

The DNA of Thanksgiving

Ok, I'll admit! Until recently I haven't given the Philippians 4:8 scripture the attention it has deserved. It just kind of got lost in my "nice –nice" file as I've looked at other scripture and biblical commands: Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Philippians 4:8 KJV

Last month I traveled to see Dr. Leaf. Her work will forever change my counseling practice. She has such a neat way of combining scripture, biology, and psychology. Her scientific research brings the scriptures to life. "Science is finally catching up with scripture," say Leaf.

As a counselor I've always helped clients to learn to look at life differently and reframe difficult situations. I've helped them to forgive. Often I've taught them to learn to value themselves and to have hope for the future. Actually, I now realize that I have been doing more than simply counseling. Who knew that I've actually been teaching principles to actually change their DNA? Neuroplasticity! This term refers to the brain's ability to actually change itself.

Leaf reminded us that thoughts are not just thoughts and explained the scientific processes. Our brain actually processes 400 billion actions per second. Everything we experience through our five senses converts as we think about it and make choices. These thoughts actually become structures in the brain and occupy space. These thoughts then have a huge impact on our health. Some researchers think that these negative thoughts are responsible for as much as 87- 95% of illnesses. Negative thoughts somehow make our bodies more acidic causing problems at the cellular level.

No wonder scripture is so full of mandates about the mind. 2 Corinthians 10:5 (NIV) 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.

Romans 12:2 NLT Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

For as he thinks in his heart, so is he...Proverbs 23:7

Leaf is quick to point out that we can be proactive in our mental health. This really got me to thinking, and considering the rest of the body. We do have options. We usually can control our weight. Our exercise impacts our muscles. Good dental care saves our teeth. The abuse of substances impacts the liver, brain, and even the development of our

babies still in the womb. There have even been studies about how the unborn child is impacted by the stress and thought life of the mother.

I found this entry in Dr. Leaf's October 23, 2012, blog entitled *The Choices We Make Have More Impact than We Realize* to be very powerful. "What we plant in our brain – our biology – will be seen in our words, actions and lives. These words and actions will impact ourselves, the world around us and the next 4 generations of humanity! This is called epigenetics in science, and the bloodline curse in scripture: "the sins of the father's will reach through to the third and fourth generation" (Exodus 20:5)."

Getting rid of toxic thoughts is not easy, but we can have some control over what we think about. I choose to not think about the last client who left my office while I am talking to my current client. Hopefully surgeons do this too! Students can choose to not think about English class while they are taking an Algebra exam. We can choose to not daydream at work. We do have a great deal of control when it comes to our thought life. We just have to exercise it! Let's start today by focusing on an attitude of "Thanksgiving!"