

Level Up! Developing Deeper Intimacy with Christ

Do you feel like you have hit a plateau in your life with Christ? Maybe your faith feels static, immature, or impersonal. God wants more for you! If you have attended church you have heard that worship, prayer, Bible study, and service are how we grow in our faith, but how do we actually incorporate these disciplines into our lives? Join us for a 6-week series that will dig deeper into these tools to discover how you can equip them, by God's grace, and develop deeper intimacy with your Father.

August 2, 2026 - Part 5: Mind Control

Why do you think churches and preachers tend to talk more about what Christians do with their eyes, ears, feelings, and bodies than we talk about what Christians do with their *thoughts*?

Many seem to believe that our thoughts are involuntary and beyond our control, but the Bible offers an alternative take:

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 - For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to **demolish strongholds**. 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***.

What did the Apostle Paul encourage Christians to do with their *thoughts*?

THE TYPICAL PROGRESSION OF THOUGHT

THOUGHT → FEAR → FIXATION → BELIEF → BEHAVIOR → WAY OF LIFE

Instead of allowing toxic thoughts to evolve into a way of life, the Gospel gives us power to break ***strongholds*** (2 Cor. 10:4). **What is a stronghold?**

STRONGHOLD = A _____ that has lived in your _____ so long it now feels like the _____.

**JUST BECAUSE YOU _____ IT
DOESN'T MEAN IT'S _____!**

HOW TO TAKE YOUR THOUGHTS CAPTIVE

The Most Common Strategy: **REPRESSION**

1. The "White Bear" Problem
2. "Just don't think about it."
3. Denial and Avoidance
4. *Mind Over Matter*

Why does this strategy of "thought repression" always fail us?

Luke 11:21-26 - "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up his plunder... When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first."

What does this parable suggest about the fallacy of repressing toxic thoughts?

HOW TO TAKE YOUR THOUGHTS CAPTIVE

The Bible's Strategy: RENEWAL

Romans 12:1-2 - Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but ***be transformed by the renewing of your mind***. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Instead of merely “cleaning house” by chasing bad thoughts away, what does the Gospel give us the power to do?

REPRESSION vs. RENEWAL of TOXIC THOUGHTS

Repression:

“Just don’t think about it.”

“Don’t give into it.”

Denial and Avoidance

Mind Over Matter

Renewal:

“Drag it into the light.”

“Replace it with something better.”

Courage and Truth

Christ Over My Mind

What would change in your day-to-day life if, instead of trying to repress bad thoughts, your mind was renewed by Christ Jesus?

4 Steps to THOUGHT RENEWAL

(Below each step, write your notes, scripture references, and ideas for life application)

1. RECOGNIZE IT

2. REVIEW IT

3. REPLACE IT

4. RENEW IT



Registration Open for Fall Core Classes

Registration is open for our Fall Core Classes - launching in August & September! Stop by the Groups table today after service to sign up for one (or more!) in person or visit our website to register online: thestory.church/groups



TONIGHT: Final Summer Student Hangout!

Save the date for our final Student Summer Hangout, happening TONIGHT from 6:30 to 8pm. All 6th-12th students are invited to the church for food, games, teaching, and summer fun! Bring a friend - all are invited!



Save the Date: Back to School Sunday

On Sunday, August 16th, we'll pray a blessing over all our students as they enter into a new school year. It's also the launch of our Student Sessions (for 6th-12th at 11:05am) and our new Kids curriculum. If you're new to The Story, fill out the first-time registration - we can't wait to meet your kids!