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One Thought Will Heal Your Mind

Written by Bill Perkins

I used to ruminate on negative thoughts for days, weeks, or longer--like years or decades. Over time they shaped my identity. Or, part of it. And then one night . . .

Winter in Oregon

I was thinking about winters in Oregon. Since I moved here in 82' I often remind myself how much I detest the wet, grey, rainy, winters. Did I say wet? Did I say cloudy? Did I say miserable? I dislike the dark, depressing winters because I grew up in the bright, happy, sunny states of New Mexico and Texas. In the Southwest the sky is large and blue and bright and sunny. In New Mexico and Texas sunny days flow into one another like a long line of Tabasco Sauce.

I lived in the sun until I was 33. In January of 82′ I moved to the winter-wet Pacific Northwest. Did you know in Oregon winter moss grows on decks and roofs and sidewalks and anything else that's left outside? Can be depressing.

I Saw Beauty In The Mist

As I reflected on the miserable winter weather I recalled something else. Almost every winter night I would take my white Goldendoodle, Shasta, for a walk. We walked along the street that runs from east to west in front of our former home. Across the street, to the south, a dance troupe of firs, pines and cedar trees cover the face of a steep hill. As I walk to the west those towering trees stand to my left. To my right runs a twenty food wide grassy area which drops steeply into a tree covered ravine.

A soft mist falls from ash grey clouds which partially mask a December moon. Shasta sniffs the air and ground and dances around, hoping I'll throw the ball. Ahead of us, and to the left, a street light illumines the lacework branches of a cedar tree. I glance up and feel the light touch of mist on my face. In the arc of the streetlight I see countless tiny droplets float softly to the ground. I throw the tennis ball into the air and Shasta sprints after it.

It hits the deserted street and bounces five or six feet into the air. Running full speed Shasta leaps into the air and snaps her jaws in an attempt to catch the ball. She misses and quickly chases it further up the street. I thank God for the beauty of the moon, the mist, the trees, the sound and feel of the wind. I celebrate the wonder of a God who would create such beauty. I thank him for giving me eyes, ears, a nose and skin to enjoy his gift. I celebrate the joy of my dog chasing a ball.

Replace a Negative Thought With a Positive One

As I recalled this thought I determined to replace my negative winter thoughts, and the emotions that attach to them, with the one I just described. And it’s working. Just ask me about Oregon winters. While nothing in the weather has changed, I have.

10 Year Anniversary

February marks the tenth year I've read through the Gospels every month. So far, after 120 readings, I haven’t found an instance where Jesus complained about the weather. Or, let it affect his emotions. I remember one instance where Jesus stilled a storm. But no complaints.

Focus on the Good

Since that's the case, why should I? Wouldn't I be healthier if I thought of Oregon winters by remembering Shasta chasing a ball on a misty, winter night? Recall the Apostle Paul, a devoted follower of Jesus, urging his friends to rejoice in every situation (1 Thessalonians 5:18). On that winter night I determined, by God’s grace, to replace my negative thoughts and feelings about winter with the memory of winter night walks with Shasta.

I’m discovering in a fresh way, almost daily, the power of Christ to root out bad attitudes and replace them with positive, healthy ones. Give it a try. Nab a negative emotion and identify the thought that triggered it. Ask what Jesus would feel in a similar situation. And then ask God to bring your thoughts and feelings into alignment with Jesus--by replacing negative thoughts with positive ones. I guarantee, as God’s Spirit aligns your feelings and thoughts with Jesus, he will also align your words and deeds.