping to gain from this experience?*

One of the first things we want to address, because we believe it's so important, is that God believes in you. Read that one more time. GOD BELIEVES IN YOU. Author Ann Voskamp, in her book *The Broken Way*, wrote, "You may believe in God, but never forget – it's *God* who believes in *you* . . . He believes in the story He's writing through you. He believes in *you* as a gift the world *needs* . . . *Christ is in me – so God can't help but believe in me!*"

Christ is in you – so God can't help but believe in you! That's the best news we could ever hear! CHRIST IS IN YOU – SO GOD CAN'T HELP BUT BELIEVE IN YOU. Let that truth resonant in your heart - God believes in you as you journey with Him to better understand and live out the Mind of Christ.

How does believing that God believes in you encourage you to move forward in this journey?

Your Identity

“You can’t experience intimacy with Christ until you know your identity in Christ. Activity for God – is not the same as intimacy with God or identity in God. And it is your intimacy with Christ that gives you your identity. You can’t experience the power of Christ, the mission of Christ, being made new in Christ, until you know who you are in Christ. Your identity literally means ‘the same’ – that regardless of changing circumstances, the core of you is unchangeable, stable, the same.

When your identity is in Christ, your identity is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Criticism can’t change it. Failing can’t shake it. Lists can’t determine it. When your identity is in the Rock, your identity is rock-solid. As long as God is for you, it doesn’t matter what mountain rises ahead of you. You aren’t your yesterday, you aren’t your messes, you aren’t your failures, you aren’t your brokenness. You are brave enough for today, because He is. You are strong enough for what’s coming, because He is. And you are enough for all that is, *because He always is.*

How we are is not who we are. How we feel about us is not how He feels about us . . . How we are is not who we are. Who we are is who He is . . .” – *Ann Voskamp, The Broken Way*

How do these truths stir your heart?

Have you been living out of this identity? Why or why not?

Now we're going to do something that most of us have probably never done before. We need every single person to pick a partner. It could be your spouse, your friend you came with, doesn't matter. If you don't know anybody here, then find someone and introduce yourself to them. If we need one group of three people, then that's totally fine.

We want to give you a few minutes to remind each other what's true of your identity in Christ. Everyday we're bombarded with a world (and Enemy) that tries to beat us down by telling us we're insignificant, that we're failures, that we should be ashamed of our past and so on. So we want you to audibly say the name of your partner, and then speak all of the things that are true of them in Christ. Here we go!

::This list was taken from a Young Life Leadership Training Handout (Justin Campbell, 2009)::

Say their name: _____

- *You are God's child – John 1:12
- *You are Christ's friend – John 15:15
- *You have been justified – Romans 5:1
- *You are a member of Christ's body – 1 Corinthians 12:27
- *You are a saint – Ephesians 1:1
- *You have been adopted as God's child – Ephesians 1:5
- *You have been redeemed and forgiven of all your sins – Colossians 1:14
- *You are complete in Christ – Colossians 2:10
- *You are free from condemnation – Romans 8:1-2
- *You cannot be separated from the love of God – Romans 8:35-39
- *You are a citizen of heaven – Philippians 3:20
- *You have not been given a spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind – 2 Timothy 1:7
- *You are born of God and the evil one cannot touch you – 1 John 5:18
- *You are the salt and light of the earth – Matthew 5:13-14
- *You have been chosen and pointed to bear fruit – John 15:16
- *You are a personal witness of Christ – Acts 1:8
- *You are God's temple – 1 Corinthians 3:16
- *You are God's coworker – 1 Corinthians 3:9
- *You are seated with Christ in the heavenly realm – Ephesians 2:6
- *You may approach God with freedom and confidence – Ephesians 3:12
- *You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you – Philippians 4:13
- *You are a child of God. THAT'S WHO YOU ARE – 1 John 3:1

What was that experience like for you, hearing a brother or sister in Christ proclaim your true identity to you?

Your Story

In order to better understand who you are and where you're heading, you first need to understand how you got here in the first place. Have you ever wondered how it's so hard for people to change? Why is it so hard getting traction to change unhealthy parts of our thinking and behavior? For most of us, it's because we don't know our story. We've never taken the time to examine our upbringing, what we've experienced and how those experiences have shaped us. Perhaps we've never wrestled with how we've been wounded by the words and actions of others or what triggers us to act out in anger or to isolate or run to addiction or (fill in the blank). Doing more "Christian things" isn't the answer. Exploring your heart and your story is the beginning step to truly allowing yourself to be healed by Christ and to let him redeem your story. And that's what we're going to take some time now and do together.

Nearly all of what you're about to read and work through in this section was taken from Donald Miller's books, *Storyline: Finding Your Subplot in God's Story* AND *Scary Close*. Some content was also taken from Donald Miller's Storyline Conference. And Wellspring's very own Rob Willoughby, Kelsey Irwin and Rich Fox help put together some of this content as well!

The exercises that follow will help you reflect back on key moments of your life that have shaped you in ways that perhaps you've never considered. Our hope is that you'll be better able to "connect the dots" between some of your current thinking patterns, ways of viewing the world and operating with experiences from your past. It's possible that some of you may have done a few of these exercises before. Feel free to find the copy of what you've previously written down so that you can refresh your memory. Or, just do to it again. It certainly won't hurt you! 😊

We want to give you 20 minutes right now to work on an exercise by yourself. Fill in your short answers to the statements on the next page (just answer as many as you can). You can write down more in-depth on your own time. This will give you some insight into your life.

THINK ABOUT THIS - The first time I realized (I was) . . .

smart -	intellectually challenged -	self-conscious -
shy -	poor -	afraid (fearful) -
rich -	sensitive -	insensitive -
in need of attention -	in need of affirmation -	accepted -
in love -	loved -	anxious and/or depressed -
I need a Savior -	who I am -	my parents weren't perfect -
my parents effect on me -	I have issues -	that I avoid hard things -
who my real friends are -	something isn't right -	my thoughts bothered me -

Now take a few minutes to consider what stands out to you the most about your observations and why?

WHAT WILL YOUR LIFE LOOK LIKE IF YOU DON'T MAKE ANY CHANGES?

One year from now...

Five years from now...

Ten years from now...

If you could live the last five years over again, what would you do differently?

SCARY CLOSE CIRCLE

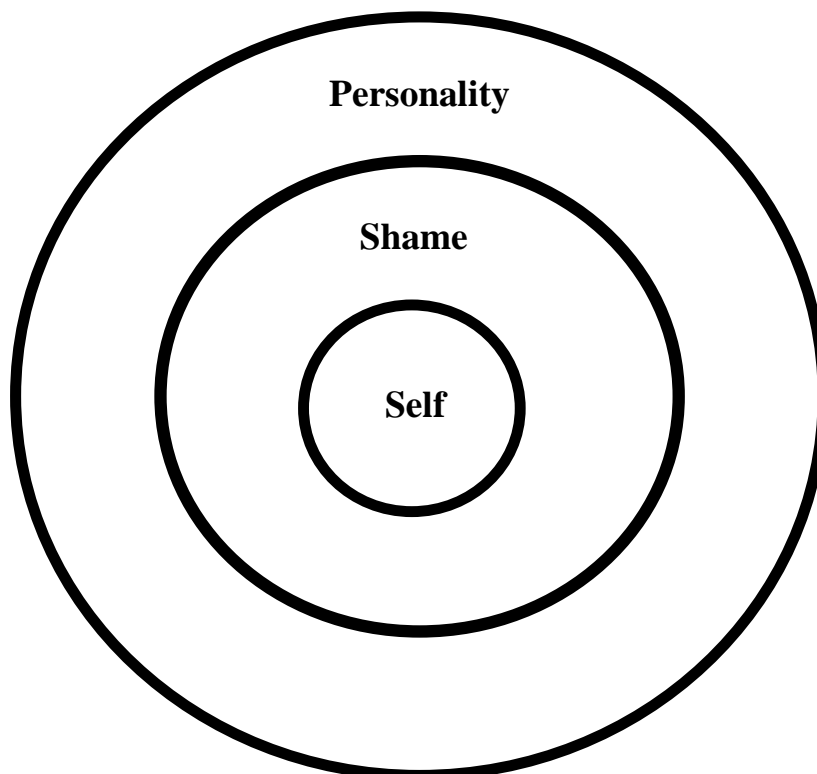
Imagine three concentric circles. The first circle represents your true **self**, the person you really are at your core.

The second circle represents our shame. At some point in our lives, all of us suffer emotional wounds. Those wounds make us fearful of being hurt again, so we pull away from the very people we ought to be drawing closer to.

The outer circle represents our personality. It's like a mask we wear. Instead of a heart-to-heart conversation, we make people laugh, or we impress them with our knowledge of sports statistics. Whatever form it takes, it's the version of ourselves we feel comfortable showing to the world. It keeps people away from the real us and the hurt and shame we feel.

But the personality we offer to others isn't who we fully are, neither is the shame and brokenness we feel. At our deepest level, we are that deeper "self" that's accepted by God no matter what. Colossians 1:21-22 says, "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation."

In order to really feel and experience true intimacy, we have to let the people we love past the two outer circles into the inner circle to the real us. But to do that we have to be willing to risk more emotional pain by being vulnerable and exposing our failures, our shame, and our past hurts to the people we love. That's where we authentically connect . . . And that can be scary for many of us.



Take some time to reflect on the Scary Close Circle from the previous page.

What's your "personality" that you often show others? Why do you think that's the case?

What's some of the shame (emotional wounds) that you carry?

How have you allowed your shame to pull you away from the people that you should be drawing closer to?

You aren't your shame. You aren't your brokenness. Your true self is the person you really are at your core. "At our deepest level, we are that deeper 'self' that's accepted by God no matter what." How might your life change if you truly believed that you're accepted by God no matter what?

What's a first step you could take in more fully living out of your true self?

What is Christ stirring in your heart right now as you wrestle with this material? And what are you going to do about it?

Story Turns

We have all experienced positive and negative turns in our life. These story turns have taken many shapes and faces. You're going to spend time this week reflecting on the major events of your life and listing the story turns. A story turn might be having met somebody, winning your fourth grade spelling bee (the first time you realized you were intelligent), having experienced a victory or failure, losing your job, divorce or having gone through a loss. Think of a story turn as a doorway. Once you crossed through this doorway, there was no going back. Life changed forever for you, when . . .?

*Create a title for each turn and briefly describe what happened. Try to put these turns in chronological order but don't worry about specific dates. On the number line circle how positive or negative each event was. Use positive numbers for positive events and negative numbers for negative events.

A person the age of thirty will have approximately 12 story turns. If you're older, a few more, and if you're younger, a few less. We've provided enough space for thirty life turns.

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Your Timeline

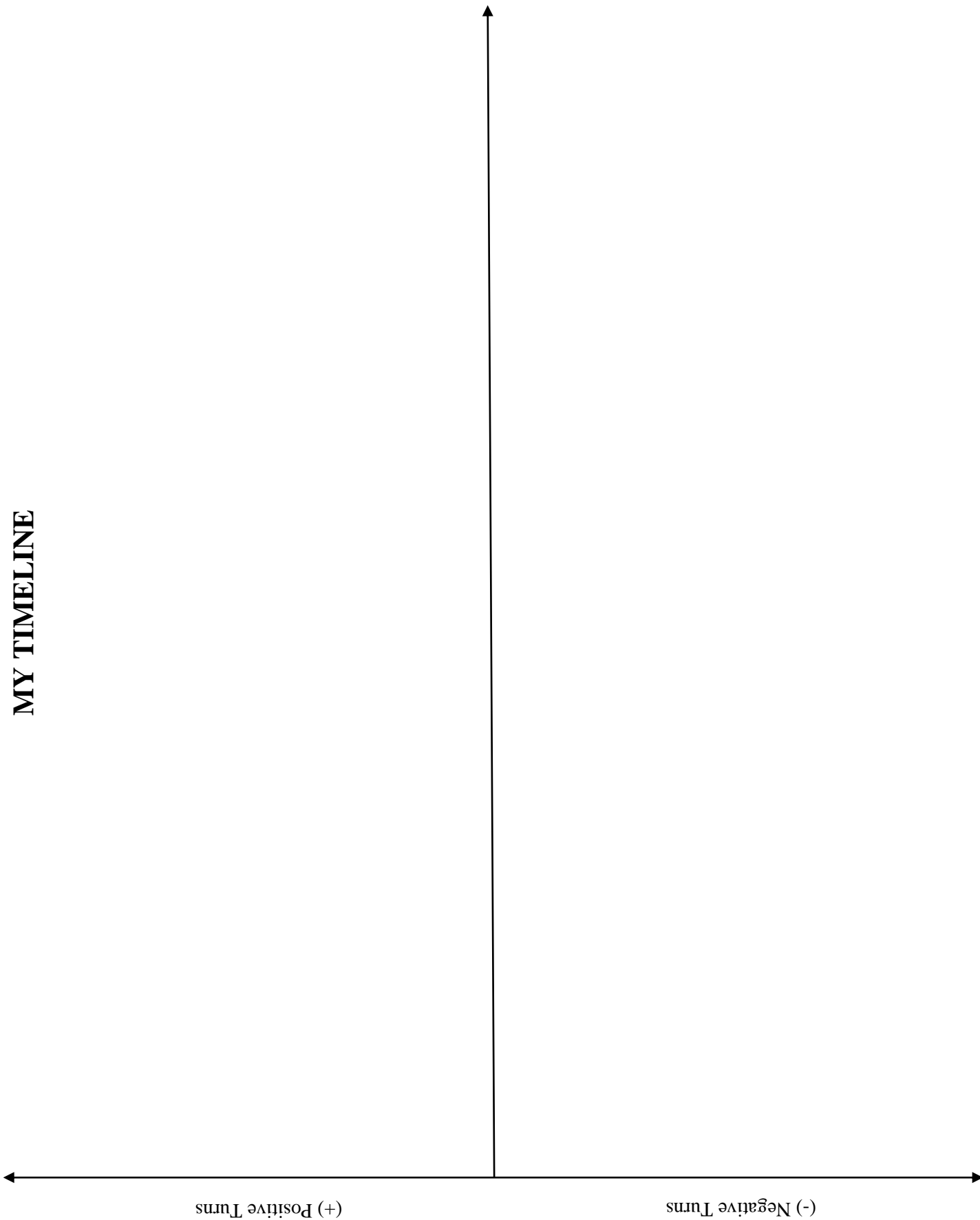
*Now you're going to create your own timeline. *There's an example timeline of the Old Testament character Joseph in the back sleeve of your notebook.* Take some time now to transfer each of your positive and negative turns onto the visual time line on the next page. Mark positive events above the center line and negative events below. We recommend using a pencil so that you can correct any errors you might make.

*As you create your visual timeline, reflect on each event. *Try to remember what your life felt like then.* When you complete your timeline, step back and take a look at it as a whole. *Where has God been in your story?*

*Many of us will see a theme running through our lives. A theme might be, "God was with me" or "God uses me to love people." The theme is the *thread that is running through your life.* To help you think about your theme: look at your positive and negative turns and ask yourself, *"I've been gifted with these experiences to be about what?"*

Ok, go ahead and start creating your timeline!

MY TIMELINE



My Timeline Reflection

Now that you've take time to examine your positive and negative turns while also creating your own timeline, we hope that you have a better understanding of how your past experiences have helped shaped you into the person you are today. Thankfully, we serve a God of redemption and our past does not have to define our present or our future!

*Once you are finished with your timeline, step back and consider what a theme of your life might be. Your life theme will evolve over time, so don't worry about "getting it right." For now, though, **what is it that your life seems to be about?**

*Share your completed timeline with a trusted friend or family member that will show you grace and compassion. Choose someone that will ponder and ask questions about your life. Sharing our stories with a loved one can help "connect the dots" on some ways of our thinking or operating that perhaps we never understood or considered. Everyone's story is different, so don't be afraid or ashamed to share your story (timeline) with others!

Finding a Redemptive Perspective Brings Healing

God wants to take what Satan has meant for evil and redeem it for His purposes. This is a blow to Satan, to take what he has done in the world, hold it up in his face and say, "now look what the Lord has done with your evil work."

God is in the business of redemption. If we want to join Him in His work, we can start by taking our tragedies (suffering) and allowing them to glorify God in some way. For example, Justin shared in the first sermon of *The Mind of Christ* series that he's suffered most his life with mental battles. But God is redeeming his suffering because he's allowed the Lord to use his story to help others find hope and healing from their own mental struggles.

We Are Not Victims

Scripture tells us we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us (Romans 8:37). There is a strong temptation to remain a victim because of the events of our past, but don't fall for it.

We tend to play the roles of heroes, victims and villains. What's the difference between a **hero** and a **victim** or **villain**?

A HERO has redeemed their suffering.

A VICTIM lets the suffering control them.

A VILLAIN is seeking vengeance for their suffering.

Psychologist Henry Cloud says a victim is a person who is truly powerless in a situation. Many of us were victims as children, and some are victims today. But once we are given the power to let God redeem a situation, we don't have to be victims anymore.

Psalm 139:7-12 says,

*Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
10 even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.
11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"
12 even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.*

Even the darkness will not be dark to you.

When we allow God's light to shine into the darkest, most negative turns in our lives, the night will shine like the day, and we can move from being victims and villains to being heroes who have let God redeem our suffering, and move forward from that place of healing.

Victim mindset: If you can't move past seeing yourself as a victim, ask yourself if you're doing so in order to manipulate yourself or others. That may sound like a strong statement, but honestly ask yourself if you are getting some kind of attention or power from seeing yourself as a victim. If so, prayerfully begin to let go of that identity.

Read Romans 8:31-39 . . . More than conquerors!

Trouble with forgiveness: Pastor Rick McKinley once defined forgiveness as accepting the burden somebody has given you while no longer holding anything against them. In this definition it doesn't mean we have to be completely healed of something before we can offer forgiveness. Donald Miller writes, "Forgiveness doesn't mean the pain has gone away, it simply means we *relinquish the control* we have over the person who hurt us." When we try to live stories with large portions unforgiven, we continue to live as victims and villains. Without offering forgiveness, our past stories continue to impact our current relationships. We become stuck.

Read Ephesians 4:32

Forgiveness is a process. Begin praying about forgiving those who have wronged you so both you, and they, can be set free.

Remember, the idea behind finding a redemptive perspective toward suffering is not to turn a negative into a positive. A negative turn will always be a negative turn. What we are trying to do is see what God can do with our tragedies. What have we learned? What can now be offered to the world because of our pain? How can this hard thing be redeemed?

God can take those negative turns and make “beauty from ashes” [Isaiah 61:3]; to take a valley of dry bones and put flesh on them and breathe life into them [Ezekiel 37].

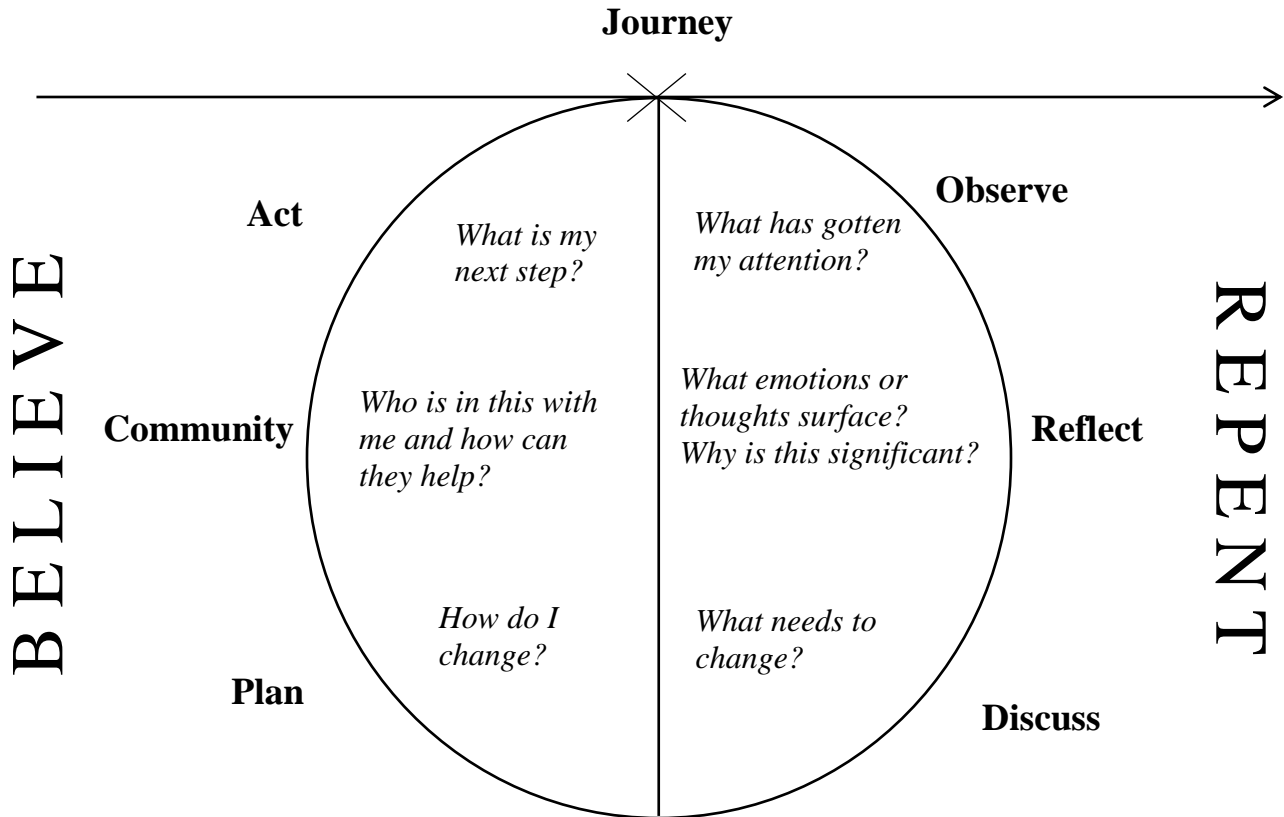
Repent and Believe:

In Mark 1:15, Jesus says, “The time has come . . . the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” Repent and believe. Another healing process that leads us further into the redemption God has for us is the process of repenting and believing. When we face something particularly difficult, we often respond in one of three ways:

- We keep walking and try to ignore it and stuff it
- We stop moving all together and are frozen
 - We move backwards

Jesus calls his followers disciples. Disciple literally means *learner*. What if we face that negative turn, enter into it – learning and redeeming – so that we can continue to move forward into a better story? Repenting and believing is part of the process.

The circle on the next page can help us walk through some steps – in the community of others – to help us not get stuck at our negative [and sometimes even our most positive] turns. (Work through the circle clockwise). This process can help us answer the questions: ***What is God saying to me? And what am I going to do about it?***



1. Observe: To change our lives, we need to observe where we are. This means taking note of our reactions, emotions and thoughts.

2. Reflect: This means asking ourselves why we reacted or felt the way we did. If a real change is to take place, we must be honest with our answers.

3. Discuss/Discover: Discussing these thoughts with a group of trusted friends is important. It can be hard to share your thoughts and struggles with someone else but it will help you grow and change the way God wants you to.

4. Plan: After reflecting and discussing, the next step is to plan. This always involves considering the Kingdom of God first. Pray, discuss and consider the best course of action to glorify God.

5. Community/Accountability: If your plan is going to succeed, there needs to be at least one person holding you accountable. Ask someone to pray with you and keep them up to date with how you're doing.

6. Act: Once a plan has been established and shared, naturally the next step to take is to act. Real faith always surfaces as action. Thoughts and intentions that remain within the mind and are not acted upon, however fruitful, is not faith.

Finding Redemptive Perspective of Your Negative Turns

LET'S GET STARTED . . .

1. Spend some time in prayer. Find a quiet place and ask God to reveal what He'd like to do with the pain you've experienced.
2. Ask yourself honestly if you've been playing the victim in any way. Be tender with yourself, but ask God to help you let go and become more than a conqueror through God's love for you.
3. Use the next few pages to begin reflecting on some of your negative turns and find a redemptive outlook toward each experience.

**If, after a great deal of reflection alone and with others, and time in the Bible, you are still having trouble finding a redemptive perspective on your negative turns, consider spending time with a counselor, therapist or pastor.*

NEGATIVE TURN

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Redemptive Perspective: _____

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Healing and Transformation

As we begin to see that there is redemption in the negative parts of our stories – light in the darkness – we can move forward and find real healing and transformation and freedom from the past.

Before we move forward, let's look at one more aspect of our past stories: *What is my part?*

Many times, our negative turns are completely out of our control. A father died or left, a battle with infertility, abuse. But often, we play a part, and we rarely take the time to look at the root of that truth.

In this final look back at your timeline, approach it with the following questions:

What was my part?

What was the root of the role *I* played?

Was I not trusting God in some area?

Was I trying to get my worth in unhelpful ways?

Other people are always part of our stories. How they respond and react to us is not our responsibility. How we respond and react/responded and reacted is and was our responsibility. Our stories can become stuck, or cyclical, if we don't really look at the part that we play.

In a different color than you previously used, look for trends in your actions/reactions [in both your positive and negative turns]. Mark them, highlight them, write a note by them.

Were you driven by selfishness? Fear of safety? Control?

As those trends start to emerge for you, prayerfully offer that to God. Share this with your community or a trusted friend. We must confess these to God, but confessing them to another human is a powerful step in removing a foothold for Satan to attack us again.

What are the trends you noticed as you looked back at your story?

[example: I noticed that every time I hit a low point emotionally, I was disconnected from people.]

Were there places in your story that you realized *your part*? What was the root of your behavior?

[example: When I was disconnected from community, I lashed out unfairly at my husband from a place of not feeling wanted by others; I seek my worth in others.]

LAST: Make Direct Amends Where Possible

Part of redeeming our negative turns was looking at where we needed to offer forgiveness.

Now that you have had time to reflect and process, pray and discuss with your community, it is time to “leave your gift at the altar” [Matthew 5:23] and forgive your brother or sister.

But another huge part is to ask others whom we have hurt [with the trends we noticed in our story] to *forgive us*. We must approach these relationships with honesty, and apologize for whatever our past behavior has damaged.

Seek counsel from a trusted friend or your group before you make amends. Pray with them and ask them for wisdom:

**Are you moving forward with the right motivation?*

**Will approaching this person at this point in your story cause more harm than good? [In some cases, this is true.]*

Ultimate Healing and Transformation

Once you have forgiven and sought forgiveness, you must ultimately lean into the truth that your identity is in Christ.

Your past story is covered by the cross.

You are forgiven.

It is redeemed.

He makes beautiful things out of dust.

You are set FREE.

It is for FREEDOM that Christ has set you FREE. Stand firm then, and do not let your heart be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. - Galatians 5:1

WEEK II

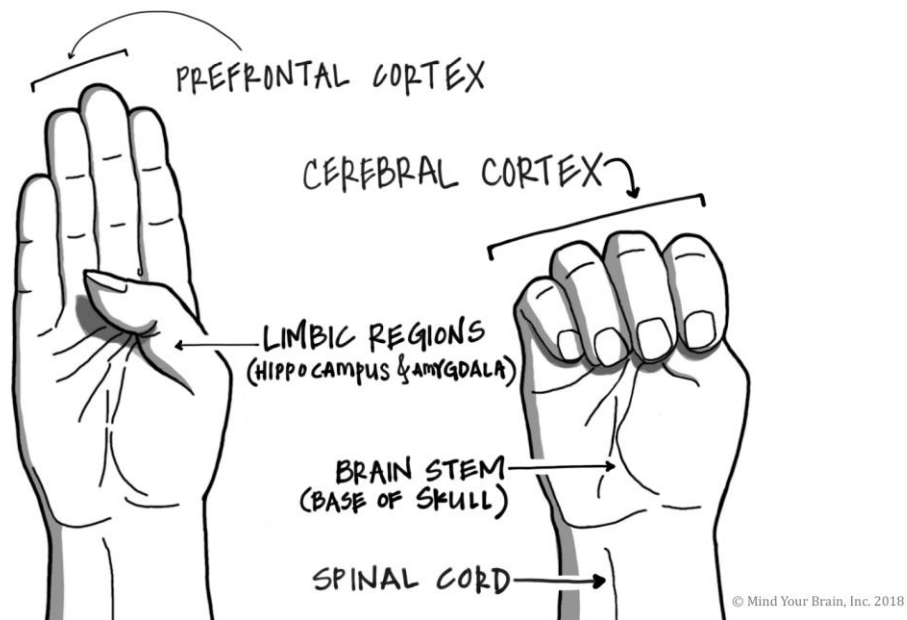
**We encourage you to continue to talk with someone each week between our meetings to help process what you're learning, how you're growing, what you're being challenged and encouraged in, etc.*

God-Moment/Joyful Memory Exercise

1. Think and focus on a memory that you would label a "God-moment." A moment in your history when you felt a sense of God's presence. If you can't think of one, that's okay, you can simply bring to mind and focus on a joyful memory. A memory for which you are grateful to God and that you would now consider that moment a gift from God. It does not have to be a memory from long ago, it could be something last week. If you are having trouble coming up with something, you can pull out your phone and look through your pictures for ideas of a moment.
2. Now that you have this moment in your awareness, close your eyes, take a few deep breaths now, and then take yourself back to this moment and really experience it again as much as possible. See the sights. Hear the sounds. Feel the feelings. Do this for about 1-2 minutes.
3. Keeping your eyes closed, I want you to visualize the physical presence of Jesus with you in that memory and, in your mind, talk to him about this moment giving praise and thanksgiving to him for this moment.
4. Then, listen to or watch Jesus respond to you. I want you to notice if he says anything to you in response or does anything in particular. If he doesn't say or do anything, that's okay, just enjoy him being in the memory with you. Be still for a moment and notice Jesus.
5. When you feel ready you can open your eyes. Take a few deep breaths and return to the room. I want you to notice what is happening with you now. Observe your thoughts, feelings, and body sensations.

Left alone our minds will trend toward the negative. We have to be intentional and consistent with the instructions given in Philippians 4:8 "Finally, brothers, 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."

Hand Model of the Brain



Downstairs Brain

Spinal Cord-connects our brain to organs throughout our body (gut feeling in stomach, heavy heart) communicate neurological information and send messages up the spinal cord to the brain
Brain Stem-regulates basic functions of the body-breathing, body temperature, digestion
Limbic Regions-Hippocampus and Amygdala-emotional seat of the brain, memory

Upstairs Brain

Cerebral Cortex-has several parts occipital, temporal-various functioning's
Prefrontal Cortex-reasoning, rational, logical, capacity for empathy, ability to think about our thinking

Left Brain

Logical, orderly, literal, language, words

Right Brain

Images, emotions, memory, nonverbal, intuitive

Trauma

A traumatic event/experience includes anything that overwhelms a person’s nervous system and ability to cope. When this overwhelm occurs, the body may have difficulty metabolizing the event and the memory system of the brain may have difficulty properly processing the event. The disturbing event/experience can then become “stuck” in the person’s nervous system and in an isolated neural network in the brain.

Big T Trauma: Exposure to war, combat, natural disasters, physical or sexual abuse, assault, terrorism, life-threatening or serious injury, domestic violence, witnessing violence, and catastrophic accidents.

Little T Trauma: bullying, divorce, emotionally-absent parents, moving or relocating, separation from a parent who is deployed, going through a bad break-up, experiencing racism or discrimination, losing a loved one, and medical procedures

Breakdowns in processing difficult life experiences create fertile ground for the enemy to distort our identities and negative core beliefs about ourselves can develop.

<u>Common Negative Core Beliefs</u>	<u>Corresponding Misbeliefs about God</u>
I am bad I am not safe I am not lovable I am not good enough I am ugly I am stupid I am weak I deserve to die I should have done something I am a failure I am not in control/I’m powerless I have to be perfect	

Question:

When reflecting on your negative life events (or negative turns), is there a theme or a negative core belief you think may have developed? What is the particular quality of your negative thinking patterns- can they be traced back or categorized under one of these core beliefs? Write down what you would guess might be a core belief you struggle with.

Group Discussion:

Looking at each of these common core beliefs, what might be the corresponding misbelief about God? Brainstorm these with someone next to you.

WHAT IS YOUR LIE-BASED STORY ABOUT YOURSELF AND ABOUT GOD?

Taking Thoughts Captive

“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.” 2 Corinthians 10:5

Telling someone to “stop it” or “just stop thinking about it” simply does not work. Trying to suppress or ignore negative thoughts or lie-based stories has the opposite effect. They seem to get stronger and more powerful the more we try not to have them.

What does it mean to take something/someone captive?

It means we recognize it is there, that it is causing harm or is destructive, and we capture and confine it.

Cognitive Fusion: Believing in the absolute truth of mere thoughts; that thoughts should be treated as though they reflect an ultimate reality that can't be questioned.

Cognitive Defusion: The ability to separate from your thoughts, notice and observe them from a distance, rather than getting caught up in them, and allowing them to dictate what you do and say.

Examples of thought defusion:

I am having the thought that.....

Oh, there is that old story about.....

The enemy is saying....

Centering Prayer

Contemplative prayer and a way to practice thought defusion.

“Listening to the voice of love requires that we direct our minds and hearts toward that voice with all our attention. How can we do that? The most fruitful way-in my experience-is to take a simple prayer, a sentence or a word, and slowly repeat it. We can use the name of Jesus, or any word that reminds us of God’s love and put it in the center of our inner room, like a candle in a dark space.”

Here and Now: Living in the Spirit by Henri Nouwen

Instructions:

1. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God’s presence and action within. Use a word of one or two syllables, such as: God, Jesus, Abba, Yahweh, or Father. Other possibilities include: Love, Listen, Peace, Mercy, Let Go, Silence, Stillness, Faith, Trust.
2. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God’s presence and action within.
3. When engaged with your thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word.
4. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

Group Discussion: Looking back at the common negative core beliefs, brainstorm with someone next to you God’s truth for each negative core belief. Look back at the identity truths and the corresponding scriptures (page 6); do any of them speak to the negative core beliefs?

<u>Common Negative Core Beliefs</u>	<u>God’s Truth</u>
I am bad I am not safe I am not lovable I am not good enough I am ugly I am stupid I am weak I deserve to die I should have done something I am a failure I am not in control/I’m powerless I have to be perfect	

Question: Which scripture or truth speaks to your particular negative core belief? Even if you are not sure you have a negative core belief or you are not sure what it is, just pick a verse that resonates with you.

Lectio Divina (Sacred reading) ... a way to meditate on scripture utilizing the WHOLE BRAIN!!

1. Prepare (Silencio) - Put yourself in the presence of God. Become quiet and offer yourself to God.
2. Read (Lectio) - Read the passage out loud, slowly allowing the words to resonate and settle in your heart. After a pause, re-read the passage out loud. During these first two readings, listen for the word or phrase that catches your attention and lights up for you.
3. Reflect (Meditatio) - Take time to sit with your word or phrase. Re-read the passage quietly to yourself and listen to where the word connects with your life right now. Enter into the scene in your imagination. Carefully watch the people. Listen to how they interact. What do you hear and experience as you watch and listen?
4. Pray (Oratio)- Talk to God about the word or phrase he has highlighted and what's coming up. It might be helpful to journal. How has God addressed you in this Word and invited you to respond? Allow the Scripture to lead you into a prayer response.
5. Rest (Contemplatio) - Rest in God's presence. Deeply receive God's word and rest in his presence and love. Give yourself some time to wait and be still before you reenter life as usual. Take God's word to you with you throughout the day. Return to it and remember it all day long. Stay with God until you feel prompted to leave.

WEEK III

**We encourage you to continue to talk with someone each week between our meetings to help process what you're learning, how you're growing, what you're being challenged and encouraged in, etc.*

Anxiety

Fear: An emotional response to a known or definite threat. The danger is real and immediate.

Anxiety: Sense of dread or discomfort; unpleasant, vague apprehension; response to an unknown or perceived threat. There is no immediate danger.

Two separate pathways in the brain can create anxiety. One path begins in the cerebral cortex and involves perceptions and thoughts about situations. The other pathway travels more directly through the amygdala. The amygdala is the alarm system for the brain that signals the fight-or-flight response and is wired to protect you from harm before the thinking brain even knows what the harm is.

Cortex-Based Anxiety: The one most people think of when they consider the causes of anxiety. Thoughts keep turning to ideas and images that increase your anxiety, you obsess over doubts, become preoccupied with worries, or get stuck in trying to think of solutions to problems. Anxiety treatment and books on anxiety (especially Christian ones) typically target this pathway by encouraging changing thoughts and arguing against the anxiety logically or with God's truth.

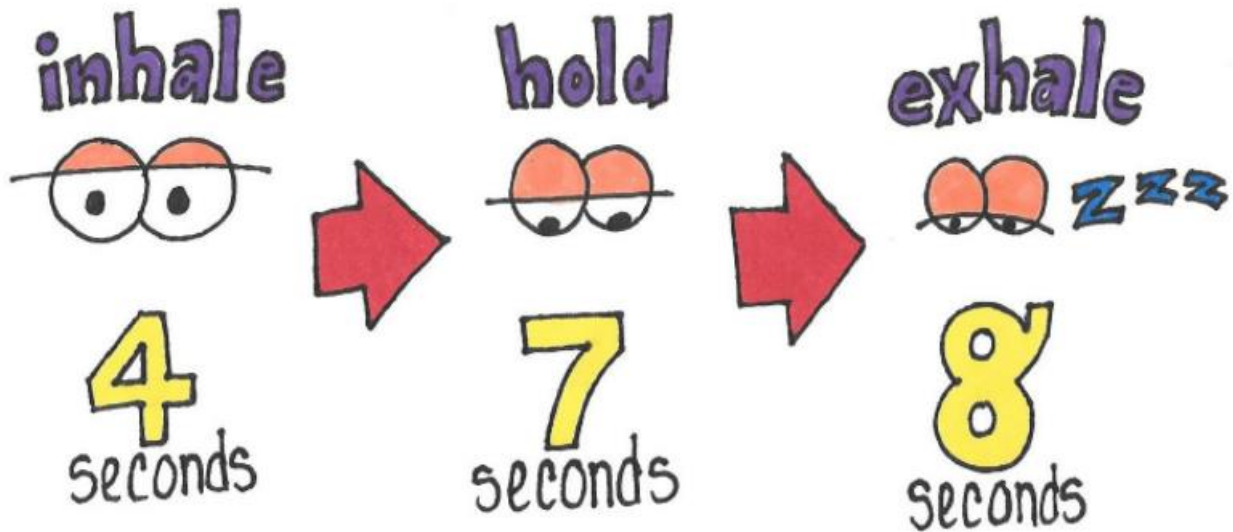
Amygdala-Based Anxiety: The amygdala is central to emotional processing. The amygdala monitors the body's reactions to the environment, evaluates an event's emotional significance, and organizes responses that a person may or may not be conscious of. The amygdala initiates a fast response to danger. In less than a tenth of a second, the amygdala can provide a surge of adrenaline, increase blood pressure and heart rate, create muscle tension, and more. This system is activated before the cortex can process what is happening. This is good for survival when there is a real and true threat. However, in people that struggle with anxiety, the amygdala may be so sensitive that it overreacts to situations that aren't really threatening, inadvertently triggering an emergency stress response. Over time, anxiety becomes attached to situations, thoughts, memories, or emotions unrelated to genuine sources of danger. This pathway can create the powerful physical effects that anxiety has on the body.

Using our thinking brain (cortex) to combat amygdala-based anxiety will not be effective. We must use other body-based or emotion-focused methods.

Also, it is important to note that even when anxiety is initiated in the cortex it still involves the amygdala.

Strategies For Amygdala-Based Anxiety

1. **4-7-8 Breathing** (breathing into the diaphragm; belly should expand, NOT chest)



2. **5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Exercise** (Helps calm the nervous system and get you more aware of the present moment)

-Connect to and scan your body. Can you feel your breath? Do you notice any tingling or other sensations anywhere? Don't worry about figuring out where they came from, for now simply notice them.

-Next, do the following to ground yourself in your present environment.

- Name five things you can see
- Name four things you can touch and touch them
- Name three things you can hear
- Name two things you can smell
- Name one thing you can touch

-Now scan your body again. Do you notice anything different?

3. **Progressive Muscle Relaxation**

Tense your feet by curling your toes. Hold 1-2-3-4. Relax and take a deep breath.

Tense your legs by pulling your toes up and pointing toward your head. Hold 1-2-3-4. Relax and take a deep breath.

Tense your stomach. Hold 1-2-3-4. Relax and take a deep breath.

Tense your hands by squeezing into fists, and tense your arms by making muscles. Hold 1-2-3-4. Relax and take a deep breath.

Tense your shoulders by pulling them up towards your ears. Hold 1-2-3-4. Relax and take a deep breath.

Tense your facial muscles by scrunching up your face. Hold 1-2-3-4. Relax and take a deep breath.

Repeat as needed.

4. **Feeling Your Feelings** -Anxious rumination can be a defense mechanism to avoid feeling your feelings because your amygdala sees the feeling as a threat

Basic Five Feelings:

Mad

Sad

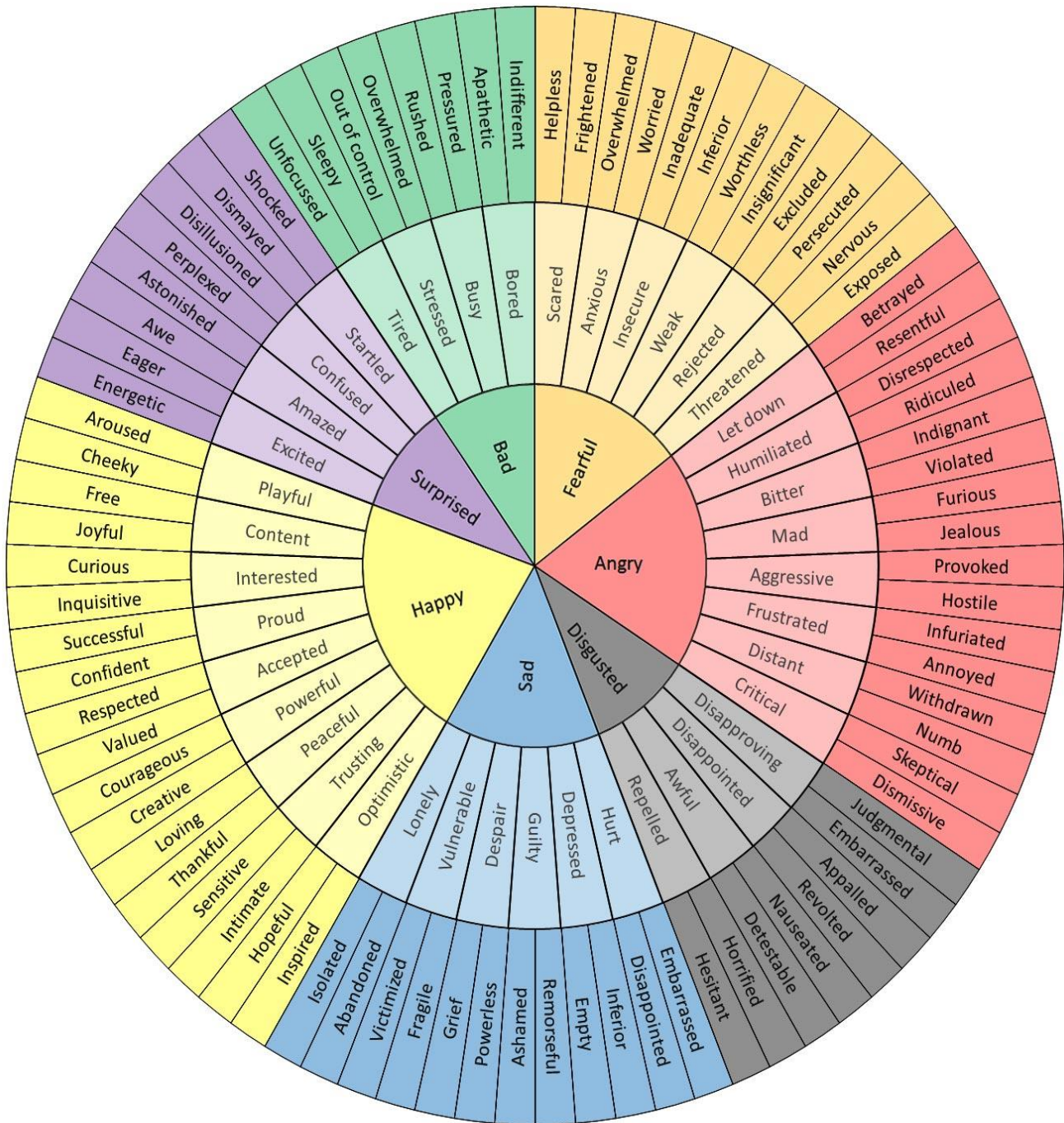
Bad (Guilt/Shame)

Glad

Fear

Question and Group Discussion: What is the purpose or function of each of these feelings?

Feelings Wheel



Feeling Exercise:

- Think about an event or situation that is mildly upsetting (nothing too triggering)
- Try to name the feeling you are having about the situation.
- Notice where you feel the feeling in your body.
- Ask Jesus to come be present with you and comfort you in the midst of feeling this feeling.
- Ask Jesus if there is anything he wants you to know about this feeling.

Strategies for Cortex-Based Anxiety

1. Cognitive Defusion (See last week's class!)
2. Labeling Thoughts - "Future" thoughts, "Judging" thoughts, "Worry" thoughts, "Past" thoughts
3. Present-Moment Focus-Ask yourself questions like "What am I doing right now?" or "What is true right now?" Throw yourself fully into the current moment. Do one thing at a time and be fully present with that one thing.
4. Return your mind throughout the day to scripture verses or to short prayer phrases such as:
 - Lord, help me.
 - Have mercy, Oh God.
 - Give me strength, God.
 - Lord, I need you.
 - Jesus, I trust you.
 - Come, Lord Jesus.
 - Thank you, God.
 - I surrender all to you, Jesus.
 - Fill my heart, Oh Lord.
 - Glory be to God.
 - I surrender to you, Lord.
5. Schedule a worry/pray period.
6. Recognize Common Thought Distortions-irrational thoughts that are very common and in their more extreme forms can be harmful.
 - Magnification and Minimization:** Exaggerating or minimizing the importance of events. One might believe their own achievements are unimportant or their mistakes are excessively important
 - Catastrophizing:** Seeing only the worst possible outcomes of a situation
 - Overgeneralization:** Making broad interpretations from a single or few events. "I felt awkward during my job interview. I am always so awkward."
 - Magical Thinking:** The belief that acts will influence unrelated situations. "I am a good person. Bad things shouldn't happen to me."
 - Personalization:** The belief that one is responsible for events outside of their own control. "My mom is always upset. She would be fine if I did more to help her."
 - Jumping to Conclusions:** Interpreting the meaning of a situation with little or no evidence.
 - Mind Reading:** Interpreting the thoughts or beliefs of others without adequate evidence. "She would not go on a date with me. She probably thinks I am ugly."
 - Fortune Telling:** The expectation that a situation will turn out badly without adequate evidence.
 - Emotional Reasoning:** The assumption that emotions reflect the way things really are. "I feel like a bad friend; therefore, I am a bad friend."
 - Disqualifying the Positive:** Recognizing only the negative aspects of a situation while ignoring the positive. One might receive many compliments on an evaluation, but focus on a single piece of negative feedback.
 - All-or-nothing Thinking:** Thinking in absolutes such as "always," "never," or "every." "I never do a good enough job on anything."

Group Discussion: What cognitive distortions do you struggle with the most?

Immanuel Journaling-Building A Secure Attachment with God

Healing is found not in the absence of pain, but in the presence of Immanuel. Immanuel journaling is designed to help you intimately interact with God, who is glad to be with you and capable of helping you. "Immanuel Journaling" is a method of prayer for conversing with God and receiving his empathy and help.

Instructions:

STEP ONE -Interactive gratitude

Write anything I appreciate and then write God's response to my gratitude.

STEP TWO - I can see you

Write from God's perspective what he observes in you right now, including your physical sensations.

Example: I can see you at your desk. Your breathing is shallow and your shoulders are tight....

STEP THREE - I can hear you

Write from God's perspective what he hears you saying to yourself. Example: You are wondering if I will speak to you and how you would ever know. You are discouraged and tired.... OR: You woke up full of energy this morning.

STEP FOUR - I understand how big this is for you

How does God see your dreams, blessings or upsets and troubles? Example: I want you to know that I care about what matters to you. Your desire to honor me brings me great pleasure.... OR: I understand how intimidated you feel. This situation feels all-consuming to you as if you are about to sink.

STEP FIVE - I am glad to be with you and treat your weakness tenderly

How does God express his desire to participate with your life? Example: Your dreams are precious to me. I fill you with life each day and really enjoy your desire to.... OR: I see your discouragement after yelling again. Times when you are frustrated and tired are when I want to be closer to you.

STEP SIX - I can do something about what you are going through

What does God give you for this time? Example: Come away with me. I offer you times of refreshing, new energy and vision.... OR: I will strengthen you. Remember how your friend encouraged you last week? With me you are not alone....

STEP SEVEN - Read what you have written aloud (preferably to someone)

Immanuel Journaling (IJ) process © was developed by Sungshim Loppnow. Please refer to Joyful Journey: listening to Immanuel © 2015, E. James Wilder, Anna Kang, John Loppnow and Sungshim Loppnow for a fuller understanding of IJ process and theory. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Depression and Its Antidotes

Connection/Empathy: reach out to someone, text, call, go for coffee, get involved in a small group, serve or help someone else in need

Activation: accomplish one thing-even if it is small; get the body moving somehow, EXERCISE!!!!

A VICTIM THINKS:	A SURVIVOR THINKS::
Bad things always happen to me. Poor me.	Good and bad things happen to me just like everyone else.
I am always going to feel like this. Things will never get better.	I may feel like this today, but I will not always feel like this. Things will get better.
I can't trust anyone. Everyone is out to get me.	Even though people aren't perfect, I have people I can trust. I can ALWAYS trust God.
I am afraid to do something new for fear I will make a mistake.	Everyone makes mistakes, this is how we learn.
I am never going to get over what happened to me.	With God's help, I can heal from this and I can be patient with the process.
I have very few choices.	I have many choices in my life. I didn't choose what happened, but I can choose my response.
I have nothing to offer others because I am messed up.	God will use my story and my struggles to bless others.

WEEK IV

Use this space to write any thoughts, reflections or prayers during our solitude time.

How To Care for Those Who Are Suffering (use the space below to take notes if you'd like)

Next Steps

As we wrap up our class, we have to consider what we need to do with everything that we've learned and experienced. In other words, what's our next step? What's YOUR next step?

Professional Counseling – Some of you need to contact a professional counselor to continue your own healing journey. Here are a few local licensed professional Christian counselors that we recommend:

- Summer Ward. Summer's website is www.newspiritchristiancounseling.org
- Matt & Cheri Uldrich. Their website is www.blueswing.net

Partner Up – Some of you need to find a trusted Christian friend that you can share your struggles with. Darkness hates the light. But when you bring your suffering to the light, the darkness starts to lose its power. Think of a friend that will show you grace and compassion, but someone that will also speak truth to you when necessary. Set up a weekly or bi-weekly meeting or a consistent phone call with them where they can check in on you, pray for you, etc. You can't fight your battles alone.

Find Community – Some of you need to stop living in isolation and find some Christian community. You could join a Wellspring small group (we have several groups that can be located on our church website). Maybe you build relationships through a common interest such as exercising (i.e., B-Fit). You need people in your life that will love and care for you but you also need to be someone that loves and cares for others as well.

Journal Through the New Testament – take the rest of this year to read/journal through the New Testament while focusing specifically on what Scripture has to say about the mind, our thoughts, etc. This is a great practice that keeps you grounded in God's Word while also focusing on having a Christ-like mind.

Study/Educate Yourself - On the next page we've listed some helpful books that we've used in this curriculum. Many of them focus specifically on our mind and our thought life.

Stay Accountable – If you've attended this class mostly to support a loved one, you now have the tools and resources to help them on their journey toward better living out the Mind of Christ. You have a role to play in their journey. Check in on them. Pray for them. Learn with them. Read books with them. Show them compassion. Be curious, ask questions. Be their biggest supporter and friend.

So.....WHAT'S YOUR NEXT STEP? WRITE IT BELOW & THEN DO IT!

Helpful Resources - BOOKS (in no particular order; some are Christian books, some aren't. Books that were used in this curriculum are marked as so)

- **Storyline: Finding Your Subplot in God's Story* – Donald Miller (used in this curriculum)
- **Waking the Dead* – John Eldredge (used in this curriculum)
- **Scary Close* – Donald Miller (used in this curriculum)
- **The Broken Way* – Ann Voskamp (used in this curriculum)
- **Building A Discipling Culture* - Mike Breen (used in this curriculum; circle illustration on page 24/25)
- Try Softer* – Aundi Kolber
- Finding Inner Peace* – Deacon Eddie Ensley
- Rewire Your Anxious Brain* – Cathering Pittman & Elizabeth Karle
- The Wounded Healer* – Henri J. M. Nouwen
- Telling Yourself the Truth* – William Backus & Marie Chapien
- Getting Past Your Past* – Francine Shapiro
- When Someone You Love Is Depressed* – Laura Epstein Rosen & Xavier Francisco Amador
- The Whole-Brain Child* – Daniel J. Siegel
- Overcoming Unwanted Intrusive Thoughts* – Martin Seif & Sally Winston
- Jesus and OCD* – Charles Thompson
- The Mindfulness Workbook for OCD* – Jon Hershfield & Tom Corboy
- The Wounded Heart* (for adult victims of sexual abuse) – Dan Allender

Tips for Discerning/Testing Thoughts

God's Voice	Satan's Voice
Calms	Obsesses
Comforts	Worries
Convicts	Condemns
Encourages	Discourages
Enlightens	Confuses
Leads	Pushes
Reassures	Frightens
Stills	Rushes

“If the thought in your head begins with:

“what’s wrong with you?”

“why can’t you?””

“I can’t believe you’d”

“when will you?”

You have complete permission from God to laugh at it and then ignore it. It is never from Him.” – John Lynch.

- Ask yourself the following questions to test a thought:**
1. Who is taking the most delight in this? (from author John Eldredge)
 2. Is this a voice of kindness or accusation?
 3. Is this thought or suggestion rooted in shame or is it rooted in God's acceptance of me?
 4. Is this thought lovely, admirable and praiseworthy?
 5. Does this thought affirm my identity as God's beloved child?