DISCERNMENT   **CONVERSATION #4: TEST YOUR THOUGHTS**

ICEBREAKER: FINISH THE SENTENCE

Most of our thinking happens so fast that we rarely slow down long enough to question it. We start thinking without even thinking about it - especially when things feel confusing, uncomfortable, or personal -and we often trust them without realizing it. This opening activity helps us pause and notice those first reactions before they quietly take the lead. Try not to overthink your responses. Just read the statement and finish the sentence.

1. **"**When I feel uncomfortable, my first thought is…"

2. "When something doesn't go as planned, I usually assume…"

3. "When I make a mistake, I immediately think…"

4. "When someone challenges my opinion, my instinct is to…"

5. "When I compare myself to others, I usually think…"

6. "When I feel overlooked, my mind goes to…"

7. "When I feel misunderstood, my first thought is…"

STUDY: FINDING YOUR FILTER

Most of us don't struggle with having thoughts; our struggle is filtering them. When faith is new, it's natural to assume that if a thought pops into our head, it must be true; if it feels strong, it must matter most; and if it makes sense to us, it must be right.

But spiritual maturity begins when our thoughts stop leading and start being examined. Rather than reacting immediately or speaking impulsively, we learn to slow down and test what's happening in our minds. Continuing to grow spiritually doesn't mean thinking less - it means thinking wisely, allowing Scripture to do the heavy lifting instead of impulse, emotion, or assumption.

What we believe, how we react, and what we say are all influenced by what's happening in our minds. The Bible describes this as a real battle we're meant to engage, not ignore.

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 10:3-5

- What stands out to you about how Paul describes the battle happening in our lives?

- What do you think it means to "take every thought captive"? What does that *not* mean?

- What thoughts tend to feel most convincing simply because they are loud or familiar?

- How can Scripture become a filter for your thinking instead of a reaction after the fact?

- What usually keeps you from slowing down long enough to examine your thoughts?

As we consider what Paul says here, it's important to notice a few things. First, our thoughts are not neutral - they're shaping us whether we realize it or not. Second, not every thought that shows up deserves our agreement or obedience. And finally, spiritual maturity requires active responsibility, not passive acceptance.

ACTIVITY: CAPTURE AND TEST

To put this into practice, we are going to take a moment to write down one recurring thought you've had recently - something that tends to show up again and again, especially under pressure. It might be a thought like *"I'm behind," "I always mess this up," "No one notices,"* or *"If God cared, this wouldn't be happening."*

Capture your thoughts in the space below:

Next, slow down and test it by asking a few questions: Is this thought actually true, or is it just familiar? Does it align with what Scripture says? Does it lead you toward obedience, or toward self-protection? And would you encourage someone else to have the same thought?

Test your thoughts in the space below:

Finally, don't just try to remove the thought - replace it by rewriting it in light of Scripture or biblical truth. This matters because spiritual children often wait for someone else to correct their thinking, but spiritual maturity learns to self-examine before reacting.

Look up and write down any scriptures that clarify, correct, or speak to this thought:

CHALLENGE: RENEW YOUR MIND

Romans 12:2 reminds us that growth happens when our minds are renewed. This week, read Scripture daily that challenges how you think, identify one thought that needs testing, and replace it with biblical truth. If you need a place to start, focus on any of your thoughts that need to be "tested" and find scriptures that speak to them. The goal is simple: stop letting impulse lead your thinking and let God's Word shape it instead.