

# Thought as Spiritual and Physical Health

*By Bobby Schuller*

I'm just going to review real quick from last week. We're in a series called *As a Man Thinketh*, and it's named not only after the famous James Allen essay, but after the Proverb that says "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" (or she). That really is true. And that is a constant theme throughout the scripture. The idea that you literally become what you think about. When you look at your life and your circumstance, you are looking 90% of the time at the result of your thinking. The mind is a garden that needs constant tending and care. A mind that is planted with good seed is going to bear good fruit, and a mind that is planted with bad seed is going to bear bad fruit. Good thoughts bear good fruit. Bad thoughts bear bad fruit all the time. It is a law. It is infallible. It is true. Good thoughts bear good fruit and in order to cultivate a beautiful mind, you must tend to beautiful thoughts. And you must be vigilant. And you must pull up the weeds that would grow against the knowledge of the word of God.

Therefore, 90% of your circumstance is the result of your thinking. And the other 10%, the random chance, the bad stuff that happens and things that we don't expect, our ability to endure those things with victory is 100% going to be based on our thinking. So you want to change your thoughts? Then you want to change your world. You want to

change your world? Change your thoughts. If you change one bad thought into a good thought today, you will be in a very, very different place five years from now, I promise you. Isn't that good news? The good news is that although none of us are perfect, and none of us are going to tend to perfect thoughts, the good news is we have the power to change our destiny. Our destiny is the result of our thinking. Amen? You know a thought cannot be kept secret, right? Every thought you have crystallizes into habit, and that habit solidifies into circumstance.

And so today I want to talk about an aspect of this theme, which is that a healthy mind leads to a healthy life. Now everybody's a little bit sick; that's what Oral Roberts said. Everybody's got a little something, right? My hope today is that you leave here with hope in your heart – that no matter how sick you are that you have some power over how your body is going to respond to your sickness or your challenge. And my hope today is that you will leave here with a biblical – can we call it an edge on whatever it is you're facing. I've been sick before, my son is very sick, and Hannah's had chronic illness, and the last thing you want to do is hear it's your fault, or, try harder.

And yet what I do want to say to you is that you could have hope, that God does miracles, that we should walk by faith, and that most of all, healthy thinking leads to a healthy life. Can I get an amen to that? Okay. So just to begin there, healthy thinking leads to a healthy life, we could all agree on that. Most of us want to lose a little weight. Or maybe

you want to stop smoking. Most smokers want to stop smoking. Most of us want to exercise more, even though it stinks. I hate exercising. If you drink, you probably want to drink less or not at all. If you sleep, you probably want to sleep more and sleep deeper. And all of these things are 100% related to the thoughts that you tend to in your mind. If you tend to healthy thoughts, you're going to cultivate a healthy body and a healthy life. If you cultivate base, lazy, other kinds of thoughts like that, you're going to cultivate that kind of life. And on an even deeper, more important level, things like stress and anxiety we know lead to real physical illness in your body. Things like neuropathy. We know they can even cause things like cancer.

And so a stressful, anxious life, although it's a 100% in your mind, can lead to things in your body, various illnesses and things like that. And what about faith? Jesus teaches us about faith. He really does teach us that we can do miracles in Jesus' name, and that some of those miracles are to heal the sick. I've been a part of those miracles, many times. And though it's certainly not a formula, and you certainly can't do it all the time, there is something about faith that can heal people. So the mind is linked to the body, and the healthy mind is linked to a healthy body. And no matter how sick you are, if you tend to healthy thoughts, to thoughts of faith, to thoughts of serenity and peace, and if you tender thoughts of victory in the word of God, you're going to do better physically. Again, I'm not saying this to say try harder, I'm saying this to

say there is way forward for you. God doesn't want you sick. You're going to do a lot better job for Him and His kingdom healthy. I believe that, don't you? So we're going to build our faith today.

Now in the scripture, in Matthew chapter 22, Jesus says something really amazing. And before we get to that, I want to talk about Judaism real quick. In Jesus' day, there's this system of rabbis. Rabbinic Judaism was emerging because of this guy named Hillel the elder and he sort of spawn into this whole system of rabbis where many of these rabbis would interpret Torah or the bible differently. They loved the bible, but it was almost like denominations where Baptist, Calvinist, Wesleyan, Catholic, they were all sort of going to read the bible differently. And in Jesus' day, rabbis sort of read the bible differently and although instead of breaking up and calling each other names, they would actually sit in a room and debate one another – all the time.

And so each rabbi then would build what was called a yoke. That yoke was his interpretation of scripture, or his denomination. It was his way of reading the bible. Jesus had a yoke, remember? And so what every rabbi wanted to do was pass on their yoke, their interpretation of scripture, onto disciples. Now in Jesus' day, they had the whole bible but the most important part of the bible was the Torah. Everyone say Torah. (AUDIENCE – Torah) Torah is the first five books of the bible, and maybe the most important passage in the Torah is the Shammah. Everyone say Shammah (AUDIENCE - Shammah) The Shammah is found in

Deuteronomy 6, chapter 4. And in Jesus' day, everyone, everyone had the bible, the Torah memorized by the age of ten, boys and girls. Did you know that? I think I told you that a few weeks ago.

So everyone had the whole bible, the whole five books of the bible memorized, but especially they had the Shammah memorized. It was a prayer they would say every day. And they would put it on the doorposts of their house. In fact today, if you have a friend, a Jewish friend, there's a really good chance that he or she is going to have this little metal box by their door called a mezuzah. And in that mezuzah is this passage - the Shammah: "Shammah Yisrael Adonai, Eloheinu, Adonai echad." "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." Everyone has it memorized.

And the part that comes right after that, if we can put the passage on the screen, hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. "Love the Lord your God." So this is in preparation for studying Torah. Love the Lord your God with all your: everyone say heart (AUDIENCE - heart), with all your - everyone say soul (AUDIENCE - soul) and with all your, everyone say strength (AUDIENCE - strength). Okay? So there are three things that every Jew they know - love the Lord with your (AUDIENCE - heart) heart, love the Lord with your (AUDIENCE - soul), love the Lord with your (AUDIENCE - strength). Right? Okay. So everybody knows. One more time - love the Lord with all your (AUDIENCE - heart), with all your (AUDIENCE - soul), and with all your (AUDIENCE - strength). Good! All right, you got it.

Okay so Jesus is sitting in the temple and it's during Passover, and this is the highest holiday of the year. There are probably about a million people there in Jerusalem, and it'd be like if Billy Graham came to Orange County, or came to church, and he was sitting out there and everybody wants to hear what the master has to say. And so they're sitting around, and many of the rabbis of Jesus' day hate Jesus, so they're always trying to beat Him intellectually. And so they're throwing questions at Him, and trying to trip Him up, and the final question is this one – the greatest teacher among the rabbis asks Jesus this question: Rabbi, what do you say is the greatest commandment?

Now what he's probably asking is what of the ten.. even though he doesn't say it outright, which of the Ten Commandments is the most important? And the reason he's asking is this is a no win question, right? You answer one and he's say well what about envy? Well you answer stealing. And he'd say well what about idolatry?

And so Jesus answers this way. When he says rabbi, what's the greatest commandment, Jesus says "the greatest commandment is this: love the Lord" (He's quoting Deuteronomy 6:5), everyone knows it, right? Everybody in the room listening knows it. He says love the Lord your God with all your (AUDIENCE – heart), with all your (AUDIENCE – soul), and with all your (AUDIENCE – strength). Wrong. The last one He says "with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind."

So everybody's who's sitting there hears Him change the Torah! Everybody's got that in their mind, in their heart, in their little box, they've got it. They know this thing. It would be like if I said thy kingdom come, thy will be done, in Orange County as it is in heaven. Right? You know what I'm saying. I'm applying my interpretation to a passage every Christian knows.

Jesus is applying this word as His interpretation to Deuteronomy. He changes the word strength to mind. What is He saying? What do you think He's saying? I think He's saying that the strength of any man or woman of God is right here. You want to be strong? Have a strong mind. Do you want to love the Lord? Love Him with your mind. Dedicate your life to cultivating good thoughts and your life will bear good fruit. Allow your mind to run wild, and your whole body and life and everything will be like a garden that is allowed to run wild. Full of weeds. Barren. Abandoned. The mind is the beginning of a new life in Jesus. That's why Paul always tells us put on the mind of Christ. That's why he tells us to be transformed by the renewing of our mind.

You want a new life? Have a new mind. All of our strength; you need strength to get through life, because life is hard. Life is going to have a lot of suffering, and you need strength to get through. And the strength that you need more than anything is the strength of your mind. And so that doesn't come through willpower: that comes through training. That comes through new patterns. It comes from cultivating

new thoughts and casting out any thought that sets itself up against the knowledge of God and scriptures in Christ Jesus. Amen? And this is true.

There's a story that just came out. Hannah and I heard about it just before we left for Australia about the faith runner. An Indian man named Samir Singh who began running with his brother one day and he just kept going. And his goal as he started, this is a real life Forest Gump. This is crazy. You got to listen to this. This man started running and his goal was to run a hundred kilometers, which do we have any Europeans here? That's like sixty miles, isn't it? Americans really don't know. We just don't know. It's something like sixty miles. It's a long way. It's farther than you can run, trust me. Me, too.

So he decides to run a hundred kilometers a day for a hundred days in the goal to reach ten thousand kilometers in a hundred days. And this was thought to be completely impossible. I mean you think about running a hundred kilometers, that's more than two marathons every day. Every day! And this guy got to day one hundred, thirty-six kilometers short of ten thousand kilometers, and his body completely broke down. He lived, of course, but he couldn't go any farther. But being interviewed after breaking every single record in everything they thought that was humanly possible, the faith runner said, "People say that the body has limits. My students," he was a coach, "my students have complained of being advised against the overuse of their bodies. But

according to the holy scripture, the body has no limit. If you have dreams, your body will take shape accordingly. My experience is testament to the same. God has given us our bodies and our mental capabilities define its limitations.” Wow. Pretty powerful, isn’t it. He’s a 40-year-old man. He’s not old, but he’s not young. Well, I guess it’s all relative, isn’t it. Pretty great that a 40-year-old man could run almost ten thousand kilometers.

Now about that almost; Hannah and I, when we heard that, we thought man, if someone had been able to trick him that it wasn’t the last day but the second to last day, you kind of get a feeling that he might have crossed the line. You know what I mean? It’s like when you start getting close to that finish line, you don’t think about enduring, you think about resting. You think about eating pizza and drinking a bunch of water, and watching Marvel on Netflix all day. I’ve never done that, I promise. And you start to foster not thoughts of crossing the line, but thoughts of what you do when you cross the line because you’ve already assumed you’ve done it. And by no means do I judge this guy at all, but he would probably say that it was in the mind. That it was in the mind. Your power, your strength to do what you’re called to do by God begins and ends with your thoughts. You want to have victory in life? Foster thoughts of victory. Foster the word of God and He’ll get you there.

That’s why Paul teaches us, if you have your bibles you can read with me. In 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians chapter 10, Paul tells us we’re fighting a

battle, right? And for the early church Christians, they took the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount seriously. They did not fight. They were non violent, even though they were being beaten and cast to lions, and killed, and executed. They turned the cheek, and they lived that out. Think about that when Paul's writing about this, because he says "for though we live in the world," right? "We do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world." Well what are the weapons? "On the contrary, our weapons, they have divine power to demolish strongholds." You have a stronghold in your life that needs demolishing? Who has a stronghold in their life they need demolishing? Just a few of you. Well that's good, I guess. I guess everybody's doing pretty good. Yeah, I know, you're a bunch of liars.

All right. Who has a stronghold in their life that needs some demolishing? All right, a few more. That's good. That's good. "We demolish arguments and every pretention that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." We take captive. Everybody say every thought (AUDIENCE – every thought). Every thought is your servant, not your master. Every thought. Every thought. Every thought. To the obedience of Christ Jesus. That's where every thought belongs in the kingdom of God. Keep it there and watch as your life flourishes in every way! Joy, life, success, relational victory, and most of all, a good life that is pleasing and brings glory to the throne of God.

When Hannah and I were enduring some of the sufferings of our son's health problems, Dodie Osteen gave Hannah this book, what was called, *Healed of Cancer?* And she says right up front it's not for everybody, but again, try and think of this as not a magic formula, but an edge. And she was told by doctors that she had late stage cancer, and I think only had like two months to live, something crazy like that. And she just said no! No! She would not go quietly into that good night. And so she said I am going to make a change and the change I'm going to make is going to be right here. I am not going to think like a sick person, I'm going to think like a healthy person. I am not going to be a victim. I'm going to be a victor. I'm going to act as though I'm healthy. I'm going to believe by faith that God can heal me, and I'm going to trust in Him no matter what. And she said it was hard. A lot! All the time. And she would do things that she shouldn't do if she had late stage cancer, like move the table. Like cook. And nobody asked her to do these things, she decided herself.

And though this doesn't work for everybody, Dodie Osteen decided at any time she had a thought that went against scripture, or against the word of God, she would say out loud: 'thoughts get in line with the word of God!' Now if you know Dodie Osteen, this is someone you want praying for you. She's this little lady and she is filled with so much fire and passion. When she prays for us, she's like angry at God. God! They need your help! Like David, you know. I love it. She's got this power in her.

And she demanded that she would not take into her mind thoughts of failure, of sickness, of self pity, but thoughts of victory. And though this doesn't work for everyone, it will give you the edge. It certainly gave her the edge. It was 25 years ago. She's been in complete remission from cancer. She's a hundred percent healthy and she loves teaching people how to align their minds with the word of God and to live by faith.

Now this shouldn't make you feel guilty or shame, but should give you hope. It's not over till God says it's over. Believe that. Do you believe it? Good.

So sanctify your imagination. This is what Dallas Willard taught us. Everything in our life, everything began because someone imagined it to be so. Disneyland exists because somebody imagined it. His name was Walt Disney. This building is here because some Catholic priest imagined that it would be here. Everything good exists because someone imagined that it would be so. And everything bad exists because someone imagined that it would be so. Murder happened because someone imagined it. Just laws exist because someone imagined them.

Your new life begins when you imagine a different life; when you imagine a healthy life; when you imagine a Christian life. When you imagine a life that's different than the one you're leading, and you begin to cultivate your ideas in the direction of that life. What you imagine and what you think about shapes your future. What you think about is your first freedom.

In fact, and this is something I've meditated a lot on, and I would love to debate you on this, you have more power over what you think about than over what you do. You ever do something that you didn't want to do? I want to ask that again. You ever have a slice of cake you didn't really mean to eat? You ever sleep in when you really shouldn't have? You ever skip the gym when you really ought to have gone? You ever bought something you couldn't afford? You ever said something you couldn't afford? I've done that twice today. You ever made a decision out of a place of fear rather than wisdom and prudence? You have more power over what you think about than what you do. Because what you think about will ultimately cultivate into circumstance. When you finally get to the decision you've made, you really don't have much power left. All the power was invested into what you thought about. See so many people are warring against the circumstances of their life, while nurturing and supporting the thoughts that led there. I'll say that one more time. Many people are arguing and upset about the circumstances of their life while they nurture and nourish the thoughts that got them there. God teaches us that we need to cultivate good thoughts, and the decisions, though they sometimes will require a bit of willpower, will be much easier and will come naturally because you'll have a new soul.

A healthy mind leads to a healthy life. That's why the scriptures say in Proverbs 4: "My son, pay attention to what I say. Turn your ear to my words. Do not let them out of your sight. Keep them within your

heart for they are life to those who find them, and health to one's whole body." A healthy mind leads to a healthy life.

This is also true of emotional well being. If you're emotionally healthy, intellectually healthy, you're going to see that things in your life begin to change.

And what about placebo? How freaky is that? Placebo? Do you know what placebo is? It's just a word doctor's slap on unexplained people being healed because they thought they were being healed. They have no explanation for it. Anytime you test a medicine, you have a control group and in that control group, you give them fake medicine, like chalk pills, or sugar pills, and you tell them this is the medicine that cures your ailment. And on average, about 30% of those people get better. And doctors just go I don't know, man. So they just factor for it in their testing so that the efficiency of a medicine is only what is over that 30% or whatever the control threshold is. That's crazy. That's science. That doctors literally don't know what placebo is. There are theories. The most common is well, by just changing the way you think about yourself, your mind somehow tells the body to do what it needs to do to beat what it needs to beat. And what I think they've stumbled on is this thing Jesus has been teaching us for 2,000 years called faith. That ultimately our bodies often come in line with our thinking.

That's how I explain many of those scriptures where Jesus talks about how there will be fake people that say they're Jesus, or that they're

from Jesus, but they'll still have miracle powers. That actually happened. Even though they could do miracles, they weren't from God. Why? Because people still had faith that they could be healed. That's weird, isn't it? The reason I tell you that is just to show you that bizarre scientific connection between the mind and the body. Again, not to judge you but to give you hope that fostering good thoughts lead to a healthy life.

I'll just finish with this. So this is from John Ortberg. And Chad used it in his sermon and I asked to borrow it. So John says one of the most thorough research projects on relationships is called the Alameda County Study. It was headed by a Harvard social scientist, and it tracked the lives of 7,000 people over nine years. That's a big study. Research found that the most isolated people were three times more likely to die than those with strong relational connections. People who had bad health habits, such as smoking, poor eating habits, obesity or alcohol use, but strong social ties lived significantly longer than people who had great health habits, but were isolated. In other words, it's better to eat Twinkies with good friends than to eat broccoli alone. Yes! It gets better.

Harvard researcher Robert Putnam notes that if you belong to no groups but decide to join one, you cut your risk of dying over the next year in half. For another study as reported in the journal of the American Medical Association two hundred and seventy six volunteers were infected with a virus that produces the common cold. The study found

that people with strong emotional connections did four times better fighting off illness than those who were more isolated. These people were less susceptible to colds, had less virus, and produced significantly less mucus than relationally isolated subjects. I'm not making this up! They produce less mucus. This means it is literally true unfriendly people are snottier than friendly people.

On that note – my point, friends, is just to simply say that God has designed that our minds and our bodies are not separate. And that our minds have a tremendous power on our health. And though cultivating good thoughts isn't necessarily always going to cure you of whatever you're facing, cultivating good thoughts is going to make you healthier than you are. And it's going to help you to endure whatever medical challenge it is you're facing. There is something about relational connection, emotional health, cultivating good thoughts that lead to a healthy body, healthy life and good sleep.

So we must become the kind of people that bring every thought, whether its thoughts of fear, thoughts of bitterness, thoughts of victimhood, thoughts of I'm sick, I'm poor, I'm a mess up, I'm a screw up, I'm always going to have this addiction, or this sin. We need to become a kind of people that take those thoughts captive to obedience of Jesus Christ. Can I get an amen? Where we put the bible before our mind and we put the good promises of God before us and believe it! And choose to

build our whole life around the promises of God and to live every day with victory. Amen.

All right. Lord, thank you. We love you and we pray that you'd transform our mind into the mind of Christ in every way. We trust you, in Jesus' name, amen.