

# Against the Tide

Nancy Missler

This book has been very helpful in teaching me to understand the power of emotions and feelings and how that influences the choices we make.

Matthew 16:24 – If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me.

To deny:

- Does NOT mean to push down and bury feelings
- Does NOT mean to pretend your feelings / desires don't exist.

What it does mean is that we have the freedom in Christ to prevent ourselves from following through or acting upon what we naturally think and feel.

As born again believers, we possess a supernatural authority to go against the tide of self. A non-believer has a choice to do as they please (under the power of the flesh or self) but they do not have the spirit of Christ within them so they do not have the authority to do anything different than what is possible by the spirit of the flesh which is the influence of the enemy.

Ephesians 4: 17-18 talks about this authority:

So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, <sup>and</sup> excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart.

Believers and non-believers can make a choice, but only Christ filled believers have the supernatural power which is the God given ability to actually walk out these choices in the practical situations of everyday life.

We don't have to feel our choices, we simply have to be willing to make them. It is contrary to what we feel and desire in the flesh but by faith we give the negative thoughts and feelings to God. The practical purpose of our lives in Christ is to be conformed into his image. This means we are transformed to love with his love, to live according to his wisdom and understanding and to function on his power and ability. This means he truly becomes the source of our lives. When we practice and learn to live in this way, the life of Christ is fully lived and his light shines to those around us. This is how his kingdom is fully realized in us and all around!

Declaring you're a Christian doesn't mean copying or imitating how Jesus lived, it is actually exchanging lives with him. This is what the cross is all about! That our sin nature may actually be replaced with the nature of God our Father through the indwelt life of Christ Jesus is why we are to be thankful and why praise should be rising up within us in our daily lives!

In our everyday circumstances, when we entertain the negative feelings and begin to embrace them in our lives then this quenches or waters down God's Spirit in our lives and separates us from the supernatural outpouring of his Spirit into and through our lives.

Here is a direct quote:

"Lest I confuse you, let me explain exactly what I mean when I say "separate us from God's Life." If we are believers, then we always have God's life in our hearts. Romans 8:38 -39 states that nothing separates us from his love and his life, and 1 Corinthians 13:8 tells us his love never stops coming. However, if God's Spirit is quenched because of something we have chosen to hold on to that is not of faith, then that life of God in our hearts will not be able to flow out into our lives or our souls. Technically, yes we still have God's life in our hearts, but practically, until we deal with that sin and self (confess it, repent of it and give it over to him) we will not experience his life in our souls. Thus Isaiah 59:2 is also true for a Christian: Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that he will not hear." – Nancy Missler

When we accept Christ and are born again, we receive his holy spirit in us. This means he is alive inside of us which produces a strong desire to repent and be set free! To repent is to turn away from how you've been thinking and living and turn in a totally new direction. This is difficult because we've established patterns in our lives and we are on autopilot living out of this old mindset. Every day we are alive our mind is filled with what we focus on. Life is full of interactions and triggers that influence and shape our mindset and it is from this place that our actions occur. So, if we want to change our actions then you work backwards to change your mindset which means you must begin to look at how you are spending your time and what type of thinking are you allowing into your mind and spirit?

Think of a busy ocean harbor with many ships waiting to dock and come to land and you are the manager who determines what ship may park and which ships must be turned away.



There is only so much dock space and many ships so it is important to give thought towards how to manage this process and what are the results of those decisions. Dealing with influences and triggers in life is really no different. Our minds, practically speaking, can only handle so much. What thoughts will you allow to dock at the harbor of your mind which will determine your mindset, which will ultimately result in your actions?

Philippians 2:13 says, "for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." Earlier on Paul is talking about being united in purpose and being of the same mind. Because of God's life in us we also have his authority and power to go against the tide of our feelings and emotions and follow Him in an ongoing attitude of praise and thankfulness. Establishing new patterns of filling our minds with the truth and life of his nature leads to a transformed mindset and a new way of living. Simply stated, think on the ways of our Lord and his kingdom, grow in a life of rich prayer, wait quietly and listen in his presence, learn to worship, praise, sing and dance in him and similar things and this will change your mindset and your way of living.

Matthew 16:19 says, I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth <sup>[a]</sup>shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth <sup>[b]</sup>shall have been loosed in heaven." Direct section from the book:

"Now, we always associate this scripture with the enemy (binding and loosing him by the Holy Spirit). But in a personal sense, to bind literally means to "prohibit or forbid self" and to loose means to "permit or to allow self." This scripture is saying that we possess the authority and the power of God (within our willpower as Christians), to choose to either "forbid self" (relinquish, surrender, and set self aside) and walk after the Spirit, or the power to "allow self" (let self reign) and walk after the flesh." – Nancy Missler

His timing and his ways are perfect regardless of what we may feel. God is faithful to change our negative thoughts and emotions to align with our choices. We only need to be willing to make the right choices and by the life of the Holy Spirit abiding within us we have the love, supernatural power and wisdom to carry on. Now, as long as we are on this earth, there is this ongoing battle between spirit and flesh. This battle is constantly bringing us to make a choice to either follow the thoughts and emotions of our flesh or to fully yield to the will of our heavenly Father. 1 Thessalonians 5 and Ephesians 4 speaks of not grieving or quenching the Holy Spirit, but instead to edify, build up, to be tender hearted and forgiving toward each other. After all, as believers, we are all in this together, running our race to be the Holy Spirit led people our Father calls us to be.

Be always awake, recognize and never forget, this war that is going on in our souls and bodies. Bring your flesh into captivity by living a life of repentance and surrender so that God's life can continually come forth. We now have the life of Christ within us and it is his nature and power that continually sets us free. Understand that this paints a very vigorous picture. There will always be this ongoing battle for your mind and we are to be very active in living moment by moment in this living relationship with our Savior.

"As Christians, God has given us incredible freedom, moment by moment to either follow his Spirit and believe and trust in him, or to follow our flesh and to believe and trust in ourselves. He has given us the authority to open ourselves up to him, and abandon ourselves to his will, or the authority to shut ourselves off from him and to follow what we think, feel and desire." - Nancy Missler

**God has 2 kinds of will:**

- 1.) Thelo – His instinctive emotional desires / the things he takes pleasure in
- 2.) Boule – His planned purposes / the resolve of his mind

God's will is always perfect. However, what we want and desire is not always perfect.

2 kinds of human will:

- 1.) Thelema – our natural & emotional desires / the things we take pleasure in
- 2.) Boulomai – our disciplined willing / our choices free of any emotion. Dependence upon God's supernatural will and power abiding within us.

This is the important question to ask:

Will we be carried away on the swelling tide of emotion consisting of our uncontrolled feelings, unhealthy thoughts and self centered desires?

**OR**

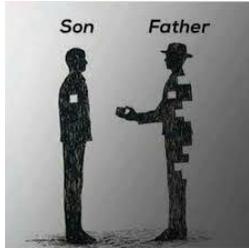
Will we make a godly choice based upon faith that goes against the tide of our emotions and self centeredness to follow what our Lord is leading us to do and to rely on him to do it?

Making choices by faith which often go against what we are feeling emotionally is very difficult and feels "unnatural". Everytime we go with the emotional choices and do what feels natural while in that emotional state where the feelings of our flesh are pulling us a certain direction we are setting ourselves up to stay in bondage to our flesh and to the enemy.

2 Corinthians 3:17 says, "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Living in joy and gratitude and making choices that go against our flesh is living life full of his Spirit.

"Remember, we said that our willpower is called in the Greek, dianoia. Well, it's interesting because dia means channel and noya means mind. This is exactly what our will power is, the channel our conduit for God's Spirit to flow from our hearts out into our lives." – Nancy Missler

So, to think and talk this out a bit, doesn't one thing need to die so that another can truly live? Possibly we can think of death as the culmination of the process in giving your whole self away through a lifetime of constant choices. In giving something away, hopefully that means what we are giving away is received by someone else and that something may be a gift that cultivates the "life garden" of the receiver and leads them further into richness of life into our Lord? That is how I long to live....that my ultimate departure from this world may be the result of a pilgrimage fully lived to this end and may it be a celebration!



John 12:24 is a beautiful illustration of what we are talking about, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."

**How do I live like this you may ask?** Isaiah 11:1-5 sheds light on this very question,

"Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,  
And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.

<sup>2</sup> The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him,  
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
The spirit of counsel and strength,  
The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

<sup>3</sup> And He will delight in the fear of the LORD,  
And He will not judge by what His eyes see,  
Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;

<sup>4</sup> But with righteousness He will judge the poor,  
And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;  
And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,  
And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.

<sup>5</sup> Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins,  
And faithfulness the belt about His waist."

As Paul talks about in Philippians 2, we are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. It is God who is at work in us through the ever abiding presence of the Spirit of Christ (per above) to will and to work for his good pleasure. God is our counselor and he supernaturally guides us as we daily submit and yield our flesh (emotional choices and feelings) so that his Spirit may have full reign in our lives. We yield, then we praise him for who he is no matter the result. He is able and we are to trust him in faith,

the one, who loves us more than any other, who knows our every thought and will lead us right where we need to be.

Remember, don't focus on outward circumstances to the point where you become in bondage. Things in life are often on fire and it's easy to become a slave to the things of the flesh through these circumstances.

This leads us to consider Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Thomas Watson, a Puritan teacher and author in the 1600's said, "How is it that a spark of grace lives in a sea of corruption, the storms of persecution blowing – but Christ holds this spark in the hollow of His hand?...In Him dwells all fullness (Colossians 1:19). Christ is whatever the soul can desire. Christ is beauty to adorn, gold to enrich, balm to heal, bread to strengthen, wine to comfort, and salvation to crown. If we are in danger, Christ is a shield; if we are disconsolate (unhappy), He is a sun. He has enough in His wardrobe to abundantly furnish the soul."

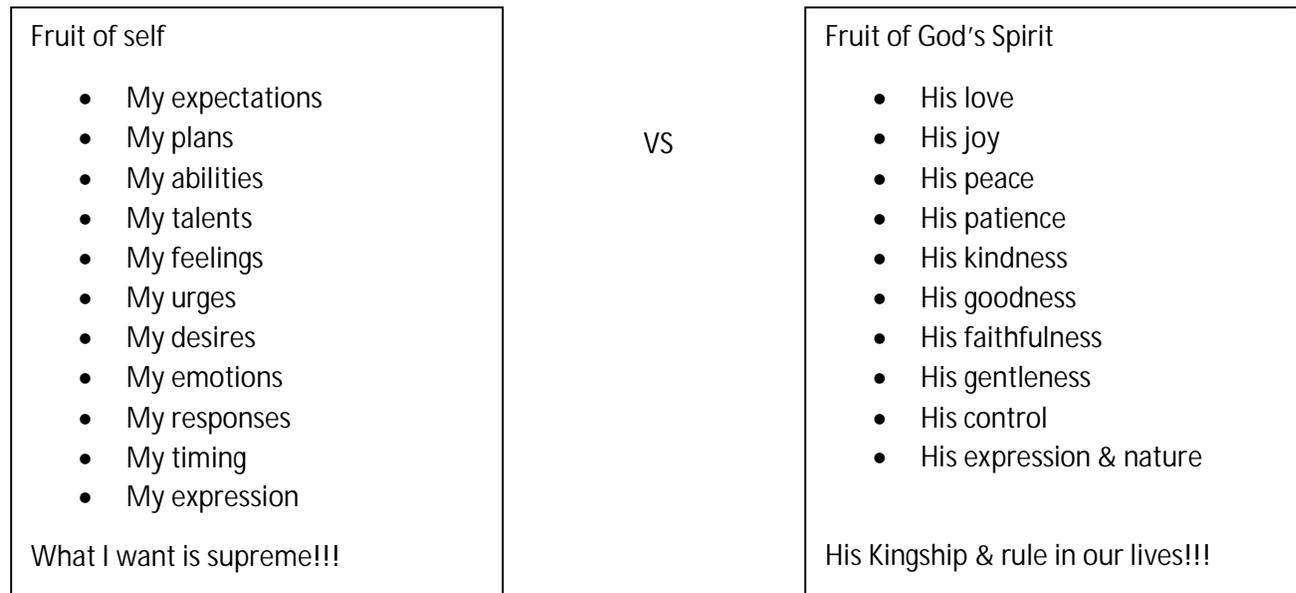
Isn't He beautiful?! The life of Christ within us is sufficient for all we can ever want or need. Daily, I find myself yielding and submitting. My expectations, plans, abilities, talents, feelings, urges, desires, emotions, responses and all of these type of things have the potential to totally wreck my day and most importantly displace the life of Christ and His rightful and deserved place as the king upon the throne of my life. This must become an ongoing and daily practice of confessing confidence in ourselves and seeing that replaced with confidence in God. As Nancy writes, "all self reliance must be superceded by

Spirit-Control: God's Spirit of Strength in the Greek means power to rein in, mastery over self, self-control, or better yet, Spirit-control. This is exactly what God's Spirit of Strength does. It reins in (or brings into captivity) our self life, so that God's life can come forth. Luke 21:19 even says, "In your patience possess (or rein in) your soul. – Nancy Missler

God's strength and His ability. In other words, it's not what we can do for God, but what God will do through us."

It's important to realize this life is not only about making choices in faith but actually walking it out. This is the hard part! We often give up, get restless, become impatient and take our lives back into our own hands. Why do we struggle to break this cycle?

Again, remember how I spoke about submitting and yielding everyday in my own life? Before I continue, let's take a look at these 2 charts



You see, the fruit of self is always trying to blossom and come forth. Nancy writes, "Consequently, it's not only important that we make the right faith choices, giving God the authority to work, but it's also important that we give Him our lives to perform those choices through."

So this means that we are to **practically live out** Romans 12: 1-2 which says, "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

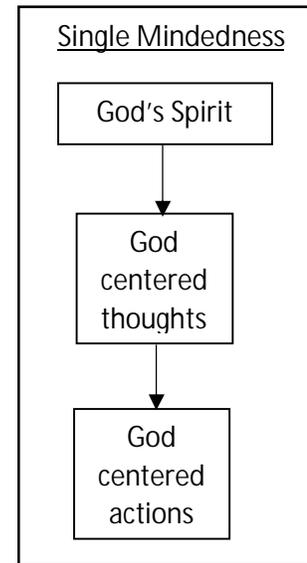
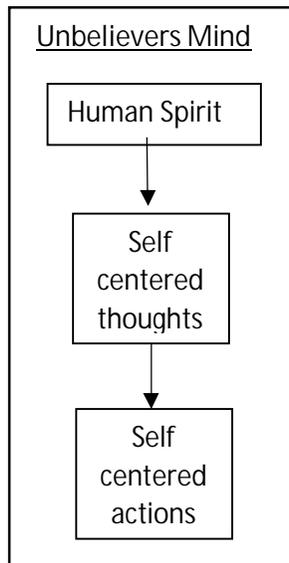
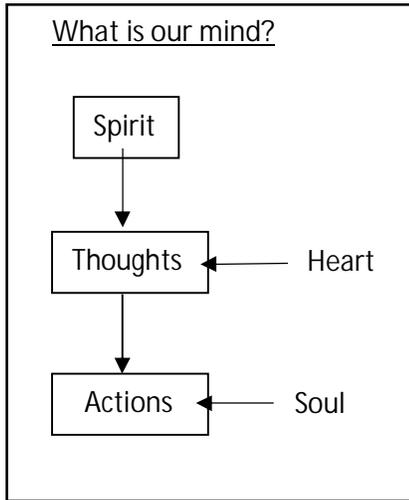
Yes, renew your mind, be set free by dying to yourself daily through submission to the Lord your King. Confess and lay down the fruit of self **continually and daily** so that his nature and life may flow in and through you and bring transformation.

## Do you trust God?

When someone really loves and cares for you, you trust that they have your best interest at heart, even though you don't always understand their expression of love. God asks us to do the same with him. He asks us to unconditionally trust in his love for us, no matter what we see, feel or understand to be happening. – Nancy Missler

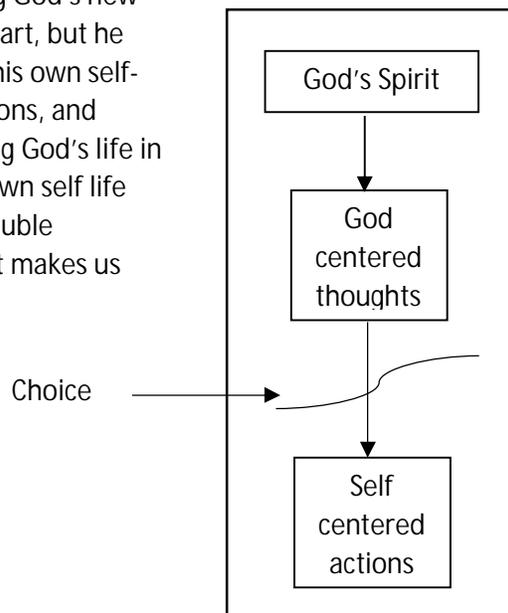
Next I would like to include a few charts that Nancy included in *Against the Tide*. Nancy writes, "our minds are not just our thoughts, or our reason, or our intellect, but a whole conceptual process. This process begins with the spirit that resides at the core of our being and ends with the life that is produced out in our soul. This whole process is called mind, or nous, in the Greek."

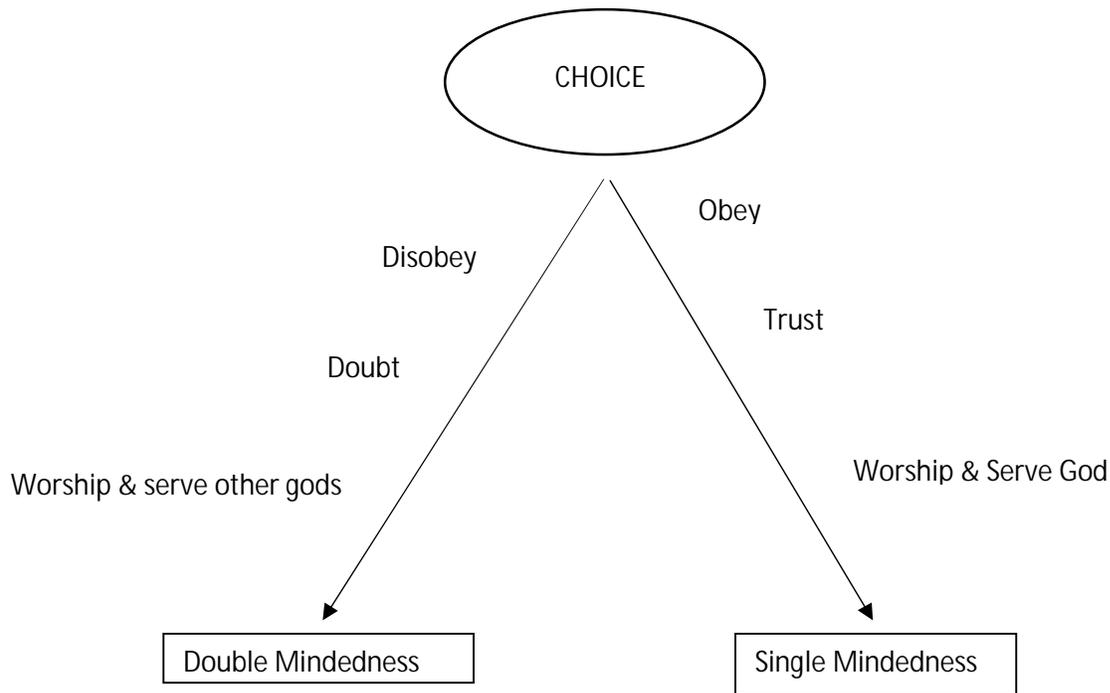
Please keep this in mind as you study each chart:



"Double mindedness is what a carnal Christian fights continuously. He still has God's Spirit energizing God's new supernatural Life in his heart, but he has chosen to hang onto his own self-centered thoughts, emotions, and desires, thereby quenching God's life in him & showing forth his own self life (the old man) instead. Double mindedness, then, is what makes us hypocrites or phonies."

Double Mindedness





"The bottom line is that all Christians have God's love in them, but not all Christians are willing to set themselves aside to let it flow." – Nancy.

"Just like it's been a habit all our lives to make emotional choices, we must now begin to make a habit of making faith choices.....(2 Corinthians 10:5 ...take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ)....

Old habit patterns (conditioned responses) are hard to break because they are in our comfort zone. Making choices that we don't feel and that we don't want to make, is going to be foreign and unfamiliar for awhile....We mustn't expect an easy or quick transition, but, we must persevere anyway and not let the enemy dissuade us. God is faithful and He promises, if we do our part, He will set us free." – Nancy

What is our part? To continually lay down and surrender our feelings, expectations, plans, unforgiveness, emotions, etc...and be filled with the Spirit of God continually, everyday, holding every thought captive and be willing to make choices by faith, not by emotions.

This type of living requires us to actually think BEFORE reacting to everything in our lives. When you do react, are you reacting according to the will of God or will you be manipulated by your own flesh? Practice living in this way and it will become natural and right.

In Nancy's own words she says, "Unfortunately, there's just no room for coasting, it's a moment by moment faith walk. In fact, there is no such thing as standing still in our walk with God. We are either moving ahead or falling behind." Personally, I have found this to be true as well in my own walk.

We put a lot of weight on how we feel. Feelings are tied very closely to the actions that we take. So often we are living our lives according to what we feel, according to our opinions and desires. Saying we have the Holy Spirit within us doesn't end with that statement alone and a fuzzy feeling. There is an expectation and a practical playing out of what his life in us actually means. That is we have the authority, by the power of

God, to make choices, by faith, that go against what we think, feel and desire. God is faithful as we walk this out in an attitude of thankfulness and praise to bring our feelings into line with our choices made by faith, when we persevere.

This time in between as we wait for our feelings to align with our choices, Nancy refers to as a holding pattern. The amount of time this "healing process" takes really depends on how deep the hurt is that we have been experiencing in a certain relationship or area of life. One example she gives is like being shot with an arrow. You remove the arrow right away but it still will take time before you will "feel" the healing. This really opens up a whole new way of thinking about healing in general to me.

### What is sin?

Well, we have the list of things from Galatians 5:19-21: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, and orgies. Nancy also addressed these other subtle things that hide in our hearts from "The Calvary Road" written by Roy Hession: **Self pity, self defensiveness, over sensitivity, criticalness, resentfulness, worry, grumbling, bossiness, self complacency, self energy, self seeking, self indulgence and self consciousness.**

These things, and more like them, can cover over our hearts and serve to block God's life in and through us. While some of these things should be very obvious, I think we need to **be very careful** in how we move forward in determining if these type of sins are being practiced in our lives. Many of us can mistakenly over analyze and flog ourselves unnecessarily. Simply through waiting on the Lord in prayer, be led by the Holy Spirit, listen and respond with obedience with how he may be convicting you in a certain area where you may have concern. Don't get worked up and anxious but let the Father do his work in you, repent and move onward into maturity.

### How to stop the chain reaction?

1. Thoughts trigger emotions
2. Emotions stir up desires
3. Desires produce actions

This is why it's so important to hold every thought captive (2 Corinthians 10:5). I often refer to this as taking a pause. Whenever I'm in a conversation with someone where we are going to disagree the "passion meter" starts to tick upwards. It takes practice to pause and identify the thoughts that are already forming in your head (are these thoughts of God's nature or my nature?). In this process you are hopefully trying to listen as the other person is laying out their thoughts to which, unfortunately, our reckless human nature wants to pounce upon, sling out a zinger, and put to rest that you are right once and for all! There is hope. As you practice surrendering your human nature continually in your days (in the smallest of ways) the nature of God begins to swell up in your spirit. The bondage you've been wrapped up in begins to unravel and the true nature and freedom that comes from a surrendered life in God begins to form and fill you up. More and more it becomes "natural" to hold your thoughts captive while they are forming, surrender them unto obedience in Christ, in real time, which completely turns the chain reaction process, as listed above, upside down. You move forward in relationship with Godly emotions, Godly desires and Godly actions.

**Consider Ephesians 4:29-32**, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do

not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Do you see how important it is that we grasp the truth of what is being laid out here and even more to apply it to our everyday lives in relationship with one another? **Remember, what is the overall point of all this as followers of Christ?** That we may grow up into maturity and through the gifts given to us by God, teach and lead others to become spiritual mothers and fathers so they may do the same.

#### The enemies playground:

“When we make an emotional choice, Satan (through the power of sin) not only has access to our conscious thoughts, emotions, and desires, he also has access to the things that we have pushed down and buried in the hidden recesses of our souls – all our doubts, unforgiveness, fears, roots of bitterness, insecurities and so forth. This is the enemy’s playground and how he tries to continually influence our choices. It’s our choices that he is after” – Nancy

#### How do we handle negative thoughts?

1. Vent them to others?
2. Stuff them down?
3. Give them to God?

I have personally tried all 3 of these choices for many years. It should be no shock that choosing, by faith, to surrender them to God is the only choice that will truly set you free. Trying to bury real feelings and thoughts doesn’t work. Do you ever wonder why? They aren’t dead! Those things will come back up to the surface until they are properly dealt with. They want to live on and continue to influence our future actions.

Venting negative feelings to others, with the sole purpose of complaining, will do nothing in the long run. It may make you feel better in the moment but you’ve done nothing of lasting effect to deal with what is living in your spirit.

Nancy touches on 4 steps to breaking free that make sense:

1. Recognize & acknowledge the sin and self that has just occurred. Be open and honest before God about what you’re feeling.
2. Confess & repent of everything that the Lord has shown. This means don’t rush out of step one. Spend time before God in prayer and thankfulness. Let him reveal what you need to know in his ways and his timing. Forgiveness is often a very important part. You’ll know when to move forward.
3. Surrender to God all that he has shown. You may not feel like it but, by faith, offer prayer and praise to God. Remember, deep seated hurt often will take time for you to “feel” the healing.
4. Read God’s word and feed his truth into your life.

It is important, and scriptural, to be clean before the Lord. That is why all the things that have been covered to this point really do matter. Walking with God so that he may do this supernatural work in us sets us up for the truth in John 4:23, “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. At this place, we are not asking the Father for anything but are truly there, before him, to worship and adore him. It is at this place

that the prayer and worship, and petitions (asking of things), will be what is flowing out of his heart through us as vessels. This is true intercessory prayer. Waiting on and praying the heart of God, united with him and his purposes.