**LIFEGROUP STUDY**

**How To Train Your Brain: Part 2**

**20211024**

**LEADER NOTES**

**OVERVIEW**

Welcome to our Creekside LifeGroup study series, “How to Train Your Brain”! All of us wrestle with bad thoughts and destructive thinking. This dark thinking is shaping us in many harmful ways. We long for freedom from their grip on our lives. God longs for us to experience that too. A key way for that to happen is for us to confess our struggles and replace our bad thinking with godly thinking. Philippians 4:8-9 reads, "And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you." When we think the way God wants us to think and put into practice God’s plan for us in the Bible, we will experience His peace. The goal of today’s study is that we would identify destructive thinking and replace it with godly thinking and godly virtues. This is the pathway to train our brain and experience freedom!

**ICEBREAKER** That Was Some Good Training!

What training have you done that you look back on and say – “Wow, that was really good!” Maybe you trained yourself to play guitar. Or maybe you experienced a really great training day at work. What was it about that training that impacted you? Share your story with the group!

**STUDY**

* READ: Have someone in your group read Philippians 4:8-9

"And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you."

1. On Sunday, Ken said that the THINKING we need to have and the ACTIONS we need to take can lead to the EXPERIENCE of God’s peace. **What do you think of this idea?**

LEADER NOTES: All of us long to experience God’s peace. To have this experience, we must train our brain to think godly thoughts. This involves replacing our bad thinking and destructive thoughts with thoughts that honour God. To experience God’s peace, we must take action. There are actions we can take, life habits we can practice, that can open the way for God to work in our lives and fill us with His peace. The goal of today’s study is to identify destructive thinking and to replace it with godly thinking and godly virtues.

1. If you were speaking with a follower of Jesus struggling with a lack of peace, **how might you use Philippians 4:8-9 to encourage them?**

LEADER NOTES: Neurological science tells us we can form new pathways in our brain. Think a negative thought long enough and regularly enough and it becomes a pathway. Think godly thoughts and you can replace that pathway with a new one, the pathway of God’s peace. A key word in these verses is “fix” – *Fix* your thoughts …. This is an intentional action, a regular habit of directing our thoughts to God’s Word and focusing our attention on Jesus and His kingdom. (see Matthew 6:33)

READ: 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 NIV

**4The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5We 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.**

1. On Sunday, Ken taught us about how to train our brain. 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 uses the language of being in a war to describe this process. We are in a battle for victory in our mind. **What battle words does Paul use in these verses?**

LEADER NOTES: Paul uses these verses to paint a picture for us of a war – the battle to train our brain. He uses words like, “weapons” “divine power” “strongholds” “demolish” “sets itself up against” “take captive”. These battle words help us appreciate the reality of the war that is taking place in our brain and the call God gives us to fight well.

1. **What does it mean that we have “divine power to demolish strongholds”?**

LEADER NOTES: We don’t fight this battle on our own. God has given us his Holy Spirit to empower us to live for Him. (see John 14:26-27). Strongholds in the Bible were high-walled fortresses that were tough to breech. Spiritual strongholds are those habits or ways of thinking that are tough for us to defeat, things like negativity or lust, anger or addiction. God gives us His power to knock those walls down and demolish the enemies’ strategies in our life.

1. What does it look like practically to “demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God …”? **What examples can you give of how we might do this?**

LEADER NOTES: The Bible is very practical about how we demolish destructive thinking. We must be strong and put on our spiritual armour (see Ephesians 6:10-11). Practically this means we saturate our thinking with God’s Word, sing songs of praise to Him, think thoughts that honour Him. When we are challenged by an argument or a lie, we identify that lie and we replace the lie with God’s truth. A great example of this is how Jesus battled temptation (see Matthew 4:1-11).

1. Think about this idea that “we take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ.” **What practices or habits might help you in this area?**

LEADER NOTES: There are two parts to this battle. First, we are to *take captive every thought.*  What thoughts need to be taken captive? Any thought that goes against God’s truth – things like cults, the occult, false religions, secular humanism. We must recognize wrong thinking for what it is and exchange that wrong thinking for godly thinking. A practice or habit here might be to regularly ask myself – “Is what I’m being asked to believe what God tells me I should believe? Is is honouring to God? Is it the truth or a lie?” Romans 12:1-2 tells us we are not to be conformed to this world but to be transformed by the *renewing* of our minds. How do we renew our minds? Through a regular habit of thinking about the truth in God’s Word.

READ: Ephesians 6:12 NLT

**12For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places.***

1. This verse can be a reminder to us that other people are not the real enemy. We need more than human resources to fight this battle. **How does this speak the battles you are fighting?**

LEADER NOTES: Sometimes in our battle to train our brain, we identify the wrong enemy. Other people are not our enemy. Satan is. Because we are in a spiritual battle, we need spiritual weapons. We cannot fight this battle on our own. We need God’s help.

1. **What strategies might Satan be using** to try to defeat you in the battle in your mind?

LEADER NOTES: One of Satan’s key strategies is lie. He lies to us in three key ways - temptation, accusation or misinformation. We must remember this tactic and be on the lookout for the lie. What lie is Satan trying to get me to believe about what will bring me joy, or who I am or my relationships? Knowing Satan’s strategies is key to defeating those strategies.

1. READ: Ephesians 6:13-18. What strategies can you use to fight and see victory?

LEADER NOTES: Ephesians 6:13-18 tells us how to be battle ready. “Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.” (vs. 11). Putting on the armour gives us God’s power to fight and to see victory.

1. **What is a key takeaway for you** of how to train your brain, to replace destructive thinking with godly thinking?

**EXPERIENCING GOD**

My Daily Declaration:

Here’s a practical way to train your brain this week. “My Daily Declaration’ is words of truth you can speak each day, words that take captive and demolish destructive thinking or a lie you are believing.

In your group, have everyone grab a recipe card and write three things.

1. The lie:
2. The truth:
3. My declaration:

Beside # 1, write the lie you’ve believed or destructive thinking you’ve wrestled with that God has shown you through this study. For example, #1 might be – “I don’t have what it takes.” Beside #2 write a truth from the Bible that speaks to the lie. For example - # 2 could be – “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13). “My declaration” is a daily declaration you will say out loud to demolish the stronghold and fill your mind with God’s truth. For example, #3 could be – “God, today I choose to fix my thoughts on You. Fill my mind with your truth. Fill my heart with your peace. Today I choose You!”

Challenge everyone in group to read this card each day this week. This will help you train your brain with godly thoughts. Boldly speak your declaration out loud this week and watch God train your brain!

**PRAYER**

This week, let’s pray for our missions area at Creekside. Pray for our partner church in Kitigoma Uganda as they have been able to reopen after another lengthy lockdown.

* Pray for the outreaches they are planning to run for Kids, Youth and the Elderly next month. We will be funding them to provide special evangelistic events to connect with everyone who has struggled through the pandemic.
* Pray blessing upon Pastor Robert and his wife Justine, and for our Administrator Shadrach and his wife Elizabeth, as they just welcomed their 4th daughter into the family!

**HALLOWEEN HYGIENE DRIVE FOR RAY OF HOPE!**

<https://www.creeksidechurch.ca/fall-drive/>

Hey LifeGroups – here’s an exciting opportunity for your LifeGroup to get involved in a great cause this fall! Our LifeGroups have been challenged to a collection contest by Jon Hill’s LifeGroup to see how much we can gather this fall for our local missions partner, Ray of Hope! (Read more here about Ray of Hope’s Community Centre <https://www.rayofhope.net/need-help/community-support/>)

Here’s the challenge. Between now and October 31st, your LifeGroup will gather the following items for the MarketPlace “store” at Ray of Hope.

Have someone in your group keep a record of the items your collect, then bring the items to Creekside on a Sunday (Oct. 24 or 31) or drop off during weekday office hours.

Involve and Invite! Invite your friends, neighbours and co-workers to get involved with this challenge by telling them about the project. Invite them to participate and make a positive difference in the lives of people in need in our downtown core.

ITEMS LIST

**1.**   regular sized deodorant

2.     formula

3.     shaving cream

4.     razors (men and women’s)

5.     diapers (size 3 and up)

6.     toothbrushes

7.     toothpaste

8.     shampoo and conditioner

9.     toilet paper

10. towels

11. soap

12. Q-tips

13. Lotion