

Finding Peace

*³To console those who mourn in Zion,
To give them beauty for ashes,
The oil of joy for mourning,
The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;
That they may be called trees of righteousness,
The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.” Isaiah 61:3*



Get to Know you: Take turns sharing something you appreciate about individuals in your group*. Make sure to include everyone.

**Words of affirmation are powerful. When someone is having a tough time, an encouraging word can have a profound impact on turning negative thoughts back to more positive, healthy ones.*

1. The 'Good News Translation' interprets Proverbs 4:23 this way – 'Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts. This is a huge statement and has massive implications in our day-to-day lives and impacting our relationships with others. Share how you may have experienced this in a positive or negative way.?'
2. Pastor Stan introduced us to the idea of Cognitive Distortion (having negative filters that distort our thinking towards a more negative perspective). The filters we use are: 1) Absolutes – making everything black and white; 2) Pessimism/catastrophizing - focusing on the bad to the exclusion of the good; 3) Personalising – blaming self or adopting a victim-mentality by blaming others; and, 4) Cynicism – general distrust of others/assuming the worst. Realising we need to 'guard against' these things, choose one and share why you think it is dangerous. Which negative mindset do you struggle with personally?

3. **Read Romans 8:1-8.** What is meant by 'sin nature'? What is meant by 'the flesh'? How do these relate to our thoughts? How can we practically utilise Scripture to 'guard our hearts and minds'?

4. **Read Philippians 4:7.** What does it mean to have PEACE that exceeds anything we could understand? Describe a time in your life when you experienced this?

5. **Read Philippians 4:8-9.** These verses talk to us about how to Guide our thinking. Discuss each of the words in the list (true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy) and share examples of that type of thinking. What does Paul say is the key to God's peace in verse 9?

6. **Read Romans 12:1-2.** God wants to make us new people through changing our thinking. How has your thinking (worldview) changed since you became a follower of Christ? What differences do you see between how Christians and non-Christians think (or do you)?

Take time to pray for/with one another. Pray for the upcoming Wonder Christmas event and the lives we may touch with the Gospel of Christmas.

