



Thought

for

7 Self Destructive Behaviors

Hello Grace Baptist Family!

This month's *Food For Thought* is from an unknown source, so I can't give proper credit to the author. I've had this in my files for quite some time and felt it was worth passing along. I hope it blesses you. The author writes...

Your biggest enemy probably isn't who you think it is. It's not Satan, and it's not the world around you. Your biggest enemy is *you*.

The battle inside of us will destroy our ministries if we let it. Paul says this of himself, *"I do not understand what I do; for I don't do what I would like to do, but instead I do what I hate"* (Romans 7:15 GNT). If you're honest, you'll agree with that statement.

I've found that there are seven weapons of self destruction that ruin more lives than anything else: shame, uncontrolled thoughts, compulsions, fear, hopelessness, bitterness, and insecurity. Ministry doesn't make us immune to these self-destructive behaviors.

But the answer isn't found in modern culture or in a book. It's found in a person—Jesus. In Romans 7-8, we find seven habits that will help set us free from these self-destructive tendencies.

1. Remind ourselves daily of what Jesus did for us.

Many of us are saved, but we don't act like it. Instead, we're filled with shame, uncontrolled thoughts, and compulsions. We're not living like we're truly set free.

Romans 8:1 tells us, *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"* (NIV). Paul doesn't say that we'll never sin once we become a Christian. Instead, he tells us God doesn't judge us when we do because Jesus took our judgment on the cross. You don't have to walk around in shame. Jesus has already paid for the cause of our shame.

2. Ask the Holy Spirit to give us better thoughts.

God will answer this prayer. He wants to give you better thoughts. Paul writes in Romans 8:5: *"Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires"* (NIV).

We have two choices with our mindset. We can think about our lives the way we normally do—or we can choose to think about it how God does. I call this the principle of replacement. If you're serious about changing your thoughts, don't resist negative thoughts. Replace them with positive thoughts from the Holy Spirit.

3. Realize that we have a new ability to say no.

Before you became a believer, all you had was willpower. But willpower wears out. Now you have something that doesn't—the Holy Spirit. We need to learn how to tap into his power. In the New Living Translation, Galatians 5:16 says, *"Let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves."* When you let the Holy Spirit guide your life, you won't live

by your sinful nature. You'll still have the same temptations, urges, and compulsions, but you'll have the power to say no to them.

4. Turn our thoughts to God when we're afraid.

When we recognize that we have a heavenly Father who is stronger than anything that threatens us, it challenges our fears. Romans 8:15-16 tells us, *"So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when He adopted you as His own children. Now we call Him, 'Abba, Father.' For His Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children"* (NLT).

Nothing you fear is out of God's control. Like an earthly parent who loves to comfort fearful children, God is ready and waiting for you to call to Him and lean on Him whenever fear holds you back. After all, when you're focused on God, you can't focus on fear.

5. Focus on the long-term rather than the short-term.

Years ago, I read a study that showed how long-term thinking often leads to a more successful life. As a Christian, this is critical. Our long-term thinking isn't 40 or 50 years down the line. We're thinking trillions of years ahead. We call it eternity.

The Bible describes long-term thinking like this: *"And since we are His children, we are His heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share His glory, we must also share His suffering. Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory He will reveal to us later"* (Romans 8:17-18 NLT).

The Christian life isn't easy. Your life in ministry isn't easy, either. If you focus on today, you'll get overwhelmed. That's why the Bible reminds us to think about eternity, where our suffering will pale in comparison to the glory of worshipping Jesus forever.

6. Remind ourselves that God is good and in control.

The pain and suffering around us is part of living in a broken world. Paul describes this brokenness in Romans 8:20: *"For creation was condemned to lose its purpose"* (GNT). That brokenness, the Bible says, leads to pain in our lives. But Romans 8 also tells us four important truths to remember as we experience pain.

- The Holy Spirit is praying for us (Romans 8:26-27).
- God will use our pain for His good (Romans 8:28).
- God wants us to succeed (Romans 8:31).
- God will give us what we need (Romans 8:31-32).

7. Trust that God will never stop loving us.

Paul realized this, and it anchored his ministry. He writes, *"There is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 8:39 GNT).

We may lose many things in this life—our loved ones, reputation, money, and so on—but we'll never lose the love of God. He will never let go of us, no matter how tough life gets. Even if we want to let go of Him, He will not let go of us. We can depend upon that truth.

God has given us everything we need to overcome our self-destructive behaviors. Whatever you're struggling with today, it doesn't have to devour you. Let God strengthen you through these seven habits.

Just some Food For Thought...

~ Pastor Frank

