

Not Every Thought Deserves Your Trust by Adam Hofer

Recently, I discovered *Pilgrim's Progress*, written by the Puritan pastor John Bunyan in 1678. Apart from the Bible, it has become one of the most widely read and influential Christian books ever published.

One scene in particular captured my attention. Christian, the main character who represents every believer, must pass through the Valley of the Shadow of Death as he journeys along the narrow path to the Celestial City. The valley represents seasons of spiritual darkness, discouragement, and the temptation to despair—to abandon hope and give up in the faith. As Christian walks beneath the clouds of darkness and confusion, an unseen enemy follows behind him. Without Christian realizing it, the enemy whispers dreadful thoughts into his ear. At first, Christian believes the thoughts are his own. They are evil—even blasphemous—and he is horrified that such thoughts could seemingly arise from within himself. As despair settles over him, the only weapon he is able to yield is what Bunyan calls "**All Prayer.**"

It wasn't until the next morning, when the light of Truth came up in the sky, that he realized that the voice was not his own but was the evil one whispering in his ear.

I believe this is often the case. Satan whispers lies disguised as truth, hoping we will believe them, embrace them, and eventually become enslaved by them. Jesus said of Satan, "*He is a liar and the father of lies*" (John 8:44).

This is why knowing the Truth is so important. So, where do we find Truth?

Is it found in popular opinion? At school? On the news? In our feelings?



No. The only completely trustworthy source of Truth is the Word of God.

One of the greatest tragedies I see today is that

many people allow their thoughts and emotions to determine what is true. Yet, our feelings constantly change, while God's truth never changes.

Personally, I have learned not to trust every thought that enters my mind. I continually examine my thoughts, asking whether they arise from my sinful flesh, are fiery darts from the enemy, or are the gentle conviction of the Holy Spirit. As Paul instructs in 2 Corinthians 10:3–5, I seek to take every thought captive and bring it into obedience to Christ.

Yet, I know my own weakness. When I am not spiritually alert, I sometimes entertain thoughts that should remain captive. Instead of judging them by Scripture, I begin listening to them, and those lies attempt to build strongholds within my heart.

Even then, God is faithful, even when I am weak or when I am tired of vetting my own thoughts. When I am discouraged, I look up and see the empty cross standing there where it has always been, shadowing my life since I was knitted together in my mother's womb. The

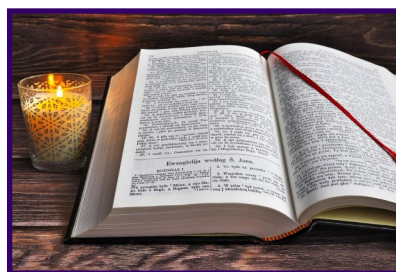
breeze of His love hits my face, and the words "My grace is sufficient" reach my ears. That is when my weary spirit weeps tears of joy! Even in my years of ministry, I am still uncovering the depths of His grace, depths too deep to see the bottom. I have barely broken the surface of my understanding.

That is why God's Word has become as necessary to me as breathing. His Truth sustains me, strengthens me, fights for me, corrects me, and fills me with hope.

After serving the homeless, incarcerated, and recently incarcerated at Center of Hope for the past ten years, I have become convinced that spiritual warfare begins in the mind. The battle is fought one thought at a time.

There is a reason the Sword of the Spirit—the Word of God—is the only offensive weapon listed in Ephesians 6. There is a reason that when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, He answered every temptation with Scripture. As Christians, we must tattoo His Truth on our very hearts.

Satan will whisper in our ears. However, God has not left us defenseless. He walks with us, speaks to us clearly through His Word, and shines His Truth into the dark valleys of our lives.



Yet, we need to be intentional. Open your Bible. Read it. Meditate on it. Memorize it. Recognize that not every thought needs to be accepted/believed. As you listen to your thoughts, take them

captive and make them obedient to Christ! Let God's Truth shape your mind so completely that when the enemy whispers his lies, you immediately recognize the voice that does not belong. **Embrace HIS Truth!**



Meet Cary Otis!

Cary Otis has officially joined the Center of Hope team as our Community Closet Assistant! For those of you who volunteer at Center of Hope, you know how important her role is! She started at Center of Hope through NICOA, then joined our Prison Transition Mentorship program. After working with her, seeing her heart for the Lord and our guests, and witnessing how well she communicates His love to our guests, we had to keep her on our team. As someone who experienced firsthand many of the difficulties our guests face each day, she is uniquely equipped for her new role. Welcome her to our team!

Congratulations, Kelly and Kyle! Now, Meet C and Johnny!

Kelly and Kyle have officially completed our Prison Transition Mentorship program! They both did an amazing job in our Bike Ministry. We are excited to see how the Lord continues to work in their lives. Such a blessing to have known both of them inside and outside of prison! Both of them are gifted and will make a difference in our community. I just know it! Remember, once part of the Center of Hope family, ALWAYS part of the Center of Hope family! Our new mentees are now C and Johnny. We are confident that they will do well. We are excited to walk alongside you the next 3-4 months! A huge thank you goes to our team of mentors: Spiritual Mentors (pastoral staff of Center of Hope), Financial Mentor (Dawson Muska at The Community Outreach), and Addiction Coaches (Face-It Together). We are better when we all work TOGETHER!



Exciting Summer of Mobile Ministry!

Benjamin Geiszler, our Bike Ministry Coordinator, and John Blok, our Community Closet Pastor, have been tag-teaming the Mobile Bike Ministry



this Summer! They not only have been visiting different locations on Mondays and Thursdays in Sioux Falls metro; they also have been visiting other towns! The Mobile Bike Ministry worked with Atlas of Rock County for a Bike Ministry Day in Luverne, Minnesota, and offered bicycle repair at Inwood's Annual Car Show and Burnouts! Such a blessing to have Center of Hope on wheels! If you want us to visit your church or business to serve alongside you in ministry in your community, feel free to reach out to us via email at info@centerofhopesf.org!

Mark Your Calendars: 24th Annual Fall Benefit—Saturday, November 7, from 4:30pm-7:00pm at Celebrate Church

MEMORIAL GIFTS

Center of Hope appreciates the gifts In Memory of:
Allen Minkler, Edith "Dolly" Hoogendoorn, Linda Elbers, and Mike Stegemann

Help Us, Help People: Partner to Empower

Stock or Commodity Gifts—Talk to your financial advisor about gifting stocks and commodities to the Center of Hope.

Make it Double—Check with your employer to see if they will match your charitable contributions to the Center of Hope.

Be a Sustainer of Hope—A monthly gift will bring stability to individuals and families.

Give online at: www.centerofhopesf.org OR via Venmo: @CenterofHopeSFSD

In-Kind Gifts—Clothing, Winter gear, Bicycles, Hygiene items, Backpacks for people transitioning out of prison, encouragement cards/letters, office supplies (contact before donating)

Financial Update

Fiscal year runs from April to March, for the year 2026-27

April—To Date Income

\$76,890.75

2026-27 Budget Need

\$545,313