

Encounter Church
Sunday January 11, 2026

Lighten the Load
Unloading a Negative Mindset

The most prolific gland in the body is the brain because it activates both healing secretions and deadly toxins dependent upon our attitude.

More than 30 years ago, Norman Cousins — a well-known journalist and longtime editor of Saturday Review — was suddenly struck by a devastating illness. Doctors diagnosed him with a rare autoimmune disease called collagen vascular disease. His body was essentially attacking its own connective tissue. The decline was rapid: he could barely move, couldn't turn his head, raise his arms, or even open his jaw to eat.

When Norman asked his doctor about his chances, the answer was crushing: "Out of 500 patients, maybe one survives." That night he realized: if medicine had no answers, he would have to take charge of his own healing. He remembered doctors once saying that fear, despair, and depression can suppress the immune system, while positive emotions might actually strengthen it. That sparked a radical thought: if negative emotions can contribute to illness, maybe positive ones could help restore health. And what's the most powerful source of positivity? Laughter.

Norman checked out of the hospital, moved into a hotel, and — with the help of a doctor — turned his room into a comedy sanctuary. He set up a projector, loaded it with Marx Brothers films, Candid Camera reels, and funny books. The first session of forced laughter lasted only ten minutes, but something astonishing happened: his pain faded enough that he slept for two hours straight without medication. Day by day, laughter became his medicine. He laughed at least six hours a day, watched comedies, read jokes, and surrounded himself with humor. Each time doctors ran tests before and after a session, they found his inflammation markers went down.

Slowly, he regained movement. First his fingers, then his arms, then his ability to get out of bed. Eventually, Norman returned to a full life: playing the organ, horseback riding, exercising. Years later, he ran into one of the doctors who had once given him no hope. Norman shook his hand so firmly the physician winced.

That handshake said everything words could not.

In 1976, Norman published his groundbreaking book, *Anatomy of an Illness (As Perceived by the Patient)*, where he documented his journey and argued that positive emotions can be a key part of healing, even when medicine fails. Later, he taught at UCLA's School of Medicine, encouraging young doctors to see patients as whole people — mind, body, and spirit — and to nurture their will to fight for life.

Norman Cousins' story isn't just history. It's a powerful reminder that laughter isn't just "a good mood." It's medicine. It's resilience. And it's something every one of us can afford.

Attitude

A settled way of feeling or thinking about someone or something, often expressed through behavior.

Easier to shift, influenced by emotions or external factors like a pep talk.

Mindset

A collection of deep-rooted beliefs, thoughts, and mental frameworks that shape your perspective and interpretation of the world.

Harder to change, requiring significant time and effort.

Know anyone you would define as "a wet blanket" always telling you what you can't do or what can't happen...many Christians have adopted this toxic "Mindset"

That phrase, "Some minds are like concrete—all mixed up and permanently set," is a popular saying, often attributed to Alfred E. Neuman, used to describe people (including Christians) who are stubborn, resistant to new ideas, dogmatic, and unwilling to change their views, despite evidence or discussion, highlighting a lack of flexibility in their thinking or faith. It's a metaphor for a closed mind, contrasting with a dynamic, growing faith, and is used in Christian contexts to warn against spiritual rigidity

If we are going to unload a negative mindset and adopt a positive mindset, we need to employ some foundational practices

Foundational Practices

1. Renew with Scripture

Read, study, and meditate on the Bible daily to let God's truth take root, making it your primary filter for thoughts.

Psalm 119:105 (NKJV)

105 Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

Joshua 1:8 (NKJV)

8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Psalm 1:1-2 (NKJV)

1 Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.

2. Pray for Transformation

Ask God and the Holy Spirit to guide, illuminate, and empower you to understand His Word and renew your mind

Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV)

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Romans 12:2 (NLT), *but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.*

3. Meditate on Truth

Instead of emptying your mind, focus it deeply on God's Word, His character, and His promises, allowing it to become your reality.

Philippians 4:8 (NKJV)

8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy-- meditate on these things.

Practical Steps

1. **Guard Your Mind**

Be intentional about media (TV, social media) and ask if it aligns with Philippians 4:8 (true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable).

Proverbs 4:23 (NLT)

23 Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.

Philippians 4:-7 (NLT)

6 Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done 7 Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

2. **Replace Lies with Truth**

Identify negative thoughts, ask God to reveal lies, and actively replace them with Scripture-based truths, even speaking them aloud.

John 17:17 (NKJV)

17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

3. **Set Your Mind on Heavenly Things**

Intentionally focus on eternal values and God's plan rather than temporary earthly concerns (Colossians 3:2).

Colossians 3:1-2 (NKJV)

1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

4. **Seek Godly Influence**

Spend time with people who love God and listen to Bible-based teachings and worship music that proclaims His goodness.

Proverbs 11:14 (NKJV)

14 Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.

5. **Develop a Vision:**

Write down detailed, God-centered goals and visions for your life, focusing on His purpose for you.

Proverbs 29:18 (KJV)

18 Where there is no vision, the people perish

Proverbs 29:18 (NLT)

18 When people do not accept divine guidance, they run wild.

Jeremiah 29:11 (NKJV)

11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

CONCLUSION

When you bring Me prayer requests, lay out your concerns before Me. Speak to Me candidly; pour out your heart. Then thank Me for the answers that I have set into motion long before you can discern results. When your requests come to mind again, continue to thank Me for the answers that are on the way. If you keep on stating your concerns to Me, you will live in a state of tension. When you thank Me for how I am answering your prayers, your mind-set becomes much more positive. Thankful prayers keep your focus on My Presence and My promises.

What is the Holy Spirit saying to you through this message?