

TAME YOUR THOUGHTS

A NOTE FROM MAX

"You are what you eat" is a scary slogan for most of us. We like the idea of chowing down on a cheeseburger with all the fixings, but we're less thrilled about those fixings forming the foundation of our physical health. Seeing ourselves as a cheeseburger is not a pleasant image, which is why we need to eat the right kinds of food.

However, as unsettling as this image might be, "you are what you think" is an even scarier slogan for those of us on a typical diet of worldly thoughts. This is because most of us savor what we think about in secret—the angry accusations, the extravagant excuses, the furtive fantasies, and so on. The notion of our private notions being made public for all to see? Terrifying. The idea that those inner thoughts go a long way toward shaping who we are at the very core of our being? Horrifying.

Even so, it's true. We are the sum of our thoughts. So it's no wonder God urges us, "Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts" (Proverbs 4:23 GNT).

Maybe this is why so many of us today are in such dire straits. Filling our bodies with harmful food leads to

heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and more. Likewise, filling our minds with harmful thoughts leads to anxiety, addiction, despair, and more. Toxic thoughts affect every aspect of who we are, including our mental health, our relationships with others, and our relationship with God.

Thankfully, we don't have to stay stuck in the rut of toxic thoughts. We can do a better job of managing our lives when we do a better job of managing our thoughts. And we have the opportunity to better manage our thoughts because we don't have to do it alone. God is with us! He designed our brains, and he has equipped us with everything we need to stop being conformed to the world and start being transformed by his way of thinking.

Sound good? Then get ready to get serious about what you think about. It's time to learn how to truly tame your thoughts.

— MAX LUCADO

TOOLS

GUIDES + SAMPLES

The Starter Guide, which you are reading right now, explores using the items in the tool kit and Bible study. Chapter 1 of the Bible Study Guide and *Tame Your Thoughts* are included. These will come in handy if anyone has not received their copies of the books in time for the first session.

COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Use the communication tools and graphics to invite people in your congregation and community to the Bible study. There are graphics to spread the word through email, social media, websites and more. Most graphics provide a blank space where you can add details about your group. The PDFs will allow you to add information directly in Adobe Acrobat.

LEADING A GROUP

Each of the sessions in the *Tame Your Thoughts Bible Study* is divided into two parts: (1) a group study section and (2) a personal study section. The group study section provides a basic framework on how to open your time together, get the most out of the video content, and discuss the key ideas that were presented in the teaching. Each session includes the following:

- **Welcome:** A short opening note about the topic of the session for you to read on your own before you meet as a group.
- **Connect:** An icebreaker question to get you and your group members thinking about the topic or your takeaways from the previous week.
- **Watch:** An outline of the key points covered in each video teaching along with space for you to take notes as you watch each session.
- **Discuss:** Questions to help you and your group reflect on the teaching material presented and apply it to your lives.
- **Respond:** A short personal exercise to help reinforce the key ideas.
- **Pray:** A place for you to record prayer requests and praises for the week.

To conduct this study in a group, make sure you have your own copy of the study guide so you can write down your thoughts, responses, and reflections—and so you have access to the videos via streaming. You will also want to have a copy of the book *Tame Your Thoughts*, as reading it alongside this guide will provide you with deeper insights. (See the notes at the beginning of each group session and personal study section on which chapters of the book you should read before the next group session.)

Finally, keep these points in mind:

- **Facilitation:** You will want to appoint someone to serve as a facilitator. This person will be responsible for starting the video and keeping track of time during discussions and activities. If you have been chosen for this role, there are some resources in the back of this guide that can help you lead your group through the study.
- **Faithfulness:** Your group is a place where tremendous growth can happen as you reflect on the Bible, ask questions, and learn what God is doing in other people's lives. For this reason, be fully committed and attend each session so you can build trust and rapport with the other members.
- **Friendship:** The goal of any small group is to serve as a place where people can share, learn about God, and build friendships. So seek to make your group a safe place. Be honest about your thoughts and feelings, but also make it a point to listen carefully to everyone else's thoughts, feelings, and opinions. Keep anything personal that your group members share in confidence so that you can create a community where people can heal, be challenged, and grow spiritually.

MATERIALS NEEDED

To gain the most from this study, each participant should have their own copy of the study guide, as well as their own copy of the book *Tame Your Thoughts*. The study guide contains notes from the video teachings, discussion questions, and personal study days that will deepen the learning between group sessions. Additionally, the leader will need to have the videos either on DVD or by digital stream/download. The study guide book provides a code to access the five teaching videos through StudyGateway.com.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

At the beginning of each week, the study guide provides information on which chapters of the book should be read prior to the next group meeting. Each personal study day will lead you deeper into the biblical content of the video or book. Please note: It is recommended that participants read the welcome section and chapters 1 and 2 of *Tame Your Thoughts* before the first group session. On the next page is a sample of the schedule you will find at the beginning of every new week.

WEEK 1

BEFORE GROUP MEETING	Read chapter 1 in <i>Tame Your Thoughts</i> Read the Welcome section (page 3)
GROUP MEETING	Discuss the Connect questions Watch the video teaching for session 1 Discuss the questions that follow as a group Do the closing exercise and pray (pages 3–8)
STUDY 1	Complete the personal study (pages 10–13)
STUDY 2	Complete the personal study (pages 14–17)
STUDY 3	Complete the personal study (pages 18–20)
CATCH UP AND READ AHEAD (BEFORE WEEK 2 GROUP MEETING)	Read chapters 2–4 in <i>Tame Your Thoughts</i> Complete any unfinished personal studies (page 21)

TIMELINE

ESTABLISH VISION AND UNITY (90 DAYS BEFORE LAUNCH)

- Present an overview of the Bible study and message to your leaders and staff to gain vision and unity.
- Based on the church calendar and wisdom of leadership, decide when the Bible study or small group can be scheduled.
- Develop a strategy to announce the study to your congregation and the surrounding community. A small group study like this is especially effective for those times of the year when you would like to reach out to your community. The resources along with this Starter Guide will help you with this.

ANNOUNCE AND ORGANIZE (60 DAYS BEFORE LAUNCH)

- Recruit a prayer team to pray for the Bible study and recruitment efforts.
 - Pray for unity, spiritual growth, and victory over the enemy.
 - Pray that lasting relationships are developed through this study.
- Identify study and/or Sunday school teachers.
- Meet with group leaders for orientation.
 - Set anxious minds at ease. Group leaders are acting as hosts and facilitators. They do not need to be experts on this topic. They need only focus on keeping the conversation going. All the questions and prompts for group discussion are in the study guide book.
- Order books and study guides. Ordering early allows leaders to become familiar with the content. You can always order more later. [ChurchSource.com](https://www.churchsource.com) offers bulk discounts.

INVITE PEOPLE (30 DAYS TO LAUNCH)

- Plan a sign-up Sunday for registration. Provide a brief introduction to the five-week study or play the trailer which can be found on YouTube: youtu.be/mpq2CHj0E4o
- Consider adding the information about the study to video announcements, emails, text messages, social media posts, and the church web site.
- Make sure that people who sign up know where to purchase their book and study guide.
- Once registration begins, ensure that you have enough leaders so each group can be 6-8 people.