



Small Group Guide: "Check Up from the Neck Up" - Week 3

Opening Ice Breaker:

Share a time when negative thoughts overwhelmed you. How did you handle it?

Key Scripture:

Philippians 4:8-9

Discussion Questions:

1. The sermon mentions a little boy swatting at invisible thoughts. How do you typically respond to negative or intrusive thoughts?
2. Pastor discusses two Greek words: "προσφιλή" (lovely) and "εὐφημα" (good report). How can focusing on these concepts impact our daily lives?
3. What stood out to you about Theodore Roosevelt's strategy for personal growth and overcoming challenges?
4. How does intentionally focusing on inspiring stories and role models shape our character? Can you share an example from your own life?
5. The sermon describes a prayer retreat with specific elements (Scripture reading, reflection, prayer, spiritual song, creative activity). Which of these elements do you find most impactful in your own spiritual life?
6. Discuss the power of music, specifically referencing "How Great Thou Art," in shaping our thoughts and emotions towards God.

Key Takeaways:

1. We can actively choose what we allow our minds to dwell on.
2. Focusing on what is lovely and of good report can combat negativity.
3. Intentional imitation of positive role models can shape our character.
4. Regular, structured spiritual practices can deepen our relationship with God.

Practical Applications:

1. Daily Thought Journal: Each day, write down one "lovely" thing and one "good report" you encountered.
2. Role Model Study: Choose an inspiring historical or biblical figure. Spend a week learning about their life and positive qualities.
3. Create a "Lovely and Good Report" playlist: Compile songs that uplift your spirit and remind you of God's greatness.
4. Group Challenge: Implement a mini version of the pastor's prayer retreat structure for one day this week. Share experiences at the next meeting.
5. Negativity Fast: For the next week, consciously avoid gossip, complaining, and negative news. Replace these with uplifting conversations and media.

Closing Prayer:

Thank God for being the source of all that is lovely and of good report. Ask for His help in focusing our minds on these things throughout the week.



Conversations fuel our faith. Use these discussion questions throughout your week in conversations at tables, in cars, online or wherever you find yourself chatting with the people you love.

How can we practically apply Paul's advice in Philippians 4:8 to our daily thought life?

In what ways do you find yourself needing to 'swat away' negative thoughts, and what strategies have you found effective?

How might intentionally focusing on stories of heroism and nobility, as Theodore Roosevelt did, shape our character and actions?

What are some 'lovely' and 'of good report' things in your life that you could meditate on more frequently?

How can we balance staying informed about world events while also protecting our minds from being overwhelmed by negativity?

In what ways can we imitate Christ's example of servanthood in our daily lives, as mentioned in John 13:15?

How might incorporating regular prayer retreats or focused spiritual practices impact our thought life and relationship with God?

What role does community play in helping us maintain a positive and spiritually healthy mindset?

How can we cultivate a habit of seeing God's greatness in nature and everyday experiences?

In what ways can reflecting on Christ's sacrifice and return help us maintain perspective during challenging times?

**Day 1: Focusing on the Lovely**

Reading: Philippians 4:4-9

Devotional: In a world filled with negativity, Paul's words in Philippians 4:8 shine like a beacon of hope. He encourages us to focus on whatever is lovely, noble, and praiseworthy. This isn't mere positive thinking; it's a spiritual discipline that transforms our minds. Today, consciously direct your thoughts toward the beauty of God's creation, the kindness of others, or a moment of grace you've experienced. How does this shift in focus change your perspective? Remember, by dwelling on the lovely, we invite the God of peace into our hearts.

Day 2: The Power of Good Reports

Reading: Proverbs 15:30-33

Devotional: "Good news refreshes the bones," says Proverbs 15:30. In our sermon, we learned that focusing on "good reports" means choosing to dwell on words and stories that build up and inspire. Today, seek out and share a piece of good news. It could be a personal victory, an answered prayer, or an act of kindness you witnessed. How does spreading positivity impact your spirit and those around you? Consider starting a "good report" journal to record daily blessings, no matter how small.

Day 3: Imitating Christ's Humility

Reading: John 13:1-17

Devotional: Jesus washing His disciples' feet is a powerful example of humility and servanthood. He tells us to do as He has done. Today, reflect on areas in your life where you can serve others without seeking recognition. How can you "wash the feet" of those around you? Remember, true greatness in God's kingdom often looks like humility to the

world. As you serve, meditate on Christ's example and how it transforms your understanding of leadership and love.

Day 4: God's Presence in Our Struggles

Reading: Psalm 23

Devotional: Like Theodore Roosevelt overcoming his childhood frailty, we too can find strength in focusing on God's presence during our struggles. Psalm 23 paints a beautiful picture of God's constant care, even in the "valley of the shadow of death." Today, identify a current challenge in your life. How might viewing this difficulty through the lens of Psalm 23 change your perspective? Remember, the Shepherd is with you, guiding and protecting, even when the path seems dark.

Day 5: The Awesome Wonder of God

Reading: Romans 8:31-39

Devotional: The hymn "How Great Thou Art" captures the awe-inspiring nature of God's love and power. Romans 8 echoes this sentiment, declaring that nothing can separate us from God's love. Today, take time to "consider all the worlds Thy hands have made." Go outside, look at the stars, or simply close your eyes and imagine the vastness of the universe. Then, reflect on the even greater wonder that the Creator of all this loves you personally. How does this realization impact your faith and daily life? Let your soul sing in response to God's greatness and love.

