



S C A L E S

BIG IDEA

Life is hard, challenging; and things just don't work out according to what we want. Why is it that often times our bad experiences outweigh the good?

We developed what's called in science a "negativity bias," which means that the brain, to help us survive, preferentially looks for, reacts to, stores, and recalls negative information over positive information. There is a famous finding in the realm of relationship psychology from John Gottman, of the University of Washington, that it takes at least five positive interactions to make up for just one negative one. In other words, a negative interaction in an important relationship is five times more powerful than a positive interaction.

The brain is like Velcro for negative experiences but Teflon for positive experiences.

How can you overcome it? We need to actively build up positive implicit memories to balance this unfair accumulation of negative implicit memories. Taking in the good is an absolutely crucial skill to develop, and a wonderful way to balance this unfair tilt embedded in your own nervous system.

Let's dig into the Bible to see how we can battle the negativities in life and tilt the fulcrum of our thoughts towards the hope of the Gospel.

2 Corinthians 4:8-18

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.

Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, “I believed, and so I spoke,” we also believe, and so we also speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Philipians 4:4-9

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you find it true that sometimes one negative thought can outweigh the many positives you have going on for you in life? If yes, why do you think this happens?
2. What is one negative thought you are battling with right now?
3. Read 2 Corinthians 4:8-18. How do these verses encourage you in battling negative thoughts?
4. Read Philipians 4:4-9. Verse 7, it says “with **thanksgiving**, bring your requests to God.” Often times when we are depressed, stressed, feeling down we cry out to God out of anger and frustration. The Paul here reminds us we need to take a moment to *pause*, give thanks, *soak in God’s goodness*. Often time we do not take time to think about how He has been faithful to us *before* bringing our requests to Him. How does this challenge you in terms of prayer?

5. Negative people and negative experiences in life will always come. Reread the two bible passages. What are some practical ways we can combat the negative thoughts/experiences that come and claim victory that the gospel brings on a daily basis?