


ME MYSELF & LIES

a thought-closet makeover 

JENNIFER ROTHSCHILD

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



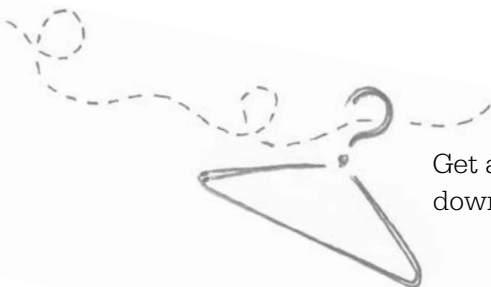
The verse, “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer” (Ps. 19: 14, KJV), has much to say to each of us. For Jennifer Rothschild, the words are much more than a beloved Scripture; they are a reflection of how she organizes her thought closet.

At the age of 15 Jennifer was diagnosed with a rare, degenerative eye disease that would eventually steal her sight. It was more than a turning point for the Miami, Florida, native. Her dreams of becoming a commercial artist and cartoonist faded. Words and music have replaced her canvas and palette.

Through her spiritual depth and down-to-earth style, Jennifer weaves music, illustrations, and biblical truth to help people find contentment, walk with endurance, and celebrate the ordinary. Through her storytelling and wit, they look beyond circumstances and experience God’s grace in adversity.

This Bible study is based on Jennifer’s trade book, *Self Talk, Soul Talk: What to Say When You Talk to Yourself*. She also co-founded and publishes *WomensMinistry.NET*, a popular online magazine. She and her husband, Philip, live in Springfield, Missouri, with their sons, Clayton and Connor. Jennifer enjoys nature walks, theme parks, and riding a bicycle built for two.

In addition to her writing and speaking ministry, Jennifer is an accomplished songwriter and recording artist with four albums to her credit—*Out of the Darkness, Come to the Morning, Not by Sight*, and *Live in Concert*.



Get a free copy of Jennifer’s song “Let the Words” on CD or by download by visiting www.JenniferRothschild.com/words.

Day 5

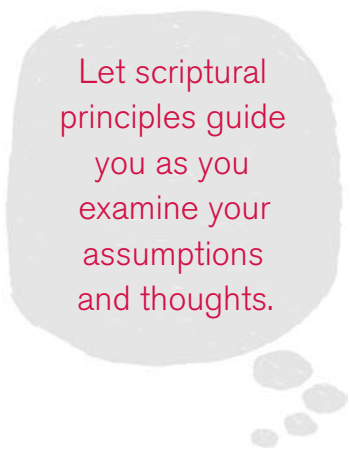
ROOTS AND FRUITS

Suppose your spaceship just landed on planet Earth. (Yes, you are now an alien!) The hydraulic door opened, lowered you to terra firma, and plopped you in the middle of a lush plantation. You would certainly be curious about the different varieties of growth you encountered. (Rumor has it aliens are very nosy.) So, how would you satisfy that extraterrestrial inquisitiveness? How would you determine the kind of trees you saw?

As an alien tree examiner, you could certainly dig down to cut a sample from the root system or perhaps take some kind of core section from deep within the living wood. But the most practical way to figure out what kind of tree you were looking at (especially if your alien invasion was on a tight schedule) would be to examine its fruit.

To understand the unseen part of a tree, you study the seen part. Fruit reveals the nature, the life, and the root of a tree. However, the opposite also applies. To understand the seen part of your life, you examine the unseen part. To understand why your life is wardrobe as it is, you must examine the contents and foundation of your thought closet.

Yesterday we looked at faulty assumptions. Faulty assumptions are roots. Wrong thinking is fruit. We saw the assumptions and thoughts of some biblical characters and considered our own. Today we will further examine our assumptions and thoughts. We will check out our roots and taste our fruit! Like that alien root examiner, let's use scriptural principles to guide us.



Let scriptural principles guide you as you examine your assumptions and thoughts.

PRINCIPLE 1: FRUIT EXPOSES ROOTS

Hebrews 12:15 shows the link between roots and fruit.

What does it warn against?

What is the “fruit” that the writer of Hebrews suggests springs from the “root” of bitterness?

The fruits that spring from the root of bitterness are difficulty and corruption. In other words, if you engage in the faulty

assumption that bitterness is appropriate for a daughter of Christ, it becomes a root in your life from which the fruit of trouble will sprout. If you invite bitterness into your thought closet, you will wardrobe yourself with troublesome thoughts and destructive emotions.

Stop and ask God to first show you the bitter and sour fruit in your life. What is your fruit? Are you hypersensitive with other people—as I was with Phil? Do you constantly interpret other people’s words and actions as personal attacks? Defensive thinking and hypersensitive emotions are fruit.

Here’s another fruit. During my college years I was paralyzed by the notion that nothing I did was good enough. That assumption bore the fruit of perfectionism. Do you ever find that fruit in your life? If your fruit of perfectionism has matured, you may place those same unrealistic demands on the people you love.

Draw some fruit in the margin and label them with the result of your faulty assumptions. Underneath each fruit describes it (for example, poison, sour, or nourishing).

You and I don’t simply sprout the fruits of insecurity, anger, intolerance, low self-esteem, or defensiveness without something to first feed those feelings or thoughts. Feelings and thoughts are fruits. Assumptions are roots.

PRINCIPLE 2: CHANGING THE FRUIT IS IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT CHANGING THE ROOT

Roots are powerful and they seem to evidence their DNA even when we don’t want them to. We may really dislike the fruit, but it just seems to keep on growing.

My friend, the sour fruit of defensiveness has been one of the most distasteful that has blossomed and left a pungent taste in our marriage. I tried to pray that fruit away. I confessed that fruit as sin and repented. I tried to will it away, and it just seemed to be a die-hard fruit!

How do Hosea 9:16 and Matthew 7:17-18 reveal the relationship of roots and fruit?

We can't will our fruits from blossoming. There is only one way to deal with bad-tasting fruit, and that is to kill the root. A fruit can't be nourished if there is no root. Rather than growing frustrated over the discouraging nature of our fruit, we can be encouraged to recognize that our fruit will die if the root dies.

When I reacted with hypersensitivity or defensiveness to Phil, I learned to check the root. Was I operating out of a faulty assumption? My answer was usually yes. Phil wasn't devaluing me in a moment of messiness or forgetfulness. His thoughts weren't even about me when he left the toilet seat up. (I guess I'm glad for that on some level.)

Choose one of the fruits you drew and describe what triggers that thought, reaction, or feeling:

What underlying assumption feeds that thought or feeling?

What you just wrote is a root. Keep that in mind.

PRINCIPLE 3: BAD FRUIT DOESN'T GROW FROM GOOD ROOTS

My fruit of defensiveness grew from the root of pride and insecurity. My assumption was, "I can't afford to be wrong. My value depends on being right," or "My opinion is right because it's mine!" Now it's your turn.

Draw roots under the fruit you drew. On each root write the faulty assumption from which they have grown.

The fruit of hypersensitivity grows from the root of pride and an unhealthy level of self-consciousness. The fruit of perfectionism springs from the root of low self-esteem or insecurity. You get the idea. Look at the roots you just drew. Each root is most likely a faulty assumption.

On what underlying assumption did the children of Israel operate (Deut. 1:27)?

The fruit of that faulty assumption is clear. What fruit did they display (result of that root) in verse 26?

Their root was a faulty assumption about the character and purposes of God. Hence, the fruit of wrong thinking sprouted in the form of discounting God's command and rebelling.

Moses tried to sprinkle truth on their poisonous root. What did he tell them in Deuteronomy 1:29,31?

If the Hebrew people had vibrant roots of truth in their thought closets, they would have tasted healthy fruit. If they had not acted presumptuously but rather believed God and accepted truth that says, "God will fight for us; I won't be afraid," they would have produced the fruit of confidence and obedience from the root of faith and security.

Deuteronomy 1:32 reveals the true nature of and cause of faulty assumptions. According to this verse, circle the reason we accept faulty assumptions.

Insecurity Fear Pride Unbelief Carelessness

My friend, unbelief feeds faulty assumptions. Not believing God fertilizes that root leads you to further presumption.

Examine the roots you drew and labeled. How do those roots reflect unbelief?

The weapon of the Word kills bad roots. Just as we have talked about speaking truth to our souls and crushing lies, we do the same to our roots. We confront those assumptions with truth. Each time you taste a bitter fruit, trace the root. When you find the root to be faulty, cut it off with the sword of the Spirit.

How does 2 Corinthians 10:4 describe your weapon?

Your weapon is not your will or your feelings; your weapon is God's truth. When your assumptions raise themselves up against the knowledge of God, wield your sword! Cut off the root so it cannot bear fruit! Ask God to strengthen your belief in Him and equip you to do battle using His Word against the faulty assumptions in your thought closet. Confess to God truthful beliefs in prayer.

Dear God,

I believe You are:

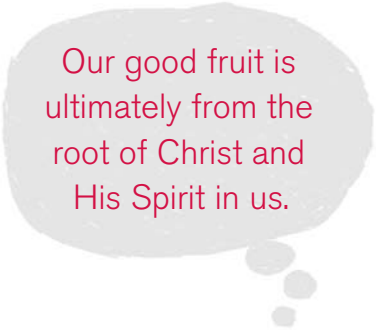
I believe:

I believe:

I believe:


Help my unbelief (Mark 9:24). Amen.

My sister, once some of those nasty roots are choked out of your thought closet by the weapon of truth, you will be clothed with the lovely fruit God intended. You will have more room in your thought closet for the life-giving roots to grow strong. Our good fruit is ultimately from the root of Christ and His Spirit in us (Phil. 1:11; Gal. 5:22-23). Next week we will learn how God's Spirit helps us control our thought closets and how the wisdom of Christ can be the watchman at the closet door. Until then, mind your labeling, keep the inside of your thought closet pure, and monitor your assumptions, for as a woman "thinketh," so is she (Prov. 23:7, KJV)! Good work!



Our good fruit is ultimately from the root of Christ and His Spirit in us.

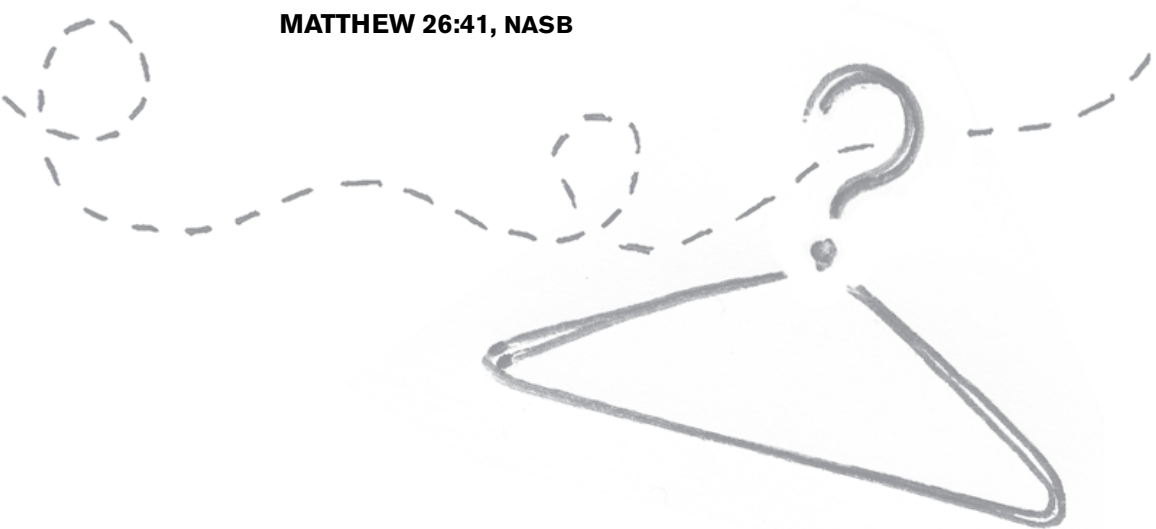
week
FOUR



GUARDING THE DOOR OF YOUR THOUGHT CLOSET

"Keep watching and praying that
you may not enter into temptation;
the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

MATTHEW 26:41, NASB



Sneak a peek into Patsy Clairmont's thought closet ...

Patsy Clairmont is a beloved speaker and one of the finest authors I know. When I told her about this study, she murmured an interested ... hmm. So, I asked when she discovered her self-talk was damaging.

“So many people were saying things to me that conflicted with what I was saying to myself. One of us had to be wrong! So I had to stop and say, Everyone can't be wrong. Do I trust their judgment? Am I willing to receive what they are saying is truth? If I am, then I have to change the messages in me ... the Enemy is a liar and a thief, and he comes in to set a lie in place and steal your joy.”

Read more of Patsy's words at Selftalksoultalk.com.

Day 1

AWAKE, MY SOUL. TUNE IN!

Here's a secret from my thought closet: I have an obsession ... with the burners on my stove. I'm driven to keep them spotless. Now that I own a gas stove, this dysfunctional issue may not require therapy, but it wasn't always that way. I once hovered over the burners on my electric range—the pans, rims, and surface beneath were all targets of my compulsion.

Before you put me on your prayer list, let me explain. For the first 13 years of marriage, we lived in homes with cooktops corroded by years of careless cooking and half-hearted cleaning. I valiantly scrubbed but to no avail. I replaced old burner pans with new ones, but I was never satisfied because under those gleaming burner pans lurked the grimy gunk from decades of apathy and neglect. Then in 1999 we moved into a 20-year-old home with a 20-year-old stove. Oh girl, thoughts about those burners filled me with dread. They probably hadn't been cleaned since 1979!

I had a responsibility to my obsession—I mean, my family—so I lifted the coils to inspect. When I felt the rims,

the pans, and the surface beneath, I was stunned. There was another woman as obsessed as I was! (Bless her compulsive heart—put *her* on your prayer list.) Surgery could have been performed on that stove—spotless!

So grateful, I ended every cooking excursion by lifting the coils to clean them. I removed pans and decontaminated underneath each time, even when I only boiled water. (OK, maybe I should be on your prayer list!) I've learned something from my former obsession, though: *Keeping something clean is easier when you tend to it daily.*

The same is true of our thought closets. They need daily attention to keep them in the condition Christ intended.

What does 2 Corinthians 5:17 say about your status now that you are in Christ?



Our thought closets need daily attention to keep them as Christ intended.

God declares all has become new! That means the old, grimy gunk is gone and you are clean, renewed, fresh ... what a lovely way to think of your thought closet!

Scripture says that accessories come with your “newness.” What are they?

Psalms 40:3—

Lamentations 3:22-23—

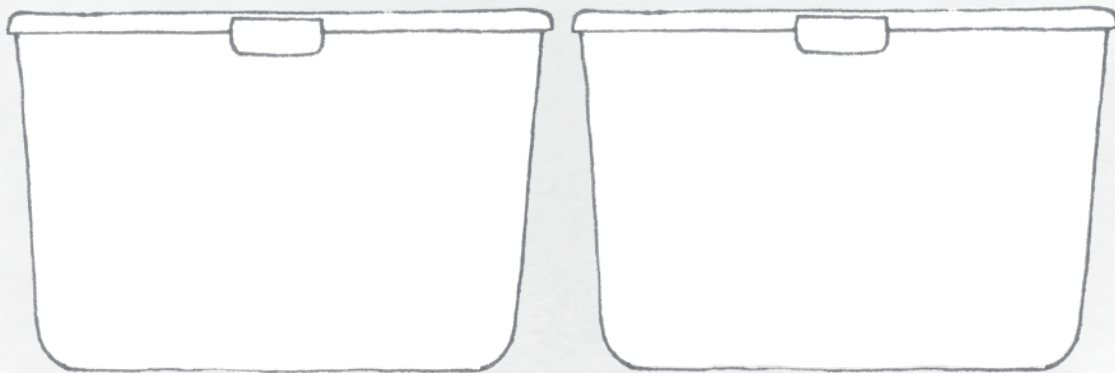
Ezekiel 11:19—

Romans 7:6—

Ephesians 4:24—

New heart, new song, new mercies—what a beautiful life wardrobe.

Do you lack or have you neglected any of the “new” belongings you wrote above? If so, circle them. On the following thought closet bins write a truthful statement you can say to your soul to reinforce what God has given you.



Now, if no one is around, just go ahead and say the things you wrote on those bins out loud! Talk to yourself! If people are around, just speak silently to yourself the phrases you wrote. That's how we keep our thought closets new and clean.

We must tell ourselves the truth about who we are and what we have in Christ. If apathy builds up, sin can crowd in. Our shine can dull and our thought closets can get awfully cluttered. We even need to talk to ourselves about our sin like the psalmist did.

What did the psalmist say to his soul in Psalm 57:8?

What is the inscription at the beginning of Psalm 57?

Friend, here's your lesson in ancient Hebrew for the day: a *miktam* was most likely a musical notation or title for psalms of penance for sin. Do you find it interesting David told his soul to "awake" in the midst of a psalm potentially about his own sin?

Why do you think he did that?

It's easy to grow dull to our own sin habits. When we aren't alert, what God made "new" can become dingy and neglected because of our sins. Sin shows up in self-loathing, negative attitudes, and accepting lies as truth, just to name a few ways. That's why we must tell our souls to be awake. When we are tuned in and alert to our sin, we can speak truth to our souls and to God about our sin.

Psalmists all throughout the collection of poetry and wisdom talked about their sin. Write a phrase to describe what they said in these psalms:

Psalm 32:5—

Psalm 38:18—

Psalm 39:1—

Psalm 51:3—

Above, check the phrases you most need to speak to your soul when you talk to yourself about your sin.

Speak that truth to your soul right now. Tuck it away into your thought closet. Now pray Psalm 139: 23-24. Ask the Holy Spirit to search you and show you if what you usually say to your soul about your sin is truth.

Write down what He shows you.

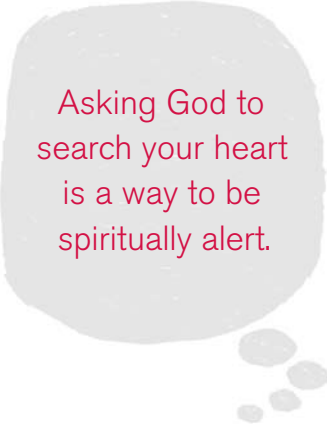
Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal if something in your thought closet doesn't belong. Do you have some sin hanging around? It could be a still-growing root of bitterness; it could be an unwillingness to embrace pure thoughts. Maybe it's self-slander. Don't write them here! Tell God, write them in a private journal, or confess them to a Bible study buddy.

Asking God to search your heart is a way to be spiritually alert. It is like telling your soul ... "Awake."

The Hebrew word translated *awake* means "wake, lift up (self), stir up (self)." I like to think of it as "tuning in." With a Spirit-controlled thought closet, the Holy Spirit alerts us to the dirt in our thought closets. He convicts us of our sins.

What is the action we are to take when we become aware of our sin (1 John 1:9)?

The Greek word for "confess" is *homologeō*, meaning "to assent, acknowledge." The purpose of confessing our sin to God is not to inform Him of something He doesn't know!



Asking God to search your heart is a way to be spiritually alert.

My friend, it's to tell God and affirm in our own hearts that we think the same way about sin as God does. It doesn't belong in the thought closet of His daughter. It just makes things dirty.

First John 1:9 tells us He forgives and cleanses. So accept His Word. The next time your feelings start to condemn you for what God has already forgiven, send those mendacious meditations to the Island of Misfit Thoughts!

When we tell our souls to "awake," we become alert to our own grime and are amazed by God's grace. To stay spiritually alert, you can't have a dimly lit thought closet. There's too much risk for dirt to gather, and it won't ever show if it's too dark in there. The light must be bright in your thought closet.

Psalm 119:105,130 tells us what light we need in our thought closets. What is it?

We must have a thought closet full of truth to fight lies, avoid sin, and stay tuned in. Keep flooding your thought closet with the light of His Word through reading it, meditating on it, and memorizing it. There is no substitute.

Day 2

TUNING INTO THE LION AT YOUR THOUGHT- CLOSET DOOR

Today is a strong coffee day! Herbal tea or decaf won't do! So grab some java, your Bible, and a pen. Here goes! Yesterday we saw we must be alert to the sin in our thought closets, but today we see we must also be alert to the Enemy at the door of our thought closets. He complicates everything. Let's assess his impact by considering these questions:

Do you tend to...

- naturally speak truth to your soul, or**
- find yourself grabbing lies and shoving them into your thought closet every now and then?**