

## **Freed from Stinking Thinking & Lousy Speaking**

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I am tired of stinking thinking resulting in lousy speaking. Tired of all that time I have wasted listening to those crazy tapes of negativism going around and around in my brain. I believe it when Jesus says, "I've come to set the captives free." I want that freedom to really live. Freedom to pursue the dream and love He has placed within my heart.

Proverbs 23:7 says, "As a man (that includes a woman also) thinketh in his (or her) heart so he (or she) is." The Bible clearly teaches that a person's feelings, passions and behavior is controlled by the way he or she thinks and speaks. If a person's mind is filled with the stinking thinking of toxic poison of negativism then all they do and say will reflect such. That is why we are told in 2 Cor.10:5 to "cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing in to captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

It is time for us to rise above the blame game and take responsibility for our thoughts and actions. We have got to stop letting the events of the past, the circumstances of the present or the fears of the future determine the course of our lives. It is not these events but the way we think about them that determine who we are. What we tell ourselves concerning these events could be either a truth or a lie. That is why every thought, feeling and event must be filtered through the reality of Jesus Christ who is as John 14:6 says, "is the way, the truth and the life."

William Backus and Marie Chapien state the following in their book, *Telling Yourself the Truth*. "Your beliefs and misbelieves are the most important factors of your mental and emotional life. Disbelieving is the direct cause of emotional turmoil, maladaptive behavior and so-called mental illness. Misbelief is the cause of the destructive behavior people persist in engaging in even when they are fully aware that it is harmful to them (such as overeating, smoking, lying, drunkenness, stealing or adultery)."

The lies that compose our stinking thinking and lousy speaking just have enough truth to make them appear as truth. In reality such lies are a toxic poison that enslave us in destructive activities. It's a fact that if you tell yourself an untruth long enough it appears to be truth. James 3:15 tells us where this stinking, thinking, lousy speaking comes from. "Such wisdom does not come down from

heaven but is earthy, unspiritual, of the devil.” A steady diet of such toxins of negative thinking and speaking is deadly. In Romans 8:6, Paul clearly points out that the mind set on the flesh is death. “The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.” The words we say to ourselves can entrap us or empower us. Psychiatrist Willard Gaylin states, “A denigrated self-image is a tar baby. The more we play with it, embrace it, the more bound we are to do it.” The time has come for us to listen to the words we tell ourselves and ask, “am I building a tar baby?” I have a tendency after my wife’s death to tell myself how lonely I am, when I should be saying, “thank you Lord for my family and friends.” I also have said to often that I am miserable when I should be saying, “I’m content because I have Jesus who has saved me and given me peace that passes all understanding. Also I have purpose thru Christ both now and for all eternity.”

I miss Penny but I can’t keep living in the past. I must let the dream God has place in my heart come forth and speak of it. As Prov.15:4 says, “A soothing tongue is a tree of life, but perversion in it crushes the spirit.” I must stop listening to the crazy tapes of negativism and hopelessness going around in my mind and instead do what Phil.4:8 tells me to do. There I see I need to think and talk about, “whatsoever things that are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are a good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise think on these things.” By doing this we allow our pain to be transformed through Christ’s resurrection rather than letting our pain be transferred to others by our stinking thinking and lousy speaking.

It is one thing to know what we need to think, say and do. It is quite something else doing it. C.S. Lewis after his wife Joy died, wrote a book entitled, A Grief Observed. As he expressed his feelings as a widower following his wife’s death, I found myself shouting “Amen that’s how we as widowers are often treated.” Lewis wrote, “To some I’m worse than an embarrassment. I am a death’s head. Whenever I meet a happily married pair I can feel them both thinking, ‘One or other of us must some day be as he is now.’ The act of living is different all through. Her absence is like the sky, spread over everything. Cancer and cancer, and cancer, killed my mother, my father, my wife. I wonder who is next.

As Lewis pours out his heart I find myself also crying out, why God, why? Cancer killed my grandmother, my sister my wife, and now it is killing my cousin. Who is next? Do I dare to ever give my heart to another only to experience loss once again? It would be so easy to just give up and let the stinking thinking and lousy speaking take over. Oh what a temptation it is to withdraw into myself. Yet that’s is not an option the Lord allows me to take.

This struggle in my own heart and mind reminds me of the one Hannah Hurnard lays out for us in her classic, *Hinds Feet on High Places*. There the young lady, Much-Afraid, is dialoging with the shepherd who is to take her on a journey to the high places. “She could thus really see her own heart as he saw it, so after a long pause she answered, ‘I think that what is growing there is a great longing to experience the joy of natural, human love and to learn to love supremely one person who will love me in return. But perhaps that desire, natural and right as it seems, is not the love of which you are speaking?’ She paused and then added honestly and almost tremblingly, ‘I see the longing to be loved and admired growing in my heart, shepherd, but I don’t think I see the kind of love that you are talking about, at least, nothing like the love which I see in you.’ ‘Then will you let me plant the seed of true love there now?’ asked the Shepherd. ‘It will take you some time to develop hinds’ feet and to climb to the High Places, and if I put the seed in your heart now it will be ready to bloom by the time you get there.’ Much-Afraid shrank back. ‘I am afraid,’ she said. ‘I have been told that if you really love someone you give that loved one the power to hurt and pain you in a way nothing else can. That is true,’ agreed the Shepherd. ‘To love does mean to put yourself into the power of the loved one and to become very vulnerable to pain, and you are very Much-Afraid of pain, are you not?’ she nodded miserably and then said shamefacedly, ‘Yes, very much afraid of it.’ ‘But it is so happy to love,’ said the Shepherd quietly. ‘It is happy to love even if you are not loved in return. There is pain too, certainly but love does not think that very significant.’”

Without a proper perspective of love it is easy to even let something beautiful and God given to be twisted into toxic poisonous thinking when fear and uncertainty takes over. Lewis in his work *A Grief Observed* shares a solution he discovered after his wife died. “Praise is the mode of love which always has some element of joy in it. Praise in due order; of Him as the giver, of her as the gift. Don’t we in praise somehow enjoy what we praise, however for we are from it? I must do more of this. I have lost the fruition I once had of “my wife.” And I am far, far away in the valley of my unlikeness, from the fruition which, if His mercies are infinite, I may some time have of God. But by praising I can still, in some degree, enjoy her, and already, in some degree, enjoy Him.”

Praise and the giving of thanks cleanses the human mind from the toxic poisons of a negative world. Dr. Robert A. Emmons in his book *Thanks: How the Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier* states, “Our groundbreaking research has shown that grateful people experience higher levels of positive emotions such as joy, enthusiasm, love, happiness, and optimism, and that the practice of gratitude as a discipline protects a person from the destructive impulses of envy, resentment, greed, and bitterness. Gratitude is a feeling that stems from certain perceptions and thoughts. Therefore, in order to become more grateful, we need to look at life in a certain way, and one tangible way we can do this is through the lens of gifts and giftedness.”

Filtering our thoughts through God's eternal love demonstrated through Jesus Christ goes a long way towards cleaning our minds of the negative toxic poisons that can and will destroy us. The end result of such filtering results in thoughts and words of thanksgiving and praise. First there is the thanksgiving for the gift of eternal life provided through Jesus Christ. "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift"(2Cor.9:15). Believers in the eternal all encompassing love of God are then encouraged to "give thanks in all circumstances"(1 Thess.5:18), "give thanks to God the Father for every things (Eph.5:19-20), present prayers and petitions 'with thanksgiving to God'"(Phil.4:6-7).

Emmons encourages people to engage in gratitude journalizing each night listing the things they are thankful for. His research showed that, "compared to those who were not jotting down their blessings nightly, participants in the gratitude condition reported getting more hours of sleep each night, spending less time awake before falling asleep, and feeling more refreshed upon awakening. Perhaps this is why grateful individuals feel more alive and vital during the day. This finding is enormous in that sleep disturbance and poor sleep quality has been identified as central indicators of poor overall well being. People whose sleep is routinely disrupted have high levels of stress hormones and compromised immune function."

How we need to be a people delivered from negative stinking thinking and lousy speaking by the love of God. This happens as we allow an attitude of gratitude and the thoughts of thanksgiving and praise to be planted within us resulting in words of appreciation.

After days of loss of sleep I decided to develop my own gratitude journal one night before I went to sleep. I wrote #1 "Thank you God for the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ #2. I am grateful for my new friends. I refuse to worry I will lose them for the same God who brought them into my life will keep them there. #3. I am so thankful for my children, grandchildren, parents, sister, brother and the wonderful New Life Evangelistic Center family, Oh how I praise you God that you place the lonely in families."

With that I went to sleep for a couple of hours. Then I awoke. But this time instead of lying there awake worrying or trying to figure out the solution to some problem, I started counting my blessings. Before long I was back asleep. This happened four or five times that night. I was blessed with a great night sleep. I woke up about 7:15 am and laid there thanking God for a new day. The phone rang. It was my cousin who had cancer. Because my mind had been cleansed of the stinking thinking I was able to begin my day by sharing words of hope, life and help instead of just engaging in lousy speaking. What a great God we serve who daily gives us so many gifts for which we must express our thankfulness. After all doesn't Psalms 119:24 say, "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."

Living life day by day, moment by moment freed from stinking thinking and lousy speaking is so much fun. May we this day let the power of God cleanse and make us whole and alive in His love and presence freed from stinking thinking and lousy speaking.

Yours in Christ,

Larry Rice