

PART 1: SEEING CLEARLY

Something happens, we feel something in response, and our minds immediately rush to a judgment about what it means. But the stories we tell ourselves about what we've experienced aren't always true to reality. Nearly 2,000 years ago, the apostle Paul gave us a way to see clearly: take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ.

CONNECT

What's something you were completely sure about (a rumor, a movie plot twist, a set of directions) that turned out to be totally wrong?

LEARN

You will watch a shortened version of a message from this series to set up your group discussion. Watch the full message sometime this week as a reminder of what you talked about today.

APPLY

After sharing what stood out from the video, discuss the following questions as a group:

1. In the video, Joel shared what his counselor told him: "When you told me you felt abandoned or betrayed or inadequate, you weren't telling me how you feel, you were rendering a judgment about someone's behavior." Which of those kinds of words do you reach for most often when you're upset? What might you actually be feeling underneath it?

2. Read **2 Corinthians 10:3–5**:

   For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 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.

   - Joel explained that the "arguments" Paul describes are the stories we tell ourselves about what we've experienced. What are some stories people commonly rehearse about themselves that don't line up with what God says about them?
   - What do you think it looks like, practically, to take a thought captive?

3. In the video, Joel said, "You see, evaluating your thoughts can be helpful, but aligning your thoughts with true reality is indispensable." When your thoughts and feelings are telling you

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one thing, where do you go to find out what's actually true? Who in your life helps you see clearly?

4. Think of a situation that has been weighing on you. What's the story you've been telling yourself about it? About God? About you? Is there another reasonable explanation for what happened?

5. Joel was honest that he needed help, including counseling, to work through past experiences that kept shaping how he reacted. Why do you think it can be hard to admit we need that kind of help?

BEFORE NEXT TIME

Our brains are quick to tell us stories about what happens to us, but those stories aren't always true. This week, when you notice a strong reaction rising in you, pause and ask yourself three questions: What actually happened? What story am I telling myself about it? Is there another reasonable explanation? Write down one story you've been telling yourself, and next to it, write what God says is true about you and your situation.

PRAY

Pray together as a group and thank God that he sees every situation clearly and knows what's really true about you. Ask him to help you take your thoughts captive and to trust his version of your story more than the one you've been telling yourself.

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