

## CAN WE CONTROL OUR THOUGHTS?

A while back, when I went to a friend seeking support during a depressed spell, she said to me, “Marja, you’ve got to take your thoughts captive. You can control your thoughts. I have to do that all the time myself and I know it’s possible.”

- Was she right? Can we control our thoughts when we’re suffering from the effects of our moods?

Some people believe you can:

- make a conscious decision to stop the thoughts,
- catch thoughts as soon as they appear,
- concentrate on something else.

Mental health expert, Grant Mullen M.D., has a good way of looking at it. He points out that humans are made up of three parts: Body, Spirit and Personality. He recognizes that depression, anxiety and bipolar disorders are medical conditions. Here is what he has to say about the physical conditions that affect our thoughts and emotions:

“Forming a thought is actually a physical event. You don’t see anything move but signals are actually passing along brain nerve cell pathways transmitting the information necessary to give you control of your thoughts. If the nerve cells are all communicating correctly, you have full control of your thoughts and moods. If they are malfunctioning in some way, then you lose control.

“Like anything else in your body, nerve cells can malfunction so that you have difficulty controlling your thoughts and moods. These medical conditions are called mood disorders. The most common ones are depression, anxiety disorder and bipolar disorder.

He goes on to say: “As I was growing up in the church, I never thought Christians got depressed since I never heard it talked about. I heard the church pray about all kinds of illnesses that people were in hospital with, but they never mentioned depression.

I just presumed that it never happened [to people with a religious faith.] Well the truth is that they suffer with depression just as frequently as others, because it is a physical, medical disorder, common to humans.”

When people with a religious belief are down, sad, anxious and overwhelmed with guilt and shame, their religion often makes things worse because they’re told that this should not happen to them because they have God in their life.

- How do you feel about that? Do you feel shame? Or are you able to talk freely about your disorder with the people in your church?

“Depression is not a sign of weakness or spiritual immaturity. It’s just another common medical condition. If you have it, treat it. I have seen many people supernaturally healed from depression so continue to pray and receive healing prayer.”

If you are struggling today with depression or any mood disorder, remember, Psalm 30 :5

*“Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.”*

God has not forgotten you. He is still holding you even when you can’t feel his arms. He is walking with you along the recovery journey even when you feel so alone.”