



How to Stop Overthinking: A Comprehensive Guide for Christians Seeking Peace

Overthinking can feel like a prison of your own thoughts. You lie awake replaying conversations, **second-guessing decisions**, and imagining worst-case scenarios that never happen. If you struggle with relentless mental churn, you're not alone. Modern psychology labels this habit *rumination* or chronic worry, and it's a **widespread issue** – in fact, one cross-cultural review found that phrases for *"thinking too much"* appear in many languages and describe the same thing: repetitive, anxious thoughts that lead to emotional and physical distress ¹. As a Christian, you may also recognize overthinking as a form of **worry** that the Bible cautions against. Jesus pointedly asked, *"Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life?"* (Luke 12:25 NIV) – a gentle reminder that excessive worry is unproductive. Indeed, research confirms this truth: over **90% of the things we worry about never come to pass**, according to a 2020 study on chronic worriers ². Overthinking not only fails to solve our problems; it also **steals our joy and peace**.

In this guide, we'll draw on **Scripture**, psychology, and real-world wisdom to understand why we overthink and how to break free. You'll learn practical steps – from renewing your mind with truth to utilizing helpful therapies – all grounded in biblical principles and evidence-based strategies. As a senior Christian theologian deeply familiar with the human nervous system and mental health, I want to reassure you: **there is hope**. With God's help and some proven tools, you can stop overthinking and embrace the *"peace of God, which transcends all understanding"* (Philippians 4:7). Let's explore how.

Understanding Overthinking: When Your Mind Won't Rest

Overthinking means thinking about something **too much or for too long**, without it leading to productive action. It often starts as genuine concern or reflection, but then gets stuck on a loop. You might replay a decision over and over, or continuously imagine everything that could go wrong. While you may convince yourself that *"I'm just problem-solving,"* overthinking is **not the same as effective problem-solving**. As one clinical counselor explains, *"with overthinking, you ruminate – going over a problem again and again – but there's no real resolution"* ³. Instead of moving toward a solution, you end up back where you started, or even **more anxious**.

Some common signs of overthinking include:

- **Inability to focus on anything else:** Your mind fixates on the issue and it's hard to be present in daily life.
- **Constant worry and anxiety:** You feel on edge, your thoughts jump from one fear to another, and you often imagine the worst-case scenario for every situation.
- **Second-guessing decisions:** After making a choice, you immediately doubt it and mentally replay alternatives (*"Did I do the right thing?"*).
- **Mental and physical tension:** Overthinking can lead to headaches, muscle tension, and insomnia because your brain won't shut off at night.



Clinically, overthinking often manifests as **rumination** (dwelling on past hurts or mistakes) or **chronic worry** about the future. It is *not* a distinct mental illness on its own – there’s no “overthinking disorder” in diagnostic manuals ⁴ – but it is strongly associated with conditions like **generalized anxiety disorder (GAD)** and depression ⁴ ⁵. In GAD, for example, a person feels excessive worry about multiple things most days, often **struggling to control the worry**. Overthinkers may also display a low tolerance for uncertainty ⁶, feeling a need to **mentally prepare for every possible outcome**. Unfortunately, this endless mental rehearsal only increases stress. **Research confirms that overthinking tends to focus on the negative** – dwelling on past regrets and future fears – which in turn **creates more stress** rather than solving anything ⁷ ⁸.

From a biblical perspective, overthinking aligns with what Scripture calls “*anxiety*” or “*worry*.” It ultimately reflects an inner struggle to feel secure. The Bible indicates that chronic anxiety often stems from a **lack of trust in God’s provision** ⁹ ¹⁰. This doesn’t mean you are a “bad Christian” for worrying – it means you are human. Even faithful figures in Scripture experienced anxious thoughts. The key is that God invites us to **turn those thoughts over to Him**. “*Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you,*” 1 Peter 5:7 says. In other words, **God cares about the worries on your mind**, and He wants to help you break free from them.

What Causes Overthinking?

Overthinking can have many underlying causes, from **personality tendencies** to **life experiences**. Here are a few common contributors:

- **Perfectionism and Control:** If you have high standards or a need to control outcomes, you might overthink decisions in an attempt to avoid every mistake. You analyze and re-analyze because uncertainty feels intolerable. This perfectionistic streak is often linked with overthinking ¹¹ – you’re striving to get everything “just right,” which ironically keeps you stuck.
- **Fear and Anxiety:** Overthinking is fueled by fear – fear of failure, fear of what others think, fear of bad outcomes. Sometimes a past negative experience (like a traumatic event or harsh criticism) makes you hyper-vigilant. You constantly scan for threats or errors now, stuck in “**what if?**” mode. This is basically your **fight-or-flight system** in overdrive, trying to anticipate danger. God designed our bodies to respond to fear (e.g. with adrenaline and a racing heart to face immediate threats), but when the threat is just our thoughts, we’re left tense without resolution ¹². Chronic anxiety keeps your nervous system activated and stress hormones elevated. (One scientific review found that people who ruminate on stress have higher cortisol levels – the body’s primary stress hormone – which can disrupt sleep and mood ¹³.)
- **Habitual Thought Patterns:** Overthinking can become a habit loop in your brain. **Cognitive distortions** – distorted ways of thinking – often play a role ¹⁴. For example:
 - **Catastrophizing:** instantly assuming the worst-case scenario. (Your boss sends an email to meet, and you start imagining you’ll be fired and lose your home – when it’s likely a routine meeting.) This pattern **sets you up to worry about unrealistic worst-case scenarios** ¹⁵.
 - **All-or-nothing thinking:** viewing situations in black-or-white terms. If one thing goes wrong, you consider the whole thing a failure. This rigid thinking ignores any middle ground and amplifies anxiety.
 - **Overgeneralizing:** expecting that because something bad happened once, it will “*always*” happen. For instance, you overthink every new social interaction because one awkward conversation years ago convinces you “I always mess up.”



- *Mind-reading/Jumping to conclusions:* assuming you know what others are thinking (“She must think I’m stupid”) or that things will turn out badly with no real evidence.

These distorted thoughts feed overthinking. As Scripture says, *“as he thinks in his heart, so is he”* (Proverbs 23:7). In other words, **our thought life shapes our reality**. If our thoughts are twisted by fear or falsehood, our emotions will follow. Recognizing these patterns is the first step to changing them (we’ll return to this).

- **Lack of Action or Solution-Focus:** Overthinking thrives when we **dwelt on problems instead of solving them** ¹⁶. Imagine a storm is coming: an overthinking approach is to sit and worry (“What if the house is damaged? I can’t handle this...”), whereas a problem-solving approach is to take action (secure loose items, prepare an emergency kit) ¹⁷. Many times, we overthink in circles about *“Why is this happening?”* or *“I wish it wasn’t so,”* instead of asking *“What can I do about it?”* When we’re not actively solution-focused, rumination fills the void. It’s like revving a car engine in neutral – using a lot of mental energy but going nowhere.
- **Spiritual Battles:** For Christians, there can also be a spiritual dimension. We have an enemy – the devil – who *“is a liar and the father of lies”* (John 8:44). He loves to whisper worst-case scenarios and condemnations into our minds. Some overthinking, especially the kind that involves relentless guilt or fear, can be **exacerbated by spiritual attack**. The Apostle Paul warns us to be alert to anxious or condemning thoughts that don’t come from God’s truth (2 Corinthians 10:5). Not every negative thought is from Satan, of course, but being aware of this potential factor is important. Prayer and Scripture (the “sword of the Spirit” per Ephesians 6:17) will help, as we’ll discuss.

Bottom line: Overthinking usually arises from a mix of **internal factors** (like temperament and thought habits) and **external triggers** (stressful events, trauma, uncertainty in life). Understanding your own triggers is helpful. Do you overthink most about relationships? Health? Work? Identify those themes, because it will make your strategy to stop overthinking more targeted. And remember: **overthinking is learned**, which means it can be unlearned. You’re not “crazy” or doomed to be this way forever. In fact, just as overthinking can be triggered by life events, it can also be **healed and rewired by new experiences and choices** – with God’s help, *“be transformed by the renewing of your mind”* (Romans 12:2).

The Cost of Overthinking: Why It Robs Your Peace

Before we get into solutions, it’s worth considering the toll that overthinking takes on our well-being – mentally, physically, and spiritually. Recognizing these consequences can motivate us to change.

Mentally and Emotionally: Overthinking creates an endless cycle of stress and dissatisfaction. Studies have observed a **bidirectional link** – meaning a two-way relationship – between rumination and mental health issues like depression and anxiety ¹⁸. On one hand, feeling depressed or anxious makes you more likely to overthink (e.g. when you’re already sad, you dwell on *“why am I like this?”*). On the other hand, **the more you overthink, the more your mood declines**, feeding into depression/anxiety symptoms ¹⁸. It’s a vicious loop. Over time, excessive worry can lead to chronic anxiety disorders or deepen a depressive episode.

Overthinking also **impairs sleep**. When your brain refuses to shut off, you might experience insomnia or restless sleep. Research confirms that rumination at bedtime directly interferes with falling asleep and reaching deep sleep ¹⁹. The next day, you’re exhausted, which makes concentrating harder – and then

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you're more prone to anxious overthinking. This *"overthinking → poor sleep → more anxiety"* pattern can become very destructive. Physically, chronic sleep deprivation and constant stress hormones (like cortisol) can weaken your immune system and increase risk of hypertension or other stress-related conditions ²⁰

²¹ . **Prolonged overthinking is essentially prolonged stress**, and the Mayo Clinic warns that chronic stress can disrupt nearly every bodily process ²⁰ . God designed our minds and bodies to experience *periods of rest*; without mental rest, we suffer. No wonder God "grants sleep to those He loves" (Psalm 127:2) – restful sleep is part of His design for a healthy life.

Relationally: Overthinking can take a toll on your relationships. When you constantly assume the worst or replay every word someone said, you're likely to misinterpret others and feel insecure. For instance, if a friend is slow to reply to your text, an overthinker might spiral into thoughts like, *"She must be upset with me; maybe I offended her; what if I lose this friendship?"* In reality, the friend might just be busy. This kind of **assumption and rumination can cause unnecessary conflict** – you might withdraw from the friend or seek constant reassurance, which can strain the relationship ²² ²³ . Overthinkers may also exhibit **clingy or controlling behaviors** in relationships (because their anxious thoughts tell them something is wrong), pushing away the very people they care about ²² .

Moreover, when your mind is always elsewhere (worrying about tomorrow or rehashing yesterday), it's hard to be fully present with loved ones *today*. You might be physically with your family but mentally preoccupied. That steals quality time and connection. In marriage or close friendships, overthinking can manifest as continual doubts (*"Do they really love me?"*), which can be exhausting for both parties. Biblically, this is contrasted with the description of love in 1 Corinthians 13 – *"Love...keeps no record of wrongs...love always trusts, always hopes."* A mind caught in overthinking tends to **keep a record of wrongs (past hurts)** and struggles to trust or hope. Thus, breaking free from overthinking can **greatly improve your relationships**, allowing you to communicate more openly and assume the best in others.

Spiritually: Perhaps most importantly for a Christian, overthinking can hinder your relationship with God. When your mind is flooded with worries, it's hard to hear the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit. You may find it difficult to pray because your prayers turn into another form of anxious rumination – *"vain repetitions"* of worries, rather than genuine release to God. Overthinking is essentially trying to **carry burdens in your own head**. Jesus invites us, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest"* (Matthew 11:28). But an overthinker struggles to lay down those burdens. In a way, chronic worry can be a form of *functional atheism* – we act as if everything depends on us figuring it out, forgetting that God is sovereign. That realization can be convicting: Jesus said *"do not worry about tomorrow"* because our Heavenly Father knows our needs (Matthew 6:34, 6:32). When we overthink, we often aren't trusting those needs to God.

The good news is that God is **very compassionate with anxious people**. Throughout Scripture, He gently reassures us: *"Do not be afraid... I am with you"* (Isaiah 41:10), *"Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you"* (Psalm 55:22). One of my favorite verses to remember when I'm caught in anxious overthinking is Isaiah 26:3 – *"You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in You."* The key to peace is a **mind fixed on God's faithfulness, not our own fears**. Overthinking robs us of that "steadfast" mind by fixing our gaze on problems. It's like Peter walking on water: as soon as he took his eyes off Jesus and looked at the storm, he began to sink (Matthew 14:29-31). Similarly, when we focus exclusively on life's storms in our head, we start sinking into anxiety. But if we refocus on Christ – His power, His promises – we can rise above the waves.



Finally, overthinking steals the **joy** that we're meant to have in Christ. Jesus said, *"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly"* (John 10:10). It's hard to experience abundant life when you're trapped in analysis paralysis or dread. Joy and peace are part of the *"fruit of the Spirit"* (Galatians 5:22). If chronic worry is dominating our mind, it's like a weed choking out that fruit. Many believers even feel guilty about their overthinking ("I should have more faith"). If that's you, please hear this: God understands your frame (Psalm 103:14) – He knows you are dust, a fragile human. He does not condemn you for struggling with anxiety, but He does want to **lead you into freedom** from it. *"Do not be anxious about anything,"* the Bible counsels, *"but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God"* (Philippians 4:6). This isn't a rebuke as much as it is an invitation: swap out anxious overthinking for faithful prayer. In the next section, we'll explore exactly how to do that, along with other concrete steps to stop overthinking.

How to Stop Overthinking: 7 Biblical and Practical Steps

Breaking the cycle of overthinking is challenging, but absolutely possible. It requires a combination of **mind renewal, behavior change, and spiritual surrender**. As someone knowledgeable in both theology and therapy, I encourage a **holistic approach** – use every God-given resource, from Scripture and prayer to counseling techniques and even medical help if needed. Here are seven steps, grounded in biblical wisdom and psychological research, to help you stop overthinking and start living with greater peace:

1. Acknowledge and Identify the Overthinking. *"You can't heal what you won't acknowledge."* The first step is simply recognizing when you are overthinking. Often, overthinking feels automatic – you might not even realize you've slipped into a mental loop until you're far down the trail of worry. Begin practicing **self-awareness** of your thought life. When you notice yourself feeling anxious or mentally exhausted, pause and examine your thoughts: *What am I dwelling on right now?* Is it something I can control, or is my mind spinning scenarios? It can help to **write down your worries in a journal**, literally externalizing them on paper. This brings clarity. King David modeled this in the Psalms by pouring out anxious thoughts to God in writing (see Psalm 55:2). Naming the specific concern (*"I keep replaying that mistake at work..."*) lessens its power and helps you decide what to do next. Sometimes I even say to myself, *"I am overthinking about X."* Just stating it makes it clear that these are **just thoughts** – not reality, and not an unsolvable monster. The Bible encourages taking an inventory of our mind: *"Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts"* (Psalm 139:23). Allow the Holy Spirit to highlight when you're spiraling in anxiety. There's no shame – only an opportunity to pivot.

Once you've acknowledged an overthinking episode, **identify the triggers and patterns**. Are there common themes? (Finances, health, what people think of you, etc.) Are there certain times or places you tend to overthink? (Perhaps when lying in bed, or when facing a new challenge.) Also identify the distortion if you can: *"I'm catastrophizing about my future right now,"* or *"I'm stuck on all-or-nothing thinking."* This is essentially what 2 Corinthians 10:5 describes: *"taking every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ."* You can't take a thought captive until you "catch" it. So step 1 is about **catching your overthinking mindset** when it happens. This awareness alone starts weakening the cycle, because you realize *"This is just my overactive mind talking"* – not actual facts or inevitable fate.

2. Challenge and Reframe Your Thoughts (Renew Your Mind). Once you've caught an overthinking thought, the next step is to **interrogate it and replace it with truth**. Our minds often lie to us. Not every thought you have is true, or helpful, or from God. So, *challenge it*. For example, if your internal monologue says, *"I'm never going to succeed in life because I messed up that project,"* pause and challenge that. Ask: **Is this thought 100% true?** What does the evidence say? What does God say? Perhaps the reality is: *Yes, I made a*



mistake on the project, but I learned from it and it doesn't mean I'll "never" succeed. God can redeem my failures. By actively questioning your negative thoughts, you perform what psychologists call **cognitive restructuring**, and what Scripture calls *"renewing your mind"* (Romans 12:2).

A helpful exercise from cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is to make a two-column list: on the left, write the anxious thought; on the right, write a more balanced rebuttal. Let's take an example from an overthinker's journal:

- Thought: *"Everything I do turns out badly. I'm sure everyone secretly thinks I'm incompetent."*
- Challenge: *"Is it true that everything I do is bad? No. I have successes (I did well on project X). Has anyone told me I'm incompetent? Not really – this is my assumption. It's more likely I'm my own worst critic."*
- Reframe: *"I'm not perfect at everything, but I do many things well. Even when I fail, it doesn't make me a failure as a person. My worth isn't based on others' opinions – God's opinion matters most, and He says I'm His beloved child (1 John 3:1)."*

See how we moved from distortion to a truth-aligned thought? **Challenging negative thoughts with reality and God's Word disarms their power.** The Bible puts it like this: *"Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right... Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise"* (Philippians 4:8 NLT). That doesn't mean we ignore problems; it means we intentionally refocus on truth and positives instead of stewing in worst-case scenarios. If you struggle to find an alternative thought, ask yourself: *What would I say to a friend in this situation?* Often we are kinder and more rational toward others than to ourselves. Or, *what might a trusted friend say to me?* Sometimes seeking wise counsel – from a spouse, friend, or mentor – can help pop the bubble of our exaggerated fears. *"In the multitude of counselors there is safety"* (Proverbs 11:14). They might point out, *"You're being too hard on yourself,"* or *"That outcome you fear is really unlikely."* Getting that outside perspective helps break the echo chamber in our head.

Most importantly, **look to Scripture for the true perspective.** If your overthinking is whispering, *"It's all on me to figure this out,"* remind yourself of God's promise: *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding"* (Proverbs 3:5). If your worry says, *"I'm alone in this,"* God says, *"Never will I leave you or forsake you"* (Hebrews 13:5). Reframing thoughts in light of God's sovereignty and care is powerful. For instance, you can replace *"I don't know what the future holds, it terrifies me"* with *"I don't know the future, but I know Who holds the future. God is already there, and He will be with me no matter what (Matthew 28:20)."* This isn't a trite platitude – it's an exercise in **faith-fueled thinking**. Over time, as you consistently challenge and reframe, you literally **rewire your brain** to think in healthier ways. Neuroscience shows that our brains have neuroplasticity; we can form new thought patterns with practice, which is wonderfully consistent with Paul's instruction to *"demolish arguments and pretensions"* that set themselves up against the knowledge of God (2 Cor 10:5). It's a battle, but each truth you declare is a weapon against anxious overthinking.

3. Turn Your Worries into Prayer. One of the most direct biblical antidotes to overthinking is **prayer**. Philippians 4:6 famously tells us: *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."* This is not just a command to *stop worrying*; it's an invitation to **actively hand our concerns over to God** through prayer. Whenever you catch yourself overthinking, make it a trigger to pray. For example, instead of endlessly mulling *"What if I get sick?"* take that thought and present it to God: *"Lord, I'm afraid of illness. I ask for Your protection and health, and I trust You with my future."* It might help to pray out loud or write the prayer down, because it engages you more fully. As you pray, also **practice thankfulness** ("with thanksgiving," as the verse says). Thank God for



listening, thank Him for specific blessings in your life. Gratitude shifts your focus from fear to appreciation, and research has shown gratitude itself can calm anxiety.

Prayer is essentially **releasing control** to God. Overthinking thrives on the illusion of control – we subconsciously think, *“If I keep thinking about this, I won’t be caught off guard.”* But that’s a false security. Jesus gently corrected Martha, *“you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed”* (Luke 10:41-42). Martha’s sister Mary chose to sit at Jesus’ feet – symbolically, to trust and listen. When we pray, we do the same: we stop busying our minds and sit with Jesus, telling Him our worries and listening for His guidance. **This is tremendously freeing.** The promise attached to Philippians 4:6-7 is that *“the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”* In other words, when you trade anxiety for prayer, God’s peace – a peace beyond what makes logical sense – will stand guard over your mind.

It’s important to note that **not all prayer is equal in reducing anxiety**. A fascinating 2022 study on prayer and anxiety found that people who approached prayer as trusting conversation with God (for example, prayers of praise and confident expectation in God’s answers) tended to have **lower anxiety levels**, whereas those who prayed in a more desperate or ritualistic way sometimes had higher anxiety ²⁴ ²⁵. What does this mean? It suggests that *how* we pray matters. If our prayers are basically worry in disguise (just fretting at God rather than to ourselves), we may not feel much relief. But if our prayers affirm God’s greatness and surrender the outcome to Him, we experience more peace. So, try praying in a posture of **trust**: praise God for who He is – *“Lord, I know You are all-powerful and all-loving”* – and *then* present your request – *“So I ask You to handle this situation, and I trust Your will.”* Pray with the expectation that **God hears you and will take care of you**, even if His methods or timing differ from your expectations. As 1 Peter 5:7 reminds, *“cast your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.”* Visualize yourself literally casting your bundle of worries onto Jesus’ shoulders. He can carry what you cannot.

Lastly, incorporate **Scripture into your prayers**. Find verses that speak to your specific worries and pray them. For example, if you’re overthinking about provision, pray *“Father, You said in Matthew 6 that I shouldn’t worry about my life, what I’ll eat or wear, because You feed the birds and clothe the flowers, and I am more valuable to You than they are. Help me to seek Your kingdom first and trust You to provide all I need”* (see Matthew 6:25-33). Praying God’s promises back to Him bolsters your faith and renews your mind in truth. It also tends to break the overthinking loop because you’re actively engaging with God, not just passively stewing. In summary: **worry** is conversing with yourself about things you can’t control; **prayer** is conversing with God and leaving those things in His hands. The latter leads to peace.

4. Practice Stillness and Mindfulness in God’s Presence. We live in a noisy, fast-paced world, and our overthinking minds often reflect that internal noise. A powerful remedy is to cultivate periods of **stillness** and mindful focus, especially focusing on the **present moment** and on God’s presence. The Psalmist writes, *“Be still, and know that I am God”* (Psalm 46:10). This ancient instruction is incredibly relevant: when you purposefully quiet your racing thoughts and center your mind on the reality of God’s control, overthinking diminishes.

In practical terms, **mindfulness or meditation techniques** can help reorient your mind. This doesn’t have to be something exotic – at its core, mindfulness is about gently bringing your attention to the here and now. As a Christian, you might do this by meditating on a short Scripture or a truth about God’s character. For instance, take a few minutes each morning to sit quietly and breathe deeply, eyes closed, repeating a truth like: *“The Lord is my shepherd; I lack nothing”* (Psalm 23:1), or a simple phrase like *“Jesus, I trust You.”*

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When your mind wanders (and it will), calmly bring it back to the focus. **Deep breathing** itself is physiologically calming – it signals your nervous system to relax. Some believers find practices like contemplative prayer or breath prayers very helpful: e.g., inhale while thinking *“Be still”*, exhale *“and know that I am God.”* This pairs a physical relaxation with a spiritual truth.

Secular research backs up the benefit of these practices. One study found that even a **10-minute meditation exercise can significantly reduce intrusive thoughts and worry** ²⁶. Think about that: when you feel stuck in overthinking, taking just ten minutes to do guided breathing or meditation can hit the “reset” button on your mind. It’s like a mental palate cleanser. As a result, you return to your tasks with a clearer head. In fact, some problems seemingly “solve themselves” when we step away and quiet our mind – or rather, when we stop obsessing, our subconscious and God’s guidance have room to work. Have you ever noticed you often get insights about a problem *after* you stop thinking about it intensely (say, in the shower or on a walk)? It’s a known phenomenon that disconnecting for a bit can lead to breakthrough. Thus, building a habit of **regular stillness** – whether through prayer, sitting in nature, or simple meditation – is key to preventing overthinking spirals. God often speaks in a *“gentle whisper”* (1 Kings 19:12); we won’t hear it if our minds are clamoring.

Additionally, **mindfulness teaches you to observe your thoughts without judgment**, which is useful for an overthinker. Instead of getting sucked into every thought, you learn to see thoughts as passing mental events, not ultimate truth. For example, during a quiet time, an anxious thought may pop up – *“What if I embarrass myself in that meeting?”* Rather than engaging it, you practice letting it float by: *“There’s that anxiety again,”* and refocus on your breathing or scripture. This is akin to taking thoughts captive – you are deciding whether to engage or dismiss a thought. Over time, you become less reactive to every worry that crosses your mind. You realize *“I have thoughts, but I am not my thoughts.”* Your identity and mood need not be dictated by every anxious brain wave.

In summary, carve out moments each day (and especially when you notice overthinking flaring up) to **pause, breathe, and be present**. Even a 5-minute break to stretch and breathe can interrupt a rumination cycle. Psalm 131:2 beautifully says, *“I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother.”* Cultivate that calm, trusting posture before God – like a child resting in a parent’s arms. The more you do, the more you’ll find the knots of overthinking loosening.

5. Engage in Healthy Distractions and Positive Activities. It may sound counterintuitive, but sometimes the best way to stop overthinking in the moment is to **intentionally distract yourself with a healthy activity**. When your mind is stuck on an unproductive worry loop, shifting your focus to something else breaks the circuit. This isn’t avoidance – it’s strategically directing your mental energy to reset it. A therapist once gave this advice: *“When your brain is spinning its wheels, get up and do something physical.”* Activities like taking a short walk, doing household chores, gardening, or playing with a pet can work wonders. These tasks are engaging enough to occupy your mind but not stressful. **Exercise** in particular is a fantastic outlet: even a brisk 15-minute walk or a bike ride can burn off nervous energy and release endorphins that improve your mood. The Cleveland Clinic notes that physical activity reduces symptoms of anxiety and can directly help calm an overactive mind ²⁷. When Elijah the prophet was overwhelmed and despairing (arguably overthinking his dire situation), God’s first intervention was to have him *eat and rest* (1 Kings 19:5-8). Only after Elijah’s physical needs were met did God engage him in deeper conversation. This story reminds us that **our bodies and minds are connected**. Taking care of your physical state – through movement, rest, nutrition – can significantly alleviate overthinking.



Beyond exercise, consider **creative or social outlets** as distractions. For example, work on a hobby that absorbs you (painting, woodworking, cooking, music). It's hard to ruminate while you're actively creating something. Or reach out to a friend to chat (about something unrelated to your worry). Laughter and positive social interaction are great anxiety antidotes. The Bible says, *"A cheerful heart is good medicine"* (Proverbs 17:22). Sometimes a coffee with a good friend or watching a wholesome comedy can break the cycle of brooding.

Importantly, choose *healthy* distractions, not harmful ones. Numbing your mind with excessive alcohol, drugs, or mindless internet scrolling might seem to give temporary relief, but they often backfire – either by creating new problems or by allowing the worry to return even stronger once the numbness wears off. Instead, aim for **constructive diversions** that either improve you or at least do no harm. Reading a book, cleaning your room, volunteering to help someone in need – these divert your mind and add value to your life. Helping others, especially, can put your worries in perspective and provide a sense of purpose that crowds out anxious thoughts.

A practical technique some use is scheduling a **"worry time."** If a persistent concern is nagging at you while you're trying to focus on something else, tell yourself, *"I'll think about this later from 4:00-4:30."* Schedule 20-30 minutes as "worry/prayer time" in the evening. Then when the thought arises at other times, gently remind yourself you have an appointment to consider it later, and redirect your attention now. Often, by the time you get to that scheduled window, the concern feels less urgent or you're more objective about it. During the worry time, you might journal or pray through the issues, then decisively close the book and move on. This technique works because **it trains your brain that now is not the time** – whereas if you allow overthinking anytime, it will intrude all the time.

In summary, **don't stay passively in your head when overthinking strikes.** Take action, do something, move. Break the inertia. As you engage in other activities, you'll often find that when you return to the issue later, it's with a fresher, calmer perspective – or the problem wasn't as big as it felt. Proverbs 12:25 observes, *"Anxiety in a person's heart weighs it down, but a kind word cheers it up."* Doing something kind for yourself (like taking a walk) or for others is like that kind word that can lift the weight of anxiety.

6. Embrace God's Truth to Replace the Lies (Renewing Your Mind Continually). This step goes deeper into the spiritual realm of thought life. As Christians, we believe that **truth sets us free** (John 8:32). Much overthinking is driven by lies or false beliefs: *"It's all up to me. I'm not good enough. The future will be a disaster. God won't help me."* Identifying and rejecting these lies is crucial for lasting change. We've touched on challenging thoughts cognitively; here we emphasize doing so **theologically** – aligning your mindset with what God says is true. This is an ongoing process of discipleship and inner healing.

One powerful practice is to **meditate on Scripture regularly**, not just when anxious but as a preventive habit. Consider memorizing a few key verses that speak to anxiety and peace. For example: *Matthew 6:34* ("do not worry about tomorrow..."), *Philippians 4:6-7* (prayer and peace), *1 Peter 5:7* (cast your cares on Him), *Isaiah 41:10* ("Do not fear, I am with you"), *2 Timothy 1:7* ("God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind"). When an overthinking episode starts, **speak these Scriptures out loud** if possible. There is authority in the Word of God. Jesus countered Satan's temptations by quoting Scripture, and we can counter tormenting thoughts the same way. For instance, if plagued by anxious *"what ifs,"* say, *"It is written: 'Be anxious for nothing, but present your requests to God'."* If you feel alone in your worries, proclaim, *"God said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you' (Hebrews 13:5)."* This isn't a magic formula



to instantly feel better, but it **shifts the atmosphere of your mind toward truth**. It also invites the Holy Spirit to do His work of comfort and conviction, reminding you of God's faithfulness.

Another aspect of embracing truth is to remember **your identity in Christ**. Overthinking often involves self-focused fears and inadequacies. But who are you in God's eyes? You are **His beloved child**, chosen and cherished (Ephesians 1:4-5). You are not defined by your mistakes or by others' approval. When you realize *"I am secure in Christ's love. Nothing can separate me from His love"* (Romans 8:39), the volume of many worries turns down. A lot of our overthinking about relationships, performance, or the future has to do with seeking validation or dreading failure. But if you know you're already accepted by God, you can approach life more boldly and with less mental angst. **Preach the gospel to yourself daily**: Jesus died for me, rose for me, and now intercedes for me – I am forgiven, I am valued, and my future is in His hands. This eternal perspective can snap you out of obsessive worry about temporal matters.

Sometimes, embracing truth means correcting some deep-seated misconceptions. For example, some Christians have the false belief that *"If I truly trust God, I wouldn't feel anxious – therefore, my anxiety means I'm a bad Christian."* This is not true; even faithful saints have dealt with anxiety (think of David, or even Jesus sweating blood in Gethsemane from anguish). Correct belief is: *"Feeling anxious is a human emotion, not a sin in itself; God understands and invites me to seek Him in it."* Another false belief might be, *"Everything depends on me."* Truth: *"God is sovereign; I have a role, but He ultimately holds all things together (Colossians 1:17)."* Replacing perfectionism with trust in God's sovereignty is life-changing. Instead of, *"I must foresee and fix every problem,"* you learn to say, *"I will do my best with the wisdom God gives, and I'll leave the rest to Him."*

To solidify these truths, you might find it helpful to **read solid Christian books or articles** on anxiety and faith. Sometimes hearing how others applied biblical truth to their worry can spur you on. A resource like *"Anxiety: Knowing God's Peace"* by Paul Tautges or **Christian counseling literature** can provide both theological insight and practical tips. There are also *support groups* or classes in some churches (often called "battlefield of the mind" workshops, etc.) where you can learn and practice these principles in community.

Real-World Example: To illustrate the power of renewing the mind, consider *Jane*, a 35-year-old Christian woman who constantly overthought social interactions and her performance at work. She often believed, *"If I don't please everyone perfectly, I'll be rejected."* This lie drove her into anxiety attacks whenever she made a mistake. Through counseling and Bible study, Jane began identifying this false belief and replacing it with truth: *"I want to do well, but I don't need everyone's approval. God's approval is what matters, and in Christ I already have it. I am loved even when I fall short."* She memorized Galatians 1:10 (which says we are servants of Christ, not trying to win human approval) and Romans 8:1 (*"there is no condemnation for those in Christ"*). Whenever the panic of rejection started, she recited these verses and reminded herself of God's unconditional love. Over time, Jane's anxiety significantly lessened. She went from a baseline anxiety score of 15 (moderately severe) on the GAD-7 scale to a score of 5 (mild) after three months of practicing truth-based thinking and prayer. In her journal, she wrote, *"The more I agree with what God says about me and my situation, the quieter the lies become."* This is the essence of Romans 12:2 – *"be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* It's not an overnight switch, but a daily choice that yields cumulative freedom.

7. Seek Support: Community and Professional Help When Needed. God did not design us to handle life's struggles alone. Overthinking, especially when severe, is not easily conquered by willpower in isolation. **Seeking support** is a wise and often necessary step. This can range from confiding in a trusted friend or pastor for accountability, to engaging in formal counseling or even considering medication for anxiety if appropriate. There should be *no shame* in getting help. Proverbs 11:14 says, *"In an abundance of counselors*

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there is safety." Sometimes an outside perspective from a Christian counselor or therapist can illuminate blind spots and teach you specific techniques to manage anxiety that you wouldn't learn on your own.

Therapy (Counseling): A mental health professional, especially one who respects your faith, can be an invaluable coach in retraining your thought patterns. The **gold standard therapy for chronic worry** is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) ²⁸, which we've already been informally using in steps above (challenging and reframing thoughts). A therapist guides you through this systematically and helps you face fears in a gradual, supported way. Another approach, if trauma underpins your overthinking, could be EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) or other trauma-focused therapies. Many people find that after a season of therapy, their overthinking diminishes greatly because they've addressed root issues and learned coping skills. If you're hesitant: remember, **therapy is not a sign of weak faith**; it's a means of wisdom. God can use skilled counselors as instruments of healing – *"Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed"* (Proverbs 15:22). Even the apostle Paul had Luke (a physician) and others to tend to him. If your overthinking is causing significant distress or interfering with daily life (e.g. you can't sleep, work, or enjoy relationships due to incessant worry), **please consider counseling**. It is not "either prayer or therapy" – you can have both. Pray for God to lead you to the right counselor. Many churches have referrals for Christian counselors, or there are reputable organizations like the American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC) where you can find help.

Medical Support (Medication): In some cases, overthinking is a symptom of a biochemical imbalance or a severe anxiety disorder. If you've tried lifestyle changes and therapy and still find yourself drowning in anxiety, **medication might be a helpful tool**. There is a stigma among some Christians about psychiatric medication, but it's important to approach this topic with grace and truth. It is *not* a sin or lack of faith to use medication for mental health. Just as we wouldn't hesitate to use insulin for diabetes or blood pressure medicine for hypertension, using an anti-anxiety medication or antidepressant can be a wise move for certain individuals. One Christian counselor notes, *"taking anti-anxiety medicines is not wrong because you are doing it to find relief and the ability to function at an improved level. This is a worthwhile goal and morally acceptable."* ²⁹ ³⁰ The Bible doesn't prohibit using medicine; in fact, Luke was a physician and Paul advised Timothy to take a medicinal remedy for his stomach (1 Timothy 5:23). We understand that **all healing ultimately comes from God**, but God often uses means – including medical science. As one pastoral resource puts it, *"God has allowed man to grow in knowledge of medicine, and there is no biblical reason not to avail ourselves of it"* ³¹.

Modern medications for anxiety (like SSRIs or other anxiolytics) can help by correcting underlying brain chemistry or dampening the physical hyperarousal, so that your mind isn't racing at 100 mph all the time. Think of it like this: medication can **turn down the volume** of the overthinking enough for you to effectively practice the other coping strategies and truths we've discussed. It doesn't erase problems or "cure" worry permanently, but it can give relief and mental space to heal. Many Christians benefit from short-term use of medication as they also pursue counseling and spiritual growth. Some might need longer-term medication for specific conditions (just as someone with chronic thyroid issues might take medicine indefinitely). There is no one-size-fits-all. If you go this route, do it under guidance of a doctor, and continue seeking God through the process. Pray for wisdom for your doctor. And monitor the results – medication should make it easier, not harder, to pray and think clearly. If it numbs you too much or has side effects, communicate with your physician to adjust as needed.

Community and Accountability: In addition to professional help, don't underestimate the power of **peer support**. Sometimes just talking about your worries with a friend or small group can break their power.

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Choose a trusted person who is a good listener. Tell them what you're struggling with. Often, voicing a worry out loud causes you to realize aspects of it that seemed huge in your head are actually manageable. Your friend can speak truth and encouragement to you, reminding you of things like *"Remember how you handled a similar challenge before; you'll get through this too,"* or *"I'll pray with you about this."* Knowing someone else is aware of your inner battle can be a relief – you don't have to put on a perfect facade. It also allows them to check in: *"Hey, how are you doing with not overthinking the job situation?"* That gentle accountability can keep you on track.

Consider also **joining a support group** if overthinking is part of a larger issue like anxiety or OCD. Many communities (and churches) offer anxiety management classes or groups where people share and learn coping skills. The solidarity of "others have similar struggles" is comforting and you can trade tips. Celebrating progress together (no matter how small) gives incentive to keep practicing the new habits. **Serving others** is another community aspect: when you volunteer or help someone with their burden, your own worries often lighten. It's a godly paradox: *"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ"* (Galatians 6:2). By focusing on someone else – maybe mentoring a younger person or helping at a shelter – you spend less time ruminating on self-focused anxieties, and you gain a sense of purpose.

Faith Community: Finally, stay connected to your church and faith community. Participate in worship, even when you feel anxious. Singing hymns and worship songs can lift your perspective to God's greatness and love (and there are many songs directly about trusting God and relinquishing fear). In fellowship, we often find that others will share testimonies of how God pulled them through anxious times. This builds your faith. Don't isolate yourself – isolation is the breeding ground for further overthinking. The enemy would love to get you alone and discourage you. But when you're with even two or three others in Jesus' name, *He is there among you* (Matthew 18:20), and there is strength. Sometimes, asking for prayer from elders or mature Christians (even for deliverance from a spirit of fear, if you suspect a spiritual component) can be a turning point. James 5:16 encourages us to *"pray for one another so that you may be healed."* Let people pray over you. Let them remind you of God's promises when you can't remind yourself.

Case Study: From Overthinking to Peace – A Journey

To see how these steps can play out in real life, let's look at a composite case study drawn from many true stories.

Meet David: He's a 40-year-old husband and father who has been a lifelong overthinker. At night, David would lie in bed for hours with racing thoughts: Did I lock the doors? What if someone breaks in? What if I get fired next week? I should have handled that argument with my wife better – what if she's still upset? His heart would pound and sleep evaded him. This began affecting his mood and health. He was irritable from fatigue and had frequent tension headaches. Spiritually, David felt distant from God; he was too consumed with worry to pray meaningfully.

Baseline: David took an anxiety self-assessment and scored 18/21 on the GAD-7 scale, indicating severe anxiety. He noticed his blood pressure was elevated at his last doctor visit. He realized his overthinking was not only mental – it was hurting him physically and relationally. So he decided to seek change.



Interventions: David applied the kind of steps we've discussed:

- **Identification:** He started keeping a **"thought log."** For one week, every time he noticed himself worrying excessively, he jotted down the situation and his thoughts. He discovered key triggers: late evenings (when he was tired), discussions about finances, and reading too much negative news online. Just recognizing these helped – for instance, he set a rule to **avoid reading news right before bed** and instead wind down with Scripture or a relaxing book.
- **Challenging Thoughts:** One recurring worry in his log was, *"We're going to go bankrupt and lose the house."* In reality, his family was financially stable, though on a tight budget. With his pastor's help, David challenged this thought: *"What evidence do I have that we'll go bankrupt? None – our bills are paid, we have savings. This is a fear, not a fact."* He replaced it with: *"God has always provided for us. I will be a good steward and trust Him with our needs."* He memorized Philippians 4:19, *"And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus,"* and quoted it whenever money fears rose. Over time, his financial panic attacks reduced significantly.
- **Prayer and Surrender:** David committed to a new routine: each morning, he spent 15 minutes in prayer *before* diving into the day's tasks. He specifically **handed over his top 3 worries to God** each dawn. He also revived a forgotten practice: praying with his wife. Instead of each silently worrying about things, they began praying together about their concerns at least once a week. This not only lessened David's personal anxiety but strengthened their marriage – they became a team facing challenges with God, rather than two individuals stewing privately.
- **Stillness and Physical Health:** In the evenings when his mind used to race, David started doing a 10-minute routine of gentle stretching and deep breathing, sometimes using a Christian meditation app with calming biblical affirmations. This helped transition him to a calmer state for sleep. If he woke at 3 AM with worry (which still happened occasionally), he practiced the breathing and silently repeated a short prayer (like *"Lord, You are in control, I release this to You"*). Additionally, David began jogging a few times a week after work – he found that **exercise dramatically improved his sleep** and mood. On nights he exercised, he fell asleep faster with fewer anxious thoughts, a benefit consistent with research showing physical activity reduces anxiety ³².
- **Community Support:** David opened up to his small men's Bible study group about his anxiety. To his surprise, two other guys said, *"We struggle with that too."* They started dedicating a few minutes each meeting to share progress and pray for each other's worries. This mutual encouragement lifted David's spirits. Seeing others conquer similar battles gave him hope. One friend in the group would text him Scripture or a positive quote during the week if he knew David was facing something stressful at work. These simple check-ins kept David grounded.
- **Professional Help:** David also did six sessions with a Christian counselor, who taught him deeper CBT techniques and guided him in uncovering a core issue: David realized much of his overthinking traced back to a childhood fear of failure and a false belief that *"I alone am responsible for everything."* The counselor helped him reframe this in light of God's grace and sovereignty. After counsel and prayer, David even experienced a breakthrough of forgiveness toward himself and his father (from whom he had internalized that pressure). His counselor and he agreed he didn't need medication at this point, as his improvements were steady with these interventions. David's doctor, seeing his blood pressure come down and hearing of reduced anxiety, concurred no medication was necessary.

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– but also reassured him, **“It’s there if you ever need it.”** Just knowing that option existed actually comforted David that he wasn’t out of options if things got worse.

Outcome: After about four months, David’s GAD-7 anxiety score dropped to 7 (mild level). He reported sleeping an average of 7 hours a night (up from 4-5 fragmented hours before). He and his wife noted that he was laughing more and enjoying family time without being so distracted. One evening, his wife commented, *“You seem present with us now – I love it.”* Spiritually, David felt closer to God than ever. The act of continually surrendering worries in prayer deepened his trust. He experienced what Philippians promises: *“the peace of God”* guarding his heart and mind. He wasn’t anxiety-free every moment (life still brings stress), but he now had **tools and faith practices to manage it**. Overthinking no longer controlled him. As David put it, *“I still catch myself starting to spiral sometimes, but now I realize it early and push the pause button. I’ve learned to say, ‘Okay, God, I’m giving this to You,’ and then I do something constructive instead. And you know what? God always comes through – either with a solution or with strength to endure.”*

This case exemplifies how applying biblical wisdom, psychology, and sometimes professional guidance can lead to tangible improvement. **Your story might look different**, but the principles hold true: identify the patterns, apply God’s truth, involve others, and be patient with the process.

Conclusion: A Renewed Mind and a Path to Peace

Learning how to stop overthinking is a journey of both **mind renewal and trust**. It involves practical effort – catching thoughts, challenging lies, changing habits – *and* a profound reliance on God’s grace to bring the inner calm we cannot manufacture on our own. Remember, overcoming chronic worry is **not about suddenly never having anxious thoughts** (we all will, as part of being human). Rather, it’s about **responding to those thoughts in healthier ways** and shortening the amount of time you stay stuck in them. Progress is measured in small victories: the night you redirect your thoughts and fall asleep, the morning you pray instead of panic, the conversation where you stay present instead of over-analyzing every word.

As you practice the steps outlined – acknowledging your overthinking, meditating on Scripture, praying your worries, disciplining your mind to focus on truth, engaging in healthy activity, and reaching out for support – you will notice change. At first it might be slight: maybe you catch yourself worrying after 10 minutes instead of 30 and manage to pivot. Celebrate that! It means growth. In time, these new patterns will become more automatic. Galatians 6:9 encourages us, *“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”* This applies to the “good work” of renewing your mind as well. Keep at it, and the harvest of peace will come.

Be patient and kind to yourself in this process. God certainly is patient with you. Psalm 103:13-14 says, *“As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him; for He knows how we are formed, He remembers that we are dust.”* The Lord understands your fears and overthinking more than anyone. He doesn’t expect you to figure it all out instantly. What He does do is lovingly guide you, step by step, toward greater freedom. Sometimes He may allow the discomfort of anxiety to persist a little, so that you learn to rely on Him more deeply. Other times, you might experience a miraculous peace that you know isn’t from your own effort at all. In all cases, **He is with you** in the journey. *“When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy,”* writes the Psalmist (Psalm 94:19). God’s comfort comes in many forms



– a timely verse, a friend’s kind word, a moment of beauty, even the clarity from a counseling session – but it is ultimately **His hand reaching into your tangled mind and steadying you.**

So, **take heart.** You won’t always be trapped by overthinking. The fact that you’ve read this far shows a willingness to change and a hope for a more peaceful mind. That, in itself, is a gift of God – hope is the first crack of light breaking through. Continue to invite Jesus into your thought life. He is the *“Wonderful Counselor”* (Isaiah 9:6) and the *“Prince of Peace.”* He can teach you, better than anyone, how to walk in peace. And as you learn, you’ll find something beautiful happening: the energy once spent on anxious overthinking will be freed up to live, love, create, and serve with joy. The deep relationship with Christ you desire will flourish, because your mind will be more present to His presence. You’ll be able to say with greater confidence, *“When I am afraid, I put my trust in You”* (Psalm 56:3).

In the end, the goal is not just to *stop negative thoughts* but to cultivate a mind so full of God’s truth and serenity that worry has less room to take root. It’s about replacing an overactive mind with an **overflowing heart – overflowing with faith, wisdom, and contentment.** *“May the Lord of peace Himself give you peace at all times and in every way”* (2 Thessalonians 3:16). That is my prayer for you. With practical steps and God’s help, *you can stop overthinking* and step into the freedom and peace that is your inheritance as a child of God.

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