



Leslie Vernick:

Hi there. I am so glad you're taking this course in walking in core strength and I wanted to give you this teaching video so that we can begin with the very first step of core. See, I am committed to truth both internally and externally, and truth is going to be absolutely the cornerstone of your emotional and mental health. Scott Beck in his bestselling book, *The Road Less Traveled*, says this. He says, "One of the roots of mental illness is invariably an interlocking system of lies that we have been told and lies that we tell ourselves." And the Bible says the same thing in Romans 1:25 for example, where Paul says, by our very nature, we exchange the truth of God for a lie. And in Jeremiah it says the heart is deceitful above all else and desperately wicked. Who can know it? By nature, you and I are prone to thinking lies over truth, and we're going to lie to ourselves and we're going to listen to lies.

That's just what's wrong with us. And that's why we so often need to be brought to God's words. We can be transformed by the renewing of our mind and learn to tell ourselves the truth. Now, in our group this week, we talked about our fears and we talked about our triggers and we talked about our lies and how many of you get stuck in that negative self talk. And I'm so glad that some of you admitted that you do talk to yourself, because we all do, but many of you struggle with this negative self talk. So what I want to do today is give you a tool that you're going to use throughout this class to help you understand a little bit more about the mind body connection as well as the way that you think, and how much it affects the way you feel.

A great verse in Psalms, 55:2, says this. My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught. In other words, the way that you're thinking affects your physical and emotional well being. And you can relate to this. Like if you had a bad dream, you know the dream isn't true, but you're dwelling on the dream, the nightmare. And as you're thinking about it, your body is feeling afraid, right? Or you're crying. And when you wake up, if you start thinking about the nightmare again, you start to have those same sick feelings, because what we allow our mind to dwell on or think about impacts our emotions. So it's going to be really important that as we're building core strength that you learn to understand this concept and learn how to capture those thoughts. Because it's not easy to change your negative feelings. And some of you do have a lot of negative feelings.

Some of you've grown up with negative feelings. But if you just try to change your negative feelings by saying, "Don't feel that way or snap out of it," how easy would that be? It doesn't work, does it? So God really takes us in the back door, and he usually takes us through our thought life because he tells us in Romans 12:2 that we're transformed by the renewing of our mind. So what I want to do today is teach you a tool, give you a tool, that I'd like you to use for the next three months faithfully and work together on practicing it. So it'll help you understand this mind body connection, and help you move beyond that because you're going to learn how to tell yourself the truth. Because honestly the most damaging lie that you will be plagued with are not the lies from another person, not even your destructive spouse.

The most damaging lies will be the ones that you tell yourself. And so it's so crucial that you understand what they are because they're causing a lot of your own fears and triggers. And we're going to learn this journal, and it's called a thought journal. And I've done this a lot in the past with my coaching counseling clients. And so I'm going to teach you how to use it in your everyday life, and I want you to do it for the next three months. Now I know, I know, you're busy. You're probably as busy as I am, if not more so. And I know what you're thinking. "Oh my gosh, I don't have time to do something like this." But I want you to really commit to it because you paid a lot of money for this class. And if you don't practice this, you won't get a hold of it.

When I was pregnant with my first child, I went to childbirth classes and we had Lamaze training and I thought, "Well, this breathing thing, this is easy." And so I didn't do it because I thought, "Oh, I could do it. How hard it is to relax your muscles?" So I just assumed I'd be able to do it. I understood how to do it, but I never actually did it. And so when I got into labor, I couldn't do it. I understood the concept, but I hadn't trained my body to do it. So I'm going to really encourage you to work on this, this thought journal, and I'm only going to ask you to do it when you feel negative or when you're thinking negative. Either fear, anger, hurt, confusion, other times don't do it. Because all of you had as one of your goals, a lack of clarity.

So we're going to get clarity. That's our first step, right? And we're going to get truth, because that's our first step in core. And so we're going to start through the backdoor of understanding where this confusion comes from, and understanding when we feel depressed and we're out of sorts or angry and hurt. Then we're going to take this chart and go through the back door and understand what's happening. Now I want to start with something very common, because this is one of the biggest mistakes we make. Let's just take a very neutral situation that all of us have, and we're going to have three columns in this chart. Your situation, your thoughts, and your feelings. And let's just take a very neutral, situation, like a traffic jam. All right? So when you're sitting in a traffic jam and you have an important place to go to, maybe you're late for work or you're on the way to the airport to catch your flight to Disney world for vacation.

You're having some feelings about it, right? Because you're in this traffic jam. So what would those feelings be? So this is how you're going to do the chart. "Well, I'm feeling stressed and anxious and angry." So you're going to write that down in the feeling category. And you might be thinking that you're feeling these things cause you're in the traffic jam. Most of you would not be having positive feelings in a traffic jam, right? So when you notice that you're getting worked up over whatever situation it is, I want you to write down these feelings, right? You're going to pull out your chart and you're going to say, "I feel angry. I feel frustrated." Even if you're stewing in your head, right? I want you to write down what you're feeling. Now, one of the biggest mistakes that we make is that we don't understand that you're not feeling stressed, angry, or anxious because of the traffic jam.

We often think it's because of this, and I'm feeling this way, but that's not exactly true. It's not the traffic jam that's causing these emotions. It's your thoughts that you're having about the traffic jam that's causing those feelings. For example, I might be saying to myself, "This is ridiculous. I can't take this. Why is this happening now? Can't you make this traffic go away? I can't believe I'm going to be late. I'm going to miss my plane." So I'm going to write all my thoughts here, even if they're ridiculous. "This is terrible. This is so unfair." I'm talking to myself in this way, and I'm actually creating these emotions. Now, if you've had this experience where you're in a traffic jam and there really isn't any deadline, you're not going to miss a plane or you're not going to miss an important meeting. You're just maybe going to the mall, but you still feel yourself anxious and angry and frustrated because you want to get there.

Right? And you start talking to yourself or thinking to yourself, "This is ridiculous. I hate living in this area anymore. There's so much traffic. I should have never gone to the mall today." And pretty soon you catch yourself sort of, or somebody else catches you and says, "Get a grip." And you start talking to yourself differently. You start saying, "Calm down, this too shall pass. I can't control this." And I'm not saying you're going to feel great, but you start to feel calmer because you're not feeding the cycle with your negative thoughts. You start saying to yourself, "There's nothing I can do. I have to trust God. I don't have control over this." And as you begin to talk to yourself more truthfully, you begin to feel a little different. Now I'm going to show you how this can work, and that you can feel very real feelings based on something that you think is true but isn't.

So I'm going to tell you a story about my office in Pennsylvania. Back in Pennsylvania I used to have a basement office where my counseling clients would come in. And so when I was sitting in my office, I could hear the outside door open and people come into my waiting room. So I sort of knew my next appointment was coming. So that was the situation. My office door would open and normally my emotion, I would feel okay. Okay? So normally my feelings were fine. I knew my next appointment was coming. But one time I was sitting there at 11:00 at night doing paperwork and all of a sudden I heard that outside

door open and I didn't feel fine anymore. Same situation. Exactly the same. Only the difference is I had different thoughts about the situation. Because 11:00 at night. So I'm thinking, "Uh oh. A disgruntled client is here. They're coming to get me. Maybe it's a husband who's dissatisfied with what I've done with his wife."

And I started feeling terrified. My heart's pounding and I'm starting to get out to run out the other door because I had two doors in my office, one to the outside and one to upstairs. And nobody was home at 11:00 at night because my husband was at a church meeting. And all of a sudden I feel the, I see the door on my office open and in walks my husband. He had been locked out upstairs and he was trying to get my attention. I didn't hear the knocking or the doorbells and so he came around to see if my office door was open. And I want you to see what happened in this moment because here I was, I felt real fear. I mean, my heart was pounding. My body was starting to pump adrenaline.

I was thinking a thought like, "Oh my gosh, there's a bad guy coming to get me." Now, I'm not saying this thought was unreasonable. It was totally reasonable. It just wasn't true. But I didn't know it wasn't sure at the time, so my body went into fight or flight mode. But when my husband walked in the door, guess what happened? I immediately felt different. I didn't have to work on not feeling terrified anymore. I didn't feel scared anymore. Now I felt mad. Because I was saying to him, "How can you scare me like that?" And it also felt relieved. You see, sometimes we work really hard to change our feelings when we're not paying attention to our thought life. And it's much harder to change our feelings if we don't understand what we're thinking. But now that I understood the truth, there really wasn't a bad guy coming in, my feelings automatically self-corrected. Because our feelings are hard-wired to our thinking.

In this situation, I heard the door open. I'm thinking, in a normal situation, my client's here, I never feel afraid, but it could have been that there's a bad guy out there all along, but I don't feel it because I'm not thinking it. You see, so your thoughts shape a lot of your experience of reality until you find out if it's to the contrary. And so it's really important when you are plagued with a lot of negative thoughts, you ask yourself an important question. What evidence do I have to support these negative thoughts that I'm having? Are they the truth? Because like we talked about in our class, our thoughts can deceive us. And by nature we do exchange the truth of God for a lie. So even though our thoughts are powerful and they create a powerful negative feeling, they may be based on something that seems reasonable, but it may not be true. Now, let me just give you another illustration, because I really want you to understand how powerful this can be.

Let me just erase my board, so we can start over. And I had a client who, I'll call her Mary, and she always interpreted negative thoughts toward other people's actions. So here she was, she was in church and so the situation was in church, and her friend didn't say hi to her outside of Sunday school. She saw her, she thought she saw her, and she would expect her to say, "Hey, how are you Mary?" And she didn't say anything. And so Mary came home from church

feeling rejected, hurt. I can't write. And afraid. Okay. And she said, "It was because my friend didn't say hi to me at church." But what was her thoughts about her friend not saying hi to her? Well, "She's mad at me. She doesn't like me." Negative thoughts, right? "I must've done something wrong."

All right. So Mary spent a week miserable, anxious. "I'm not important. I have no friends." So Mary came to our coaching session and we talked about what happened in her miserable week, right? All these horrible feelings that she's having. And so I asked her this first question. "Well, Mary, what evidence do you have that your friend didn't say hi to you because she's mad at you, because she doesn't want to be your friend, because you did something wrong? What evidence do you have?" Well, Mary said, "Well, why else wouldn't she have said hi?" So this brings us to the second question I need you to ask yourself when you do this journal. The first question you ask is, what evidence do I have to support that this is true? And all of the evidence that Mary had in this moment was, well, she didn't say hi.

"Well, is there another way of looking at why your friend didn't say hi, Mary? Is there another way to interpret this? Is there another way of looking at why your friend might not have said hi?" Now Mary was stumped on this. She said, "I don't know. I can't think of any other reason." And then she thought for a minute and she said, "Well, I don't know. Maybe she didn't feel good or maybe she was busy and she just didn't see me." Maybe, just maybe, her not saying hi to Mary had nothing to do with Mary. Maybe her friend was just preoccupied, had her own stuff going on. She just didn't see Mary. Now if she thought that way, that her friend was preoccupied instead of ignoring her, how might Mary have felt? She might have felt a little disappointed, but she might not have felt all these other negative feelings that she felt.

And so how's Mary going to test out whether her version of thinking is the way it really was, or there's another reason? So I said to Mary, "I have a homework assignment for you. I want you to call your friend." And she's like, "I can't call her. Why, she's mad at me." And I said, "Well, why don't you just sort of act like she's not mad at you? Why don't you just assume the best of her? If she were really mad at you, she would've called you and told you. So why don't you just call her and say, 'Hey, how you doing?' And you'll be able to tell by her response back to you if she's mad at you because she'll sound cold or she'll sound unfriendly or she won't answer your call or she won't return your call." And so Mary thought about it and she said, "You know, I can do that."

So she took the challenge. And she called her friend and she said, "Hey, how you doing?" And her friend said this. "Good, good. How are you married? I missed you in church last Sunday. Where were you?" Now, Mary was completely dumbfounded. Her friend wasn't mad at her, her friend didn't reject her. But Mary had suffered real feelings for a whole week based on thoughts that were triggers from her old history, from her childhood. But they weren't true. And so one of the things I want you to begin to understand in this coaching class, when you're doing this thought journal, is to begin to look at your own stinking

thinking, your own crazy thoughts. We all have them. Sometimes when I'm sitting and writing a book and I have writer's block and I can't think of anything to say and I'm feeling anxious, I'm telling myself, "Oh, I can't write this book. I'm no good. Nobody wants to read my stuff anyway."

I'm kind of creating my own anxiety. And many times, we create our own negative feelings based on how we interpret the situation. So if you want to get healthier, if you want to grow to a godly woman and build core strength, it's so important that you learn to recognize those thoughts and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. That we allow God to transform our mind with the washing of the word, with the renewing of the truth. God says in his word, in Psalm 107:20, he sent forth his word and healed them. And it's not just the words of scripture, but the word of God. Christ, who wants to come and help you see things differently. Remember we talked about in Matthew 6 where Jesus tells you if your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light.

When you can perceive things correctly, you can be clear-minded and transformed. Now, truth be told, sometimes we have to look out of two eyes at the same time. So let's do this again, because sometimes we do have some legitimate hurt feelings based on things that are really true. The situation is I'm in a rotten marriage, right? And I'm having some hurt feelings about this, and some negative thoughts about this. "Why can't he love me? What have I done wrong? It's all my fault." Now are all those thoughts true? "I should've done more, I should have done better." And all of those lies that we've talked about in the class that you identify with, a lot of your angry, guilty feelings can come out of the lies. Some of it might be true, like I'm in a destructive marriage and my husbands cheated on me and that's true, but maybe it's not all my fault.

You see, the really sad part is that God knows that we're going to feel sad and disappointed at times. That's just life. We're not looking to erase all your negative feelings, but we're looking to have your negative feelings over here match the truth, not being based on lies. Or perhaps wrong thinking like it's all my fault, I should have done more. If you think that you're going to feel guilty, right? Maybe there's no truth that you should have done more, or maybe there's another way of looking at it. "I'm in a destructive marriage because my partner won't look at himself. Maybe because he's too shamed or too proud to see what he's doing wrong. Maybe I'm in a destructive marriage and my thoughts can also be fixed on eternal ends that, yes, this is painful. This is the one way of seeing it and God's using it to help me grow strong. I'm going to grow stronger in this class. That maybe a healthier person. God doesn't waste anything in my life, including bad situations."

And if you thought that way, you might feel more hopeful. You know, some of us have rotten childhoods and you don't just have a rotten present, you have a rotten past and you can't change the fact that you grew up in an abusive home. But how you look at the past, how you talk to yourself about the past, whether you say to yourself, "I was a rotten kid and that's why my parents could love me because I was unlovable." When you say that to yourself, that's not true. There

might be another way of looking at it. And you can't change the past, but you can change the way that you look at the past so that you can learn to be healthier and you're not stuck in lies.

One more thing, one more piece of this that I want you to do. So we're going to keep this chart, and at times you're going to start having some negative feelings. So write down your negative feelings, whatever they are. Hurt, sad, anxious, guilty. And then what was the situation? Write the situation out. My husband didn't call me. My kids gave me a smart mouth. Whatever it is, it can be big or little. My husband told me he's leaving me. My husband's having an affair. It could be a big thing, a really big thing. All right, my situation is, my husband dies. All right? Now for most women, they might feel really sad and hurt and scared. Why? Because you're having thoughts like, "I'm going to be alone. I don't have enough money. I don't know what to do. I feel so overwhelmed." Right? And those things might be true.

But there was a woman in the Bible whose husband died. And she felt happy. Do you know who she was? She was Abigail and Samuel. Because her husband was a foolish and cruel man. So she was saying something different to herself. "Yay! I don't have to live with this anymore." You know? She had a very different perspective on the situation. So even with something so horrible as having a husband die, not everyone feels the same way, right? It's how we think about the situation, about what happened, that affects us emotionally. There's one more piece of this chart that I want to go over with you. Because let's say you did something and it is true. Let's say you failed at something, okay? Let's say I'm getting divorced. The situation is, I'm getting divorced. My husband is leaving me for another woman and I feel hurt and sad and guilty because maybe I wasn't the best wife, and maybe I cheated on him too and I didn't do enough.

Maybe some of that is true, all right? Maybe some of that is true. So you're going to take each of those thoughts and you're going to say, what evidence, is it true? Is there another way of looking at it? But let's say that there was a piece of it that was true. Let's say that the situation is your kid gave you a smart mouth and you slapped him in the face. And you feel really guilty and sad and bad because you acted out and you did something wrong. Okay? And it was partly your responsibility. You did something that you're not proud of or that you're upset and you're thinking about that, and you're beating yourself up. It's really common, all right? "I feel bad about what I did and I'm feeling so guilty. I'm feeling so ashamed and it's true. I did do that. It's true. There is evidence that I did that." Right?

"There isn't no other way of looking at it. So what do I do with that?" So this is what you do with that. So let's say it's true, I slapped my kid. Or it's true that I cheated on my husband too. All right, whatever it is that you're beating yourself up over. Okay? What I want you to do, if it's true, "I was adulterous too, or it's true that I did something yucky to my kid, or I was disrespectful too, or I wasn't the kind of person I wish I could have been." Here's what you're going to do. That's the situation then. I slapped my kid or I cheated. Whatever it is, it's true.

So that's the situation. And I feel shame, guilty, bad. What are your thoughts?  
"I'm horrible. I will never be able to forgive myself."

What are your negative thoughts? So the question you're going to ask yourself is, what does it mean that you did that? What does it mean? Right? You want to look at your thoughts that, "I failed. I'm a miserable person. I'm a failure. No one will ever love me. I can't do anything right. God is mad at me. I will never forgive myself." Do you see all the lies here? Even if this is true, do you see all how the enemy comes in and accuses you with lies and you believe the lies? And now we define ourselves by our mistakes? Friend, there isn't one hero in the Bible other than maybe Daniel that I can think of that didn't mess up. And some of them messed up a lot. Failure is an important part of being a human being, and failure is not a statement about who you are.

Failure isn't a statement about what you did or didn't do. It's a learning experience for you to make corrections for sure. Just like when you're a child and you learn to walk and you fall down. You don't say to yourself, "Oh, forget that, I can't do that. I'm just a miserable kid who'll never learn to walk." You just get yourself back up and you keep walking. So sometimes we do do something that's wrong. We feel embarrassed about. We didn't do right. And don't make it about your whole character, okay? Don't make it about who you are. It's something that happened, and you can fix it, correct it. Sometimes you can't change it. But what evidence do I have that no one will ever love me because of this, or that my life can't ever be redeemed. The apostle Paul's life was redeemed. David's life was redeemed.

Moses's life was redeemed. There's lots of people who met big failures and they were able to move on. They learned from it. It can help you be a bigger and better and stronger and more godly person. If failure was never allowed in the Christian life, then Jesus would not have had to die for us. Because failure is part of what he went to the cross for. Peter failed, and he repented after he failed. Remember? But Judas failed and he felt so bad about himself. What did he do? He went out and killed himself. So one of the things I think is really important for you to really get ahold of in building your first step of core strength is that you're committed to the truth, both internally and externally. God desires truth in your inner most being, Psalm 51 says. And so this week, as well as future weeks, I want you to work on this thought journal. Practice it, and see how much of your thought life affects your emotional life, and how much of your thought life may not be true. And I will talk to you next time. God bless.