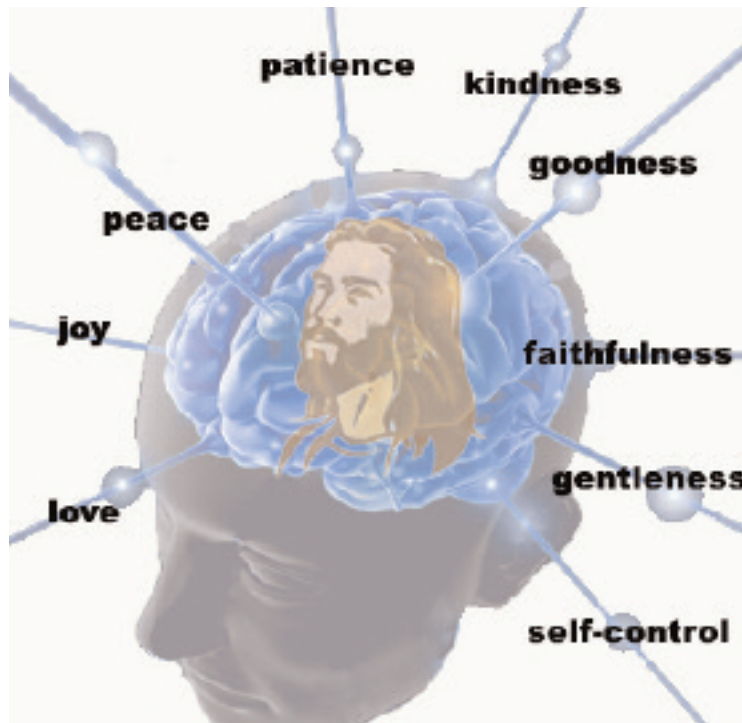


Lifebyte 73

Stop Toxic Thoughts— Replace Toxic Memories

*“Do not conform any longer 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” (Romans 12:2)*



Restoration Ministries International

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz
Web: www.Restorationministries.org

"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds" (2Corinthians 10:4)

Introduction

The history of efforts by Christians to evangelize the world sadly reveals that vast numbers of cultures ultimately corrupted biblical truth with their own pagan practices. Such *spiritual compromise* includes clergy intermediaries, prayer to entities other than God alone, holiday celebrations according to heathen rituals, and even infant baptism.

Practices that *aren't of God* are demonic in origin (1Corinthians 10:20-22). By incorporating these practices and rituals into their worship, "Christians" were seduced into participating with demons.

How could centuries of Christians continue adulterating biblical truths with demonic infidelity?

The missing elements of preparing hearts to receive the Gospel are twofold. First is *repentance*: turning away from sin and *turning to God* for forgiveness and obedience to His commands. This was the pattern of the Hebrew scriptures, awaiting fulfillment in the Messiah:

*It is written in Isaiah the prophet: 'I will send My messenger ahead of You, who will **prepare Your way**—a voice of one calling in the desert, "Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him.'" And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and **preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins** (Mark 1:2-4; see also Matthew 4:17).*

The second preparation for responsiveness to the Gospel is *deliverance* from demonic bondage that closes hearts to receiving the Truth:

*[Jesus] called His twelve disciples to Him and gave them authority to **drive out evil spirits** and to heal every disease and sickness (Matthew 10:1; see also Luke 10:17).*

Paul's commission from Jesus contains that *preparation work of freedom* from demonic hindrance: "**to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me**" (Acts 26:18).

Consider this: Failure to both call for repentance and free people from demonic imprisonment *prior to* embracing the Gospel has been the key failure of evangelism. Too often, countless numbers continue to "*have fellowship with demons*" (1Corinthians 10:20, NKJV), drinking of the cup of the Lord *and* the cup of demons (1Corinthians 10:21). This is same kind of sinful *spiritual adultery* engaged in by Israel that so offended our holy God!

We too had "entertained demons" during much of our early walk, suffering from powerlessness and fruitlessness because we hadn't been freed before accepting the Gospel. Thirteen years transpired before we learned to rid ourselves of demonic influence. As Mike testified in our workbook, *Demolishing Strongholds*,

"The Holy Spirit told me, 'You do have a spirit of deceit. Now renounce it in the name of Jesus.' As I began to pray, a vision appeared right in front of me. The vision



appeared as an object that looked like a big black rock about five feet high and five feet wide. On it was written the word "DECEIT." As I prayed, renouncing the spirit of deceit, a veneer like an onion skin fell off the object.

"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" (2Corinthians 10:5)

Underneath this veneer was the word "REJECTION." As I stared at it, God began to show me painful memories of my childhood—many of which I had forgotten. As I watched the scenes unfold, a growing sense of humiliation welled up inside me. Then the Holy Spirit revealed, 'Those feelings of humiliation laid the foundation for the spirit of rejection to be built in you. Now renounce that spirit's influence in your life.' As I renounced the spirit of rejection in the name of Jesus, the black object disappeared."



While Mike's deliverance was complete when he demolished those strongholds, he was still responsible to replace his old sinful attitudes and actions with Christ's ways in order to not return to the familiarity of the demonic responses.

If you don't seek God's ways to fill in the ruts of your sinful actions, you'll return to the same sins "like a dog to its vomit." You'll fall prey to the same pattern of **ungodly thoughts > ungodly emotions > ungodly actions > habitual actions**, which then become **strongholds**: the controlling influence in your mind, will and emotions. If you are delivered from an evil spirit but *don't* fill in that sin area with God's way, seven worse spirits will have access to you! (Luke 11:26)

Over the years we've grieved for those who once tasted freedom from demonic spirits but then lived in even greater oppression because they neglected or refused to be transformed by the Spirit in those areas. They ignored Chapter 5 of *Demolishing Strongholds*, "After You've Demolished the Strongholds", thereby circumventing their need for old sinful patterns of behavior and attitude to be filled in according to God's Word. Thus their seven needs remained unfulfilled.

After the strongholds of deceit and rejection were demolished, I [Mike] realized I had a strong need for dignity, security, and intimate love and companionship. **With Sue's help and the loving input of those in our home fellowship family**, I began to experience the joy of having these needs met.

Sue and a certain man in our fellowship family helped Mike the most by frequently questioning *why* he responded or acted in a certain way. Their probing was often upsetting to Mike, as they made him revisit old painful memories or confronted him about the unbiblical motives behind his actions. With their help he began to fulfill his need for dignity, security, and intimate love and companionship. *Something wonderful was happening, but we didn't understand it at the time.*

A few years later we lived with our friends, Bert and Exie Schlossberg, in Israel for several months. There, further healing took place. Below is Mike's testimony from Teaching E-mail 17:

Bert was an older friend, and a tool in God's hands to make me confront the barriers I had to loving Sue. Often as he and I walked the neighborhood after dinner he'd ask the same painful question, "Why can't you love Sue the way Jesus calls for you to?" Every time I bought up a rationale to justify my resistance, Bert would quickly stop me with, "But Mike..." This went on for almost three weeks until I came to realize that *Jesus* is the only One who could enable me to love Sue.

On December 31, 1993, Sue and I were walking through Jerusalem talking. She told me, "Before we left the retreat center one of the staff members took me aside and said, *'Inside Mike is a little boy that has never been healed.'*" In my spirit I knew God had her speak those words to me, and that I really needed Jesus to heal me. Vivid, painful

thoughts of my childhood raced through my mind that I had buried deeply.

That night we and the Schlossbergs sat around talking. Exie asked me some pointed questions, and I remember that my response was such anger toward God that I literally saw red. She then said, *"Only you and God can deal with this."* I went up to our bedroom. As I closed the door I could feel His presence in the room. It wasn't with audible words, but I KNEW He'd been waiting for years for me to bring before Him issues that went all the way back to my youth. He wasn't upset that I was angry with Him, but grieved that I hadn't addressed Him about it years earlier. I guess I'd always thought it was "unspiritual" to be angry with God!

When I humbled my heart to listen to Him, my bitter anger was gone. But I knew there was still something more that needed healing. Then Sue came up to the room. As soon as I saw her I discovered I was madly in love with her! My heart was so attached to her it was actually hurting. She was startled and distrusting, to say the least. That was okay. In the months that followed, the love Jesus gave me for Sue enveloped her.

The next morning as we went downstairs, Bert and Exie were in the kitchen preparing breakfast. Exie looked at me and said emphatically, *"Mike, inside you is a little boy who has never been healed!"* [Sue had never mentioned anything to her about that topic.] I began to cry. Bert brought out some oil and anointed both Sue and me.

From that day on our marriage moved forward into the love we now experience today. It was a week later that our Father began to show us the Hebraic foundations of the earliest Church which He commanded us to share when we returned to the U.S.

Even after all this, we didn't fully grasp what our Lord was doing in freeing us to love as He would love. *Something*

wonderful was happening but we didn't understand it at the time.

We've been so pained over the years to watch many become free from strongholds but then over time become controlled again by them. We longed for them to experience the ever-increasing freedom to love which the Lord had showered on us.

Recently, we were given a tool to help us understand what our Lord had been doing to heal our inner emotions. Research by Dr. Caroline Leaf of South Africa demonstrates that the memory parts of a brain which the demonic strongholds once influenced or controlled still have *chemical attachments* which she calls "toxic memories." After the strongholds are demolished, the chemical composition of those memories must also be replaced for a person to experience complete freedom.

Deliverance in the Name of Jesus indeed rids you of the demons and their stronghold control. But, to fill in the ruts of sinful attitudes and behaviors requires further intentional effort to free these memories of their toxic chemicals so that the Holy Spirit can have full reign in your mind, will and emotions.

Dr. Leaf approaches strongholds from a psychological-biological basis. We strongly encourage you to view her DVD or book, *"Who Switched Off My Brain? Controlling Toxic Thoughts and Emotions."* It's a great sequel to *Demolishing Strongholds*, and a worthwhile addendum to Chapter 5. *After You've Demolished the Strongholds.*

There is far more helpful information in her work than we'll be presenting in this Lifebyte. Our discussion is only a bridge between *Demolishing Strongholds* and her research which exposes the toxic memories that must be confronted after the demons are gone. As long as toxic memories remain in your brain, you will NEVER acquire the love of Jesus for others or fulfill His purposes for your life.

"For You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well" (Psalms 139:13,14)

A Condensed Review of Your Brain How Thoughts Become Memories

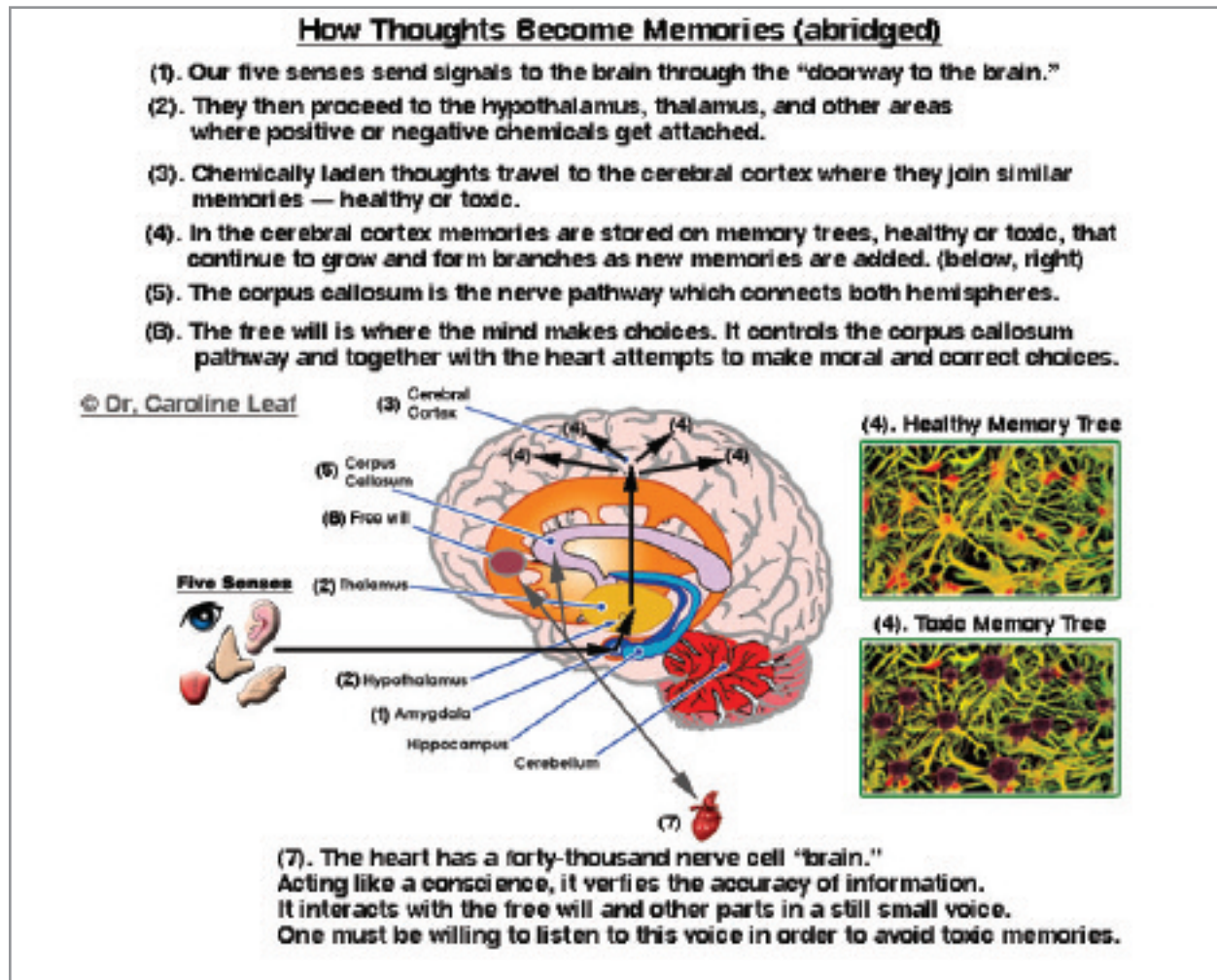
Dr. Leaf's research provides the basis for our discussion here, certainly illustrating how "fearfully and wonderfully" our Lord has created humans! (Psalm 139:14)

The diagram below is an abbreviated view of how a thought becomes a memory, a very complex process. The brain receives electrical charges provided by the five senses. The hypothalamus and thalamus as well as other parts combine that electrical charge with a chemical in order to build a memory. If it is a *negative* thought, it will add a chemical which will become a "*toxic memory*." If it is a *positive* thought, it will build a good memory.

You must deliberately capture a

thought BEFORE it becomes a toxic memory, beginning in the free will area of your brain. The *free will* is your decision making area where you make choices, allowing you to *accept* or *reject* information—to pay attention to or to disregard information. (Pages 11 and 12 emphasize the *Holy Spirit's* role in this process!)

If your free will area decides to pay attention, it activates your corpus callosum pathway to allow both hemispheres of your brain to receive and consider the information that's come in. *Thinking* takes place as you ask, answer, and discuss with others, keeping in mind the goal of understanding the information that has come in. So *thinking* is meditating on that information until it is understood.



At this point your free will area turns to the *conscience* in your heart which Scripture abundantly speaks of. Within your heart is a 40,000-neuron “brain” which acts like a checking station for the accuracy of information. It sends a small, still voice to your cranial brain.

All memories from birth onward are stored in your cerebral cortex as good or toxic memories, with chemicals attached to them. Toxic memories in your brain function as *strongholds*, and appear dark and thorny on brain scans. They represent an accumulation of unbiblical, un-Christlike responses to emotionally painful encounters with people or situations.

A *toxic memory*, whether it has attached to it a bitter, insecure, rejection, or whatever chemical, will be your default response when similar negative thoughts enter your cortex. A new toxic thought will seek out the *similar toxic memory* and form a thorny stronghold around it. That’s when demonic influence is able to assume control of that area of your brain that you’ve yielded.

Remember, a *stronghold* is a demonic fortress of thoughts housing evil spirits that:

- (1) control, dictate, and influence your attitudes and behavior;
- (2) oppress and discourage you;
- (3) filter and color how you view or react to situations, circumstances, or people.

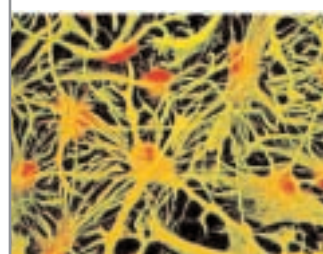
How are strongholds formed in your mind?

- 1) Satanic-inspired (toxic) **THOUGHTS** are introduced into your mind.
- 2) Entertaining these thoughts brings on **EMOTIONS**.
- 3) Giving in to emotions eventually leads to taking some sort of **ACTION**.
- 4) Continual participation in this behavior causes you to develop a **HABIT**.

- 5) Once a habit is developed, a **STRONGHOLD** is built by that spirit.

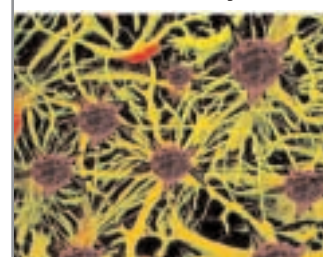
Look at the series of diagrams at right. (1) *Healthy Memory Trees*. As thoughts enter your mind, they are reviewed by the free will, other brain areas and your heart. Toxic thoughts are eliminated.

1. Healthy Memory Trees



(2) *Toxic Memory Trees* form because the free will, other areas and your heart weren’t allowed to *think*, that is, to ask, answer, and discuss the incoming thought. Your

2. Toxic Memory Trees



heart wasn’t consulted to verify the Christlike, biblical basis to the incoming thought. Therefore, the toxic thought was allowed to *attach itself* to a thorny toxic memory.

3. Demonic Strongholds



(3) *Demonic Strongholds*. This diagram reveals the condition when demonic strongholds are built around your toxic memories. The demons *block out* God’s truth and love in those areas of your mind. You’re not only held in bondage within a *demonic prison* unable to experience God. You’re also held captive in a *chemical prison of toxicity* which influences your attitudes and behaviors long after the original painful experience.

We noted in *Demolishing Strongholds* that demonic strongholds are relationship destroyers. A chief demonic goal is to destroy your intimate relationships. Your

"Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed" (1Peter 1:13)

relationship with your Father and His Son, Jesus, with people in your household, and with those with whom you share close fellowship are targets the demonic forces seek to destroy. Why? Because emotionally isolated people are easier for them to influence, control, and oppress than people who have loving, supportive relationships.



must be evaluated in light of the character of Jesus and His Word.

Thankfully, the chemical composition of these memories can be changed *as you cooperate with the Spirit*. Any new negative thoughts entering your brain will require intent in your free will area, other brain areas and your heart to deliberately capture that thought and make it become obedient to Jesus (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Strongholds can also impair your health. Reliable studies indicate that 80% of all illnesses, including many cancers, are caused by toxic memories that impede the immune system.

Anchor this truth: Whenever you experience an uncomfortable feeling, either from a new thought or an old memory, it's crucial that you don't suppress it by bottling it up inside. NEVER SUPPRESS YOUR FEELINGS! Always acknowledge each one, being careful to take ownership of it and not aim it at anyone or cast blame. If you bury negative feelings, they'll eventually spew forth and explode hurtfully. They'll also cause you to be prejudiced toward others who arouse in you the same feelings as the toxic ones in your memory. A follower of Jesus can't give way to either anger or prejudice and still authentically represent Him to others in love!

**After the Strongholds Are Gone
How Do You Come Across?**

Dominated By Toxic Memories
Habitually Seeing the Wrong in Others
"You're the one with the problem."



- Constantly blaming others for your problems;
- Frequently bringing up their past failures;
- More concerned with proving you're right than loving;
- Blinded to your negative treatment of others.

ALL Thoughts Obedient to Jesus
Lovingly Supporting Each Other
"We've got a toxic thought (memory) to change."



- Cooperatively seeking to become more Christ-like;
- Seeing each toxic memory as opportunity for sanctification;
- Demonstrating love as the only way to become more like Jesus.

You Must Prevent or Replace Toxicity

- To restore *healthy memory trees* you need to first demolish the demonic strongholds so God's truth and love can break through.
- Next, you must take captive *all negative thoughts* coming into your brain before they find similar toxic memories.
- As they surface in your memory, you need to confront *old toxic memories* that inspire feelings of uneasiness and dread in you.
- Both new thoughts and old toxic memories

As new thoughts enter your brain they are divided into two types of emotions—*fear-based* or *love-based*. Examples of fear-based emotions are anxiety, bitterness, insecurity, shame. Love-based emotions are joy, peace, forgiveness, patience, and others similar to these. For each and every kind of emotional memory stored in your cortex, your brain attaches a corresponding chemical. Each type of *fear-based toxic memory* has a chemical attached to it that's specific to the emotion being stored.

Now consider in light of the words of Jesus how your brain divides information into fear-based and love-based categories: "*Peace I leave with you; My peace I give*

"He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5)

you. I do not give to you **as the world** gives. Do not let your hearts **be troubled and do not be afraid**" (John 14:27). By the power of the indwelling Spirit you *can* take your thoughts and emotions captive and bring them into obedience to Jesus. In Jesus you find love and peace. But without Jesus, you're afflicted by toxic memories and demonic oppression.

Previous emotionally painful, toxic memories can prevent your free will from considering new painful thoughts and dealing with them. As a result, you'll ignore their negative influence and negate any chance of making a Christ-like, biblical choice. That pattern will shut out the voice of the Spirit of Jesus in you and keep you from searching His Word for a biblical application.

Letting toxic memories hinder your quest for a Christ-like choice also stops you from turning to others for help. The *ask/answer/discuss* function of your brain is what the Bible describes as the way to *obtain wisdom*. This is why we should never be reluctant to ask others close to us for their input BEFORE we let a toxic thought continue.

We get extremely nervous when we encounter people who *don't ask questions* when they're seeking wisdom. In our years of ministry we've come to recognize that they only want their emotional pain to cease. They have no desire to become more Christ-like, or to apply His Word to their lives. Thus, they remain unchanged in their misery, and the love of Jesus is stifled in them.

"We take captive every [current] thought to make it obedient to Christ"
(2Corinthians 10:5b)

Being a follower of Jesus means *surrendering our free will* to His Spirit. This is essential because ***"it is God Who works in***

you to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). The free will/corpus callosum connection provides our opportunity to take a new thought captive and bring it into obedience to Jesus. At this point our free will turns to the conscience in our heart. God designed the heart to be our moral conscience *if* it hasn't become so bent on sin that it's beyond redemption (see Hebrews 6:4-6). It's our choice what we store in our hearts:

*The good man brings good things out of the good stored up **in his heart**, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up **in his heart**. For out of the **overflow of his heart** his mouth speaks* (Luke 6:45).

What comes out of your mouth is a key indicator of what is in your heart. Other passages reveal the depth of conviction and moral conscience that flow from our hearts:

*That if you acknowledge publicly with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and trust in **your heart** that God raised Him from the dead, you will be delivered. For with the **heart** one goes on trusting and thus continues toward righteousness, while with the mouth one keeps on making public acknowledgement and thus continues toward deliverance* (Romans 10:9,10, CJB).

*When the people heard this, they were **cut to the heart** and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'* (Acts 2:37).

*May the words of my mouth and the meditation **of my heart** be pleasing in Your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer* (Psalms 19:14).

If your mind is dominated by demonic strongholds and toxic memories, you won't listen to your heart. But you

“For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me... Then I acknowledged my sin to You and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD’ — and You forgave the guilt of my sin.” (Psalms 32:4,5)

MUST desire to listen to your heart in order to resist sin. Beware the trap set by the enemy to appeal to our sin nature:

When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire [failure to take the thought captive], he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death (James 1:13-15).

If you *don’t* allow your free will and other brain areas to turn to your heart to discern whether something is right in God’s sight, you’ll be deceived into sin just as Eve was. That same deadly independence will lead you astray.

A whole lot of hurt has come upon mankind because the first couple didn’t stop to ask/answer/discuss their decision beforehand. This same failure bedevils us today. Paul warns that there will come a time when people will seek pleasure at all costs (2 Timothy 3:4). They refuse to allow their mind to turn to their heart to biblically verify what they’re about to do.

As toxic thoughts are allowed to enter the mind unchecked, *toxic strongholds* are built throughout the cortex. The truth and love of God are completely blocked out. These people become so reprobate it is impossible to bring them to repentance. (See Titus 1:15,16.)

Paul warned Timothy of this pattern of *corrupt minds* that will confront us who live in the last times: “*Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith*” (2 Timothy 3:8).

Train yourself to scrutinize all incom-

ing thoughts. This is especially true for negative, discomforting ones, and thoughts that focus on your passion for pleasure. Make your thoughts run the gauntlet of your free will, your whole brain, and heart. Be sure that you hear the still, small voice of your heart conscience. Ask yourself if these thoughts line up with the character of Jesus and His commands in the Word.

“We take captive every [toxic memory] to make it obedient to Christ”
(2Corinthians 10:5b)

Long after a negative situation develops the formation of a toxic memory, just recalling that particular event can release the same electro-chemical response all over again. That’s why you need to confront each and every toxic memory as it surfaces. Your toxic memories won’t be changed all at once. If you refuse to face past emotional hurt, you’ll remain imprisoned by it. And, you’ll be unavailable for the Spirit to bless through you those who remind you of that past pain. (See Luke 6:27,28.)

To face your toxic memories will require courage, and trust that Jesus can and will heal your forgiving heart. Often a toxic memory is exposed when a situation occurs that reminds you of a memory in which something unChristlike was spoken or done. It’s when a toxic memory comes to your conscious mind that you must exercise any *repentance* or *forgiveness* that is needed in the situation.

Cry out to the Spirit of Jesus within you to replace the toxic memory of that past encounter with something good and redemptive in your mind (see Philippians 4:8). He won’t erase the memory, but He can *heal the pain* of it—changing the memory from toxic to healthy. And, you may find that the victory you now have

"I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13,14)

over that once toxic memory is a source of hope and comfort to others as you bear witness. (See 2Corinthians 1:3-5.)

Quite often the people close to you can recognize a toxic memory surfacing in you before you're conscious of it. Part of the reason is that the memory has become part of your identity and history. Certain reactions and attitudes emerge when you're hounded by a toxic memory, and you may be unaware of them. Don't resist someone who points out that you may be operating from a past negative memory. That pain has to be acknowledged and confronted if you're ever going to be healed by Jesus.

In the process of transforming past toxic memories, you need to yield to the Spirit as you ask/answer/discuss things under the control of your free will. It's vital that you allow yourself to experience past negative feelings so that you may repent and/or forgive as necessary. If you don't allow yourself to reflect and turn to your heart for right judgment, you won't be able to rid yourself of the negative chemical in your brain. You have to face the reality of your emotional pain so that you can forgive those who brought it about and receive healing from your Lord.

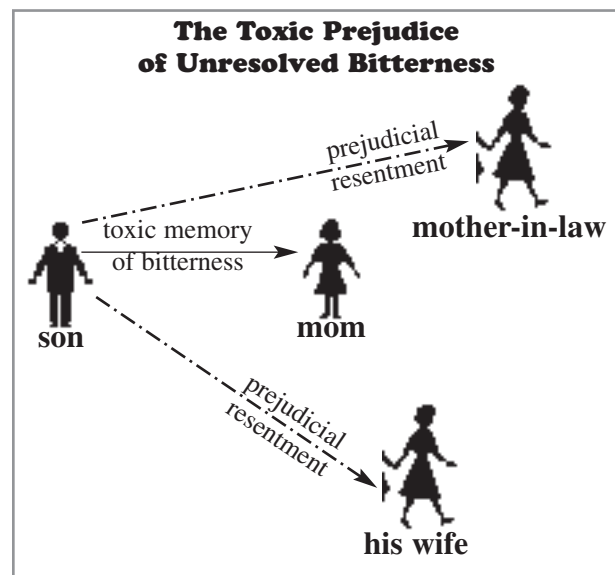
ALL toxic memories in one way or another negatively affect current relationships. They prejudice you toward others whom you feel are connected in some way to prior unhealed toxic memories.

When I [Mike] counseled clergy many years ago one of them told me, "I watch how other clergy deal with you. You had a healthy relationship with your father. I've noticed that men who have unresolved bitterness with their own fathers react negatively to you. When they respond that way, I realize I don't want to be their friend."

Often as we led youth groups and single groups, some of the more rebellious individuals would rage, "You're just like my father!" At that moment any wise counsel I might have provided was terminated by their resistant spirit.

Let's examine the issue of unresolved bitterness from the past and how it defiles current relationships. We're warned about the perils of bitterness by the writer to the Hebrews: "*See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many*" (12:15).

In the diagram below a son has failed to confront toxic bitter memories toward his mother. Years later these memories have defiled his relationship with his mother-in-law and even his wife. In fact, the bitterness attached to these memories will prejudice him toward all other women whom he perceives can wound him like his mother did.



In order to end the prejudicial resentment toward others, the original toxic memories must be acknowledged, repented of and forgiven. You need to both *forgive others* and ask our Lord to *forgive you*

“In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like Him” (1John 4:17)

for holding onto the sin of bitterness: *“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you **do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins**”* (Matthew 6:14,15). Forgiveness is the only way you can stop defiling others when bitterness is at the root.

Please heed this warning: If you insist on holding on to your toxic memories, you’re failing to appreciate what *you’ve* been forgiven of. By remaining imprisoned in your toxic memories of past wrongs done to you, you’re rejecting the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, the Master Who paid the penalty for your sins. Without coming under His atoning blood, heaven is closed to you because your sins are not forgiven. Unforgiveness shuts the door:

Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how My heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart (Matthew 18:33-35).

Prejudicial toxic memories are often held by those who grew up impoverished, feeling like they’d gotten the short end of the stick in life. Later on as adults, these toxic memories may compel them to do whatever it takes to never experience need again. They’ll intentionally align themselves with others of similar worldly goals (see James 4:4; 1John 2:15-17), and avoid anyone who questions their motives in light of God’s Word.

If their toxic memories remain, they find it difficult, if not impossible, to trust God for anything, especially for provision. So as parents they dote on their children—giving in to every demand, failing

to correct them as the Bible calls for.

Again, holding on to ANY TYPE of toxic memory will bring about prejudice in one way or another toward others. Or, you’ll be prejudiced against scriptural commands, refusing to fulfill your biblical responsibilities to your children.

Throughout your life toxic memories will prompt you to be favorably disposed toward people who *don’t confront you*. You’ll also be prone to avoid or treat with contempt those who address your toxic memories. Because your identity is intertwined with these memories, you’re probably unaware of the prejudice others feel from you unless you’re willing to hear their feedback.

Often your prejudice isn’t manifested by what *you do* to others, but what *you fail to do*. They sense they are being emotionally shut out, or relegated to a lower priority than the relationship warrants. Toxic memories will always hamper current relationships. Don’t let this go on!

If you’re following Jesus you need to be *impartial in love* toward all others, always keeping in mind that they are made in God’s image and that Jesus died for them. This foundational truth underlies all Christ-like relationships and is evidenced by the way we treat one another: *“But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere”* (James 3:17).

As we’ve previously mentioned, you’ll need the help of others you trust in order to rid yourself of the toxic memories of bitterness, fear or whatever remains unresolved from your past. These memories must be acknowledged, and the accompanying negative emotions allowed to surface. Only then can they be

healed through repentance and forgiveness. If not, you'll enact prejudice toward others who remind you of the original painful event or encounter.

"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love"

(1John 4:18)

Jesus is THE source for your determination to not let your thoughts become fear-based as they enter your brain. Each thought must be taken captive! But what does it mean to bring a thought into obedience to Him? Instead of a fear-based, toxic memory being formed, Jesus enables you to develop the emotional conviction *to love as He does*.

To make your thoughts and emotions obedient to Jesus means that they align with the commands of God found in the Bible. *His love at work* in and through you and *obeying His commands* are intricately connected. This is why knowing God's Word and applying it to your life are so important. Ponder in your heart the discourse of Jesus at the Last Supper and the intertwining of love and obedience:

*By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you **love one another**... If you **love Me**, you **will obey** what I command... Whoever has My commands and **obeys them**, he is the one who **loves Me**. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love him and show Myself to him... If anyone **loves Me**, he will **obey My teaching**. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does **not love Me** will **not obey** My teaching. These words you hear are not My own; they belong to the Father who sent Me*

(John 13:35; 14:15, 21,23,24).

If you have aligned your current thoughts and emotions and all past toxic memories with Jesus and His Word, you'll find it within your character to forgive whatever anyone has done to you. Peter's encouragement will shine clearly in your mind: ***"Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins"*** (1Peter 4:8). Paul's defining attribute of love will resonate as well: ***"love keeps no record of wrongs"*** (1Corinthians 13:5). In this light, beginning with your marriage, you can truly fulfill Christ's intent for your life:

*My command is this: **Love each other as I have loved you**. Greater love has no one than this, that he **lay down his life for his friends** (John 15:12,13).*

Be aware, however, that people with strongholds in their brain *don't want* their free will and their heart to align with righteousness. They *don't want* to know God's commands because then they'd know right and wrong, and would have to make a choice. Then their corpus callosum would enable them to ask/answer/discuss how to apply God's commands to their lives.

But no matter how much Bible they know, they don't have the love of Jesus. This dreadful epitaph is a warning to the resistant: ***"I know that you do not have the love of God in your heart"*** (John 5:42).

Concluding Thoughts

In light of the insights Dr. Leaf has provided us, we now understand a phenomenon that has mystified us during the many years that we've been teaching about demonic strongholds. It all has to do with the follow-up responsibility to *replace toxic memories with healthy ones*.

“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Philippians 4:8)

That’s what we’ve been doing for each other and with the help of others close to us.

We’ve experienced the increased love of Jesus in us and through us during the process. Toxic memories have been replaced even though we didn’t understand what was going on in our mind. But now we better understand what’s happening, and hope that this Lifebyte has given you some helpful insight as well.

As you consider and discuss this Lifebyte and pursue the wisdom in Dr. Leaf’s book or DVD, we hope you’ll be convicted to intentionally follow up your deliverance from demonic strongholds with filling in those old ruts and behaviors by the grace and work of the Holy Spirit. That will call for you to purpose to take your old toxic memories and forgive each person involved, replacing the

memories with prayers of blessing for those individuals. Don’t be held captive any longer!

As a follower of Jesus, never forget that you’re in a lifelong battle over who will rule your mind, will and emotions. Will it be Jesus Christ, or demonic strongholds and toxic memories?

Ask yourself:

- Demonic strongholds not only block the truth and love of God, they destroy relationships both between you and God, and with other people. Are you free of strongholds at this time? If not, how is Satan prejudicing you toward others in a manner that is contrary to the will of Jesus?
- How *sanctified*—set apart as holy for God’s use—are you? When thoughts and emotions emerge from your soul, do they have the aroma of Jesus, or do they reek of strongholds and toxic memories?



The *Way of Sanctification* (left) corresponds to staying in the *center of the funnel* (below) in your hunger for more of Christ’s likeness in you. Repentance, remaining free from strongholds, ridding yourself of toxic memories, and aligning your thoughts with those of Jesus are His way of becoming more like Him through His Spirit.

One of the greatest hindrances to your own sanctification into Christ’s likeness and fulfilling your part in His Kingdom will be your *unbelieving relatives and friends*—those who refuse to leave their sin-based pleasures on “Earth” and on

the sides of the funnel. Their lack of devotion to Jesus will provoke them to obstruct your progress because they *don’t want you to change!* A Christ-like life threatens their own sinful pursuit.

You must not let the fear of hurting their feelings impede your own quest for sanctification by the Spirit at work in you. It is in this light that Jesus warns, “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Matthew 10:37). Your true family in our Father’s sight are those traveling with you on The Way of Sanctification: “Whoever does God’s will is My brother and sister and mother” (Mark 3:35). Press on with those whose goal is Christ-likeness, helping each other, so that one day together you’ll hear, “Well done, My good servants!”

Continuing on The Way of Sanctification into Christ-likeness and refusing to accommodate relatives and friends who persist in sin is a choice all followers of Jesus must face. The less “toxic” you are in your mind, the easier it is for the love of Jesus within you to enable you to choose to become more like Him through His Spirit. Replacing toxicity results in the freedom our Lord promises His followers.

