



HOAW Newsletter

We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:5 (ESV)

March 2024

HELPING MEN LIVE LIVES OF INTEGRITY AND HONOR

What if vs What is

Dr. Greg Bourgond

As humans we tend to second guess the decisions we need to make. In many cases, we decide not to decide. We put off an important decision and justify our procrastination. We don't have all the information we think we need to make the decision. Or we are afraid to make a decision fearing we will miss a more viable option. Or our mind conjures up possible scenarios we might encounter. These scenarios, often farfetched and reflecting our fears of the unknown, become seemingly insurmountable barriers. Our perceptions of reality become blurred or warped out of proportion with the evidence before us.

There is nothing wrong with entertaining possible but realistic consequences of legitimate possibilities and weighing the

anticipated risks should we choose one or another alternative. That's just wise practice. On the other hand, are my concerns really possible or are they a figment of my imagination. Are the imagined scenarios inflated or exaggerated beyond reasonable expectations? Do I tend to over worry about things that rarely emerge as a real concern? Am I inclined to pursue 'rabbit trails?'

In a premarital counseling session with a young couple, the prospective groom had serious doubts about the trustworthiness of his future bride. When I probed his concerns, it was obvious that he based his fears on unfounded circumstances. Because he was betrayed by someone in the past, his mind conjured up negative scenarios about his intended spouse. His speculation followed a predictable pattern.

***"What if* she lied to me?"**

***"What if* she wasn't where she said she was going to be?"**

***"What if* she cheats on me?"**

***"What if* I'm being strung along?"**

***"What if* she is manipulating me?"**

***"What if* she only tells me what I want to hear?"**

***"What if* she doesn't love me?"**

***"What if* she falls in love with someone else?"**

***"What if* she betrays me?"**

***"What if* she leaves me?"**

You can see where this is going can't you. Entertaining unsubstantiated circumstances, events, interactions, and encounters without verifiable proof can destroy a beautiful relationship. When we allow our

mind to play with our perceptions, producing false understandings of the circumstances, we blow our thoughts out of proportion. If we play with these thoughts over time, we begin to believe they are real even though the real facts say otherwise. I have seen marriages dashed on the rocks because the **'what ifs'** overwhelmed the **'what is.'**

How do we stop this destructive behavior? How do we replace the **'what if'** with the **'what is?'**

Sometime ago, a compelling Wendy's ad regarding the quality of its hamburger meat compared to other competitors. A prickly senior citizen presented a somewhat comical retort, **"Where's the beef?"** Perhaps our suspicions would evaporate if we proactively looked for the truth before wandering off to fantasies about a given situation. We might want to pursue answers to the following questions.

"What really happened or didn't happen?"

"Is there any real evidence that my partner is untrustworthy?"

"Does what I know about her justify my concerns?"

"Is she in the habit of behaving in accordance with my perceptions?"

"What is her track record regarding these issues?"

"Has she shown to be reliable, responsible, and trustworthy?"

"Have I asked her about these issues in a non-accusatory way?"

"Do those who know her best share my concerns?"

"Where's the beef?"

Neil T. Anderson of Freedom in Christ Ministries taught me about stopping temptation at the 'threshold.' Although he is speaking about temptation, an application can be easily made in this situation. Anderson calls it **threshold thinking**.¹ In other words, when speculating about someone's perceived behavior, we should stop the speculation at the threshold. Further speculation can lead us to erroneous conclusions and relationship destruction.

Neil offers wise counsel.

*"Temptation always comes by way of a thought, and the key to resisting temptation is to **take that initial thought captive** to the obedience of Christ. I found a humorous "Cathy" cartoon strip that illustrates how an unchecked initial thought carries her away like a runaway freight train:*

Frame 1: "I will take a drive but won't go near the grocery store."

Frame 2: "I will drive by the grocery store, but will not go in."

Frame 3: "I will go in the grocery store but will not walk down the

aisle where the Halloween candy is on sale."

Frame 4: "I will look at the candy, but not pick it up."

Frame 5: "I will pick it up, but not buy it."

Frame 6: "I will buy it, but not open it."

Frame 7: "Open it, but not smell it."

Frame 8: "Smell it, but not taste it."

Frame 9: "Taste it, but not eat it."

Frame 10: "Eat, eat, eat, eat, eat!"

*"The Scriptures teach that God has provided a way of escape from every temptation (see 1 Corinthians 10:13). As illustrated by Cathy's experience, however, the escape probably would have occurred before the first frame. Cathy lost the battle when she decided to go for a drive. If you don't take captive the initial thought, you will probably lose the battle to temptation. We all have to learn how to practice **threshold thinking**. We need to take the way of escape the moment our thoughts are contrary to the truth and righteousness."*

"For example, a man struggling with lust sees a pornographic picture. He has the opportunity to respond by thinking, my relationship with sin has ended. I don't have to give in to this. I choose right now to take this thought captive to the obedience of Christ. I'm not going to look at it and I'm not going to think about it. He stops looking at the picture and gets

¹ Mr. Neil T. Anderson. *Victory Over the Darkness: Realizing the Power of Your*

Identity in Christ (Kindle Locations 1542-1547, pages 154-155). Kindle Edition.

rid of the magazine or leaves the place of temptation. If he hesitates at the threshold, stares at the picture, and begins to fantasize about it, he will trigger an emotional landslide, producing a physical response that will be difficult to stop. He must capture the initial tempting thought, or it will probably capture him."

In **2 Corinthians 10:5 (ESV)** we read, "We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and **take every thought captive** to obey Christ." When our mind and emotions wander into speculative and unfounded arenas, we need to take our thoughts captive at the threshold.

In a past newsletter, I discussed the formula **S = R/E**. The degree to which we experience 'S' depends on the relationship between 'R' and 'E'. Our perception of reality and the formulation of our expectations based on that reality is crucial to the sense of satisfaction or significance or stability we enjoy.

If our reality is not based on the certainty of truth and instead, is based on a misperception or falsehood then our expectations will be unrealistic, practically unattainable, and unrealized.

Contrary to popular opinion our perceptions are not reality. What we perceive to be true may be in fact a lie, false, or fiction. Living that way will only produce disappointment, despair, discouragement, and failure—an alternative reality that has no basis in true reality.

For instance, telling a child he or she can do anything if they simply

apply themselves is a misperception at best and a lie at worst. Expectation adjusted to this falsehood will result in utter frustration, adversely impact our self-esteem, and curtail our motivation going forward. The truth is that we can become all we are capable of becoming based on our innate talents and wiring, circumstances we are experiencing, and opportunity that presents itself if we apply ourselves accordingly.

Conclusion

Life is full of unfounded "What ifs..." What really matters is "What is..." Avoid the 'what ifs' if they lead you to a perceived and fantasized reality. Replace the '**what ifs**' with '**what is.**' You will save a relationship instead of destroying it.

OTHER NEWS



to be.

Heart of a Warrior Ministries offers four journeys you can take to become who God created you

The Foundation (Ground Zero) helps establish strong biblical foundations for the battles ahead.

The Compass (Phase I) calibrates a warrior's heart and tunes that heart to the heart of God. I am currently leading 45 at Calvary Church WBL Campus on this journey.

The Map (Phase II) helps men focus on what matters in accordance with their unique divine wiring.

The Guide (Phase III) develops the spiritual discipline of being mentored and mentoring others.

Go to our website for more details. www.heartofawarrior.org/journeys/

Previous newsletters dating back to January 2018 may be found at www.heartofawarrior.org/newpage-1

If you would like to contact me directly, email me at Greg@HeartofaWarrior.org



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God-honoring lives

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Websites for Men

Heart of a Warrior Ministries
www.Heartofawarrior.org

A Chosen Generation
www.achosengeneration.info/

Band of Brothers
www.bandofbrothers.org/

Church for Men
churchformen.com/

Every Man's Battle
<https://newlife.com/emb/>

Every Man Ministries
www.everymanministries.com

Iron Sharpens Iron

ironsharpensiron.net/

Iron Works

www.ironworksmen.com/

Legacy Minded Men

www.legacymindedmen.org

Life Way Men

www.lifeway.com/en/shop/ministries/men

Man in the Mirror

maninthemirror.org/

Man 2 Man

www.man2man.org/

Man Up God's Way

www.manupgodsway.org/

Men's Alliance

www.mensalliancetribe.com/

Men's Fraternity

www.mensfraternity.com/

Men's Ministry Catalyst

mensministrycatalyst.org/

Men with No Regrets

www.menwithnoregrets.org/

National Collision of Ministries to Men

ncmm.org/

Ransomed Heart Ministries

www.ransomedheart.com/

Resolute

beresolute.org/

Restoration Generation

resgen.org/