

Turn from Wrong Thinking To Right Thinking

Have you ever been traveling in a car when you suddenly realized that you missed the turn you were supposed to take? You've gone a mile or more out of the way because you've been going in the wrong direction. The only way to get where you want to go is to turn around and go back to the turn you missed.



The same thing can happen in our thinking. We hear a lie from the Enemy, who is described as *“a liar and the father of lies”* (John 8:44). It may come from an acquaintance, something you read in the paper, something you hear on the radio or television, or that subtle voice within.

Wrong ideas are all around us. Many common sayings, while containing a partial truth, are in fact lies that can take us down the wrong road. Think about the following misleading sayings. How many have you heard and accepted?

COMMON, BUT WRONG, THINKING

- “If anything can go wrong, it will.”
- “All good things must come to an end.”
- “A leopard can’t change its spots.”
- “God helps those who help themselves.”
- “It’s better to wear out than to rust out.”
- “All things come to those who wait.”
- “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.”
- “There’s no such thing as a free lunch.”
- “You’ve got to pull yourself up by your bootstraps.”
- “It never rains but it pours.”
- “He who hesitates is lost.”
- “There is safety in numbers.”
- “The end justifies the means.”

When you agree that the lie is true, perhaps without even realizing it, you begin going the wrong direction, making decisions and taking actions based on the lie.

Agreements about Life

Agreements lead to ideas **about life**. These include thoughts like:

- *“Life is never going to be what I had hoped”*
- *“Love never lasts”*
- *“It’s too late”*
- *“Life is so hard I should just give up”*

Agreements about Ourselves

Agreements may reflect ideas we have adopted **about ourselves**. For example, we may say to ourselves,

- *“I am a loser”*
- *“I could never do that job”*
- *“I’ll always be fat”*
- *“I can make it on my own if I just try harder”*

Agreements about God

Agreements may reflect ideas we have adopted **about God**. These could include such lies as

- *“I can’t trust God”*
- *“God could never forgive what I have done”*
- *“God isn’t interested in my everyday life”*

These **thoughts** cause us to take wrong **actions**.

Lies → *Agreements* → *Actions*

AGREEMENTS

Here's an example of how we can be deceived and enter into an agreement. Assume that you are a parent and that your son repeatedly disobeys you. You finally "blow your stack," ranting and raving at your son. You feel terrible afterward. Then a voice within you (most likely the Enemy, Satan) whispers a lie to you. Perhaps it is directed at you: "I'm such a jerk. I've always been a lousy parent and I always will be." This is more than just low self-esteem; it is a spiritual attack.

**How we
make
agreements**

**Lies
about
God**

Perhaps the lie is directed at God: "I've prayed for my son, and it's just not working. God doesn't answer my prayers." When you mentally agree with one of those lies, you have made an agreement. That agreement will then determine your behavior.

Sometimes the deceit will be directed at both us and God. I recently read a statement by a step-parent who was experiencing difficulties. She said, "It appears that the God I prayed to for so long has abandoned me (and I'm sure I deserve it)." She has made agreements about God and about herself. She has given in to wrong thinking.

In 1 Samuel 13, Saul chose not to wait for Samuel, a priest, to come sacrifice burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Saul made an agreement that God would not protect him and his army from the Philistines if he didn't make these offerings. He also made an agreement that he could offer these sacrifices, something only a priest was supposed to do. In making these agreements and acting on them, he disobeyed God.

**Saul
made an
agreement**

**Eve
made an
agreement**

In Genesis 3, Eve knew that God had forbidden them from eating the fruit of one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But she listened to the serpent, believed his lie, and made an agreement that God was holding back something desirable and beneficial from them. She acted on the agreement and ate the fruit and gave it to Adam as well.

“Be transformed by the renewing of your mind”
Romans 12:2

Spiritual renewal begins with recognizing the agreements we have made and turning from wrong thinking to right thinking, Biblical thinking. We begin by identifying the lie that we have believed.

Identify the Lie

For example, you might say to yourself, “I have believed the lie that no one could ever love me.”

Break the Agreement

Next, we need to make the decision to break the agreement we have. State it clearly: “It is not true that no one could ever love me. I am loved.”

Act on the Truth

Finally, we act on the truth; we have the courage to enter into relationships knowing that we can be loved. We live differently as a result of rejecting the lie and believing the truth.

Identify the Lie

Break the Agreement

Act on the Truth

1 Samuel 17 tells the story of David and Goliath and provides an example of someone resisting the making of agreements. King Saul told David, *“You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy ...”* (verse 33).

“You are not able”

If David had believed this lie and made an agreement, he would have run away from Goliath. Instead of making this agreement, he argued with Saul, saying in effect, “What are you talking about? I can defeat him! As a shepherd, I have killed lions and bears and I’ll do the same thing to this ungodly Philistine!” He didn’t buy the lie from the Enemy.

“I can”

**David
resisted
making
any
agreements**

Don’t Buy the Lie!

David also resisted the agreement that God wouldn’t protect him. He asserted, *“The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine!”* (verse 37) Again, he didn’t buy the lie of the Enemy that God wouldn’t protect him.

“The Lord will deliver me!”

Finally, David acted on the truth that he knew—that he was capable and that God would protect him. He went into battle against Goliath while the other Israelites, including King Saul, bought the devil’s deceit and cowered in fear. Identifying the lie and breaking the agreement is not enough; we must also act on the truth.

Identify the Lie

Break the Agreement

Act on the Truth

Act on the Truth

Pray to God, asking him to show you what agreements you have made. Identify the lies behind them and deliberately call them what they are—lies! Then state the truth and live by it.

Daily doses of Right Thinking

The following pages contain forty daily agreements (wrong thinking) and the Biblical truth (right thinking) to follow. Read just one each day and consider whether you have believed the agreement (or something similar). If so, apply the Biblical truth to help you turn from wrong thinking to right thinking.

Apply Biblical Truth

If the agreement doesn't apply to you, consider whether there are people you know who have thought this way and use the right thinking to encourage them.

Remember: Lies lead to Agreements which lead to Action. Break the chain. Turn from Wrong Thinking to Right Thinking!

Identify the Lie

Break the Agreement

Act on the Truth

Day 1: "I can't ..."

Right thinking: What God calls us to do, he will empower us to carry out. The apostle Paul could confidently assert, "*I can do everything through him who gives me strength*" (Philippians 4:13). The key is relying on God's strength working through us and not trying to do it on our own strength.

Day 2: "It's too late"

Right thinking: It's never too late for God to act in a situation. When Lazarus died, Mary lamented that it wouldn't have happened if Jesus had come earlier. Jesus still raised Lazarus from the dead, even though he had been dead three days (John 11:32, 43-44).

Day 3: "I'm a victim of my circumstances"

Right thinking: Since nothing can separate us from Christ's love (not even trouble, hardship, danger, persecution, etc.), the Bible tells us we are "*more than conquerors through him who loved us*" (Romans 8:37). Conquerors are not victims!

Day 4: "I'm too tired to keep trying"

Right thinking: God "*gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak...Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint*" (Isaiah 40:29,31).

Day 5: "I can do it myself"

Right thinking: I cannot count on my own wisdom to deal with every situation. The Bible counsels us, "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding ... Do not be wise in your own eyes*" (Proverbs 3:5,7).

Day 6: "I'm not talented enough to serve God"

Right thinking: God made us as we are. He won't ask us to do anything he knows we're not capable of doing. Moses protested that he couldn't speak well, but God asked him, "*Who gave man his mouth? ... Is it not I, the Lord? Now go; I will help you speak...*" (Exodus 4:12).

Day 7: "God hates me for what I've done"

Right thinking: If you have trusted Jesus as your Savior, God will not condemn you. The Bible says, *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 8:1).

Day 8: "I can't get past my flaws"

Right thinking: God doesn't call us to be perfect. Even the apostle Paul said, *"Not that I have ... already been made perfect."* God does want us to keep moving toward the goal he has for us. Paul continued, *"But I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me"* (Philippians 3:12).

Day 9: "I can't resist the influence of the devil"

Right thinking: Christians have the Holy Spirit within them. We can be assured that *"greater is the one who is in you than the one who is in the world"* (1John 4:4).

Day 10: "I don't have enough to be happy"

Right thinking: Contentment is possible, but it is a learning process. The apostle Paul said, *"I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry"* (Philippians 4:12).

Day 11: "God's not working in my life when I have problems"

Right thinking: Problems may just mean that we are on the front line of the battle. The apostle Paul was imprisoned, yet he concluded, *"What has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel"* (Philippians 1:12). We can still see God at work in our lives even when we are facing adversity.

Day 12: "I don't have anything to contribute to the church's ministry"

Right thinking: We are like different parts of a human body. Each part has a role, and none is more important than the other parts. The Bible says that God has given each Christian gifts to use in serving and *"has arranged the parts in the body ... just as he wanted them to be"* (1 Corinthians 12:18).

Day 13: "I am insignificant"

Right thinking: You are created in the image of God and *"crowned with glory and honor"* (Psalm 8:5). You have incredible value in God's eyes, enough value to God that Jesus died for you.

Day 14: "I can't resist this temptation"

Right thinking: God promises to provide a way out of your tempting situation. The Bible says, "*God ... will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it*" (1 Corinthians 10:13). It's up to you to look for the way out.

Day 15: "I'm too dumb to understand the Bible"

Right thinking: We have the Holy Spirit within us to help us understand the scriptures, and He's the author! Jesus said, "*The Holy Spirit ... will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you*" (John 14:21).

Day 16: "I can't succeed unless my situation changes"

Right thinking: We can creatively overcome obstacles. When the friends of the paralyzed man in Mark 2 wanted to bring him to Jesus, they didn't let the crowd stop them—they made a hole in the roof of the house! Think outside the box.

Day 17: "I can't help worrying"

Right thinking: God tells us that if we take our concerns to him in prayer, with thanksgiving, we will experience his peace. Therefore, he commands us to "*not be anxious about anything*" (Philippians 4:6-7). If God commands us, God will enable us.

Day 18: "I don't deserve God's blessing"

Right thinking: None of us deserve God's blessing. It is something we receive as we exercise faith in God. The Bible says that "*those who have faith are blessed ...*" (Galatians 3:9).

Day 19: "I am not good enough for God to accept me"

Right thinking: No one is "good enough." God accepts us on the basis of our faith in Christ, not on our good deeds. The Bible puts it this way: "*A man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ*" (Galatians 2:16).

Day 20: "I am worthless"

Right thinking: God created you, and "God don't make no junk!" When the psalmist reflected on the fact that God created him, his response was, "*I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful*" (Psalm 139:14).

Day 21: “My circumstances keep me from being successful”

Right thinking: Joseph in the Old Testament was sold into slavery by his brothers (pretty bad circumstances!) but “*the Lord was with Joseph and he prospered*” (Genesis 39:2). God is more powerful than our circumstances.

Day 22: “I don’t have enough to meet my needs”

Right thinking: Most of us have far more than we *need*. The problem is that we confuse *wants* with *needs*. The Bible says that “*God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 4:19).

Day 23: “It’s just not working”

Right thinking: “*Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up*” (Galatians 6:9). It is easy to give up too soon because we become impatient.

Day 24: “I’m not smart enough to handle this situation”

Right thinking: The Bible says that we should ask God if we lack wisdom and he will give it to us (James 1:5). In fact, it says he “*gives generously to all without finding fault.*”

Day 25: “God won’t forgive what I did”

Right thinking: God assures us that if we confess our sins, he is faithful to forgive us (1 John 1:9). In fact, he says that will not even remember our sins (Jeremiah 31:34). If God forgets something, we should too!

Day 26: “I can’t help myself”

Right thinking: God will enable us to say “no” to wrong behavior. The Bible assures us that “*the grace of God ... teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age*” (Titus 2:11-12). The apostle Paul also says in Galatians 5 that self-control is included among the fruit of the Spirit.

Day 27: “If it works, I should do it”

Right thinking: If it is right, do it. The Bible says, “*Do what is right and good in the Lord’s sight, so that it may go well with you ...*” (Deut. 6:18).

Day 28: "All the problems in the world right now make it impossible to feel secure"

Right thinking: Our security comes from God, not from our circumstances. *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea"* (which is more catastrophic than the current economic crisis) (Psalm 46:1-2).

Day 29: "It won't hurt to give in just this one time"

Right thinking: Every act has consequences. The Bible warns us that one wrong act or idea can influence our whole life, using the illustration that *"a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough"* (Galatians 5:9). It also tells us that *"God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows"* (Galatians 6:7).

Day 30: "I can't forgive him/her"

Right thinking: Forgive others *"just as in Christ God forgave you"* (Ephesians 4:32). Do they deserve it? No, but we don't deserve God's forgiveness either. The danger of not forgiving others is that we will become consumed with bitterness, poisoning our own lives.

Day 31: "I can't face another day"

Right thinking: God knows what you are going through and his grace is sufficient for each day. *"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit"* (Psalm 34:18).

Day 32: "The Old Testament doesn't have much application to my life"

Right thinking: The Old Testament is God's inspired message to us just as much as the New Testament. Regarding Israel's history recorded in the Old Testament, the Bible says, *"These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us"* (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Day 33: "I just can't win"

Right thinking: *"If God is for us, who can be against us?"* (Romans 8:31). God gives us the assurance that *"no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you"* (Isaiah 54:17). It may be tough for a while, but God will ultimately give the victory.

Day 34: "God could never be happy with me"

Right thinking: The Bible says, "*The Lord your God is with you ... He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing*" (Zephaniah 3:17).

Day 35: "What if ..."

Right thinking: God calls us to act in faith, not hesitate out of fear of what might happen. Ecclesiastes 11:4 notes that "*farmers who wait for perfect weather never plant. If they watch every cloud, they never harvest*" (New Living Translation).

Day 36: "I don't need to grow in my relationship with God"

Right thinking: God wants us to keep growing in every area of the Christian life. The apostle Paul commended the Thessalonian Christians "*because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing*" (1 Thessalonians 1:3).

Day 37: "I am inadequate"

Right thinking: By ourselves we are inadequate, but the God who is more than adequate promises to be with us. When Moses protested that he was inadequate to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, God assured him, "*I will be with you*" (Exodus 3:12a).

Day 38: "God can't understand the pressures I face"

Right thinking: God became man and faced just what we face (and more!). The Bible says about Jesus, "*We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin*" (Hebrews 4:15).

Day 39: "Life is so hard I should just give up"

Right thinking: The Bible says that "though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day." Therefore we can say with the apostle Paul, "*We do not lose heart*" (2 Corinthians 4:16).

Day 40: "That's just the way I am, I'll never change"

Right thinking: God is at work in you. The Bible says that "*the word of God ... is at work in you who believe*" (1Thess. 2:13). Where God is at work, things change!

NOTES

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