



TOMMY
NEWBERRY

THE 4:8 PRINCIPLE



TYNDALE HOUSE PUBLISHERS, INC.
CAROL STREAM, ILLINOIS

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The 4:8 Principle: The Secret to a Joy-Filled Life

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Newberry, Tommy.

The 4:8 principle : the secret to a joy-filled life / Tommy Newberry.

p. cm.

ISBN-13: 978-1-4143-1304-7 (hc)

ISBN-10: 1-4143-1304-7 (hc)

1. Joy—Religious aspects—Christianity. 2. Thought and thinking—Religious aspects—Christianity. I. Title.

BV4647.J68N49 2007

248.4—dc22

2007010405

Printed in the United States of America

13 12 11 10 09 08 07

7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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THINKING LIKE GOD THINKS

All things be ready if our minds be so.

– William Shakespeare

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This is not a book about thinking like most people think. You do not need a book for that; it just happens naturally! *The 4:8 Principle* is a book about thinking differently, about thinking in a way that maximizes your *potential for joy*. Because most people are oblivious to their habitual way of thinking, they experience less joy and a less-abundant life than God intended for them.

I wrote this book to help you improve the one thing in life over which you have complete control: your thinking. This profoundly influences every other aspect of your life. In my practice as a life coach, I've observed that all lasting change is preceded by changed thinking. Any other type of change will be only temporary. The place to begin, then, is with your thought life, with a revival of your mind. I have great news for you: You no longer have to be a slave to your thoughts!

Few people have experience with intentional, focused thinking. We spend very little time thinking about what we are thinking about. For most of us, thinking is a poorly developed ability that often occurs with little conscious

awareness. You can probably go through hours—even days and weeks—filled with frenzied activity while giving very little notice to the *quality of thoughts* passing through your mind. Most of your thinking is more like background noise while you engage in other activities. Yet behind everything you do is a thought, and each individual thought contributes to your overall character. How well your mind works dictates how much joy you experience, how successful you feel, and how well you interact with other people. **No area of your life is untouched by your thoughts.** Your habitual thinking patterns either encourage you toward excellence or nudge you into weakness.

By the grace of God, each moment is a new beginning, a new dawn for your potential. Your thoughts can become totally different, and as a result, your character can change and your life can be transformed. God wants you to be completely alive, full of passion, and bursting with joy. After all, we're his children—and would you want anything less for your children? King David vividly illustrated God's desire when he wrote these words to the Lord: "You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy" (Psalm 30:11, NIV). God desires us to experience great joy, and he created us with that capacity. He wants good things for us and has a wonderful plan for our future!

You can become everything God had in mind when he created you. There is no limit to your full potential once you recognize and put into practice the secret to a joy-filled life. Despite your past and regardless of your current circumstances, your future can exceed even your wildest

expectations. There is only one catch: *You must learn to think like God thinks!*

You may be wondering, *How could I possibly do that?* Well, of course it's impossible to literally think like God—he is all-knowing and all-powerful. But we can learn to focus our thoughts on things that reflect and honor his character. It's not easy, but it is simpler than you might realize—and it will pay great dividends. The truly difficult thing is living with the consequences of *not* changing the way you think. As with many other defining moments in life, you have the choice to pay now or pay later. If you choose to postpone payment by not changing your thinking, the later cost, with compounded interest, will always be even greater.

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How Does God Think?

To understand how God thinks, we must first comprehend *who* God is. With just a quick glimpse through the Bible, we learn that

- God is love.
- God is all-powerful.
- God is ever present.
- God is all knowing.
- God is absolute truth.
- God is holy.
- God is merciful.
- God is faithful.
- God is just.
- God is unchanging.

Though not exhaustive, this description of God's nature certainly gives us enough clues to contemplate the perfection and unlimited character of our Creator. To think like God, you must become intentional about mirroring his image in all that you do. Nowhere is this more important than in your thought life. As your thoughts reflect God's thoughts, not only will you glorify God, but you will also increase your positive influence on those you love. No doubt you will become a much brighter light to many whom you may never meet personally. God wants to impart his character and power through every individual. And when this happens, the world is instantly changed because those who reflect his glory impact the world.

The Scripture verse on which this book is based is Philippians 4:8, written by the apostle Paul:

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. (NKJV)

If anyone was ever justified in being negative and overwhelmed, certainly Paul was. Unfairly accused, confined in prison, and facing death, he chose to emphasize possibilities instead of problems. In his letters, he challenged believers to think differently and rise above the world's standard. As a prisoner, he didn't whine about the poor conditions, his bad luck, being chained to the guards, or even the things he missed about being free. Instead, Paul wrote in a spirit

of gratitude and with an encouraging, joyful manner—all in the midst of a continual barrage of persecution. The apostle Paul presents us with exceedingly wise advice for thinking like God thinks when he challenges us to seek out and dwell on the positives in our life.

Philippians 4:8 reflects very crisply the nature and character of God, who himself is true, noble, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. As Christians, we are called to meditate on things that mirror God's character! Not only does this keep us from focusing on sinful or harmful things, but it also allows us to fill our lives with hope and optimism.

From time to time, you might hear a sermon preached on this passage, encouraging people to focus their minds on positive, beneficial things. Most people who hear this message nod their heads and agree with it in theory. However, what really counts is putting the 4:8 Principle *into practice*, and that's where this book comes in.

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Joy by Design!

In *The 4:8 Principle*, I will challenge some of your dearest assumptions and possibly nudge you out of your comfort zone. But I promise that it will be well worth the effort. Since 1991, I have worked as a life coach for more than eight hundred highly successful clients in The 1% Club, and many thousands more in my public speaking events. I have used the principles you're about to learn to help people just like you revitalize their minds, get unstuck from disagreeable conditions, and go on to leave their unique mark on the world. In the chapters that follow, I'll show you how you might be snuffing out some of the light that God intended

to shine through your life. Then I will show you step-by-step how to think more like God and upgrade your potential for joy. When you live in alignment with the 4:8 Principle, you beget a series of positive life changes in you and those you love for generations to come.

In the pages that follow, I'll challenge you to *discover*, *develop*, and *defend* your joy. In each of these sections, you will find field-tested strategies, sensible suggestions, and sustainable approaches to living a joy-filled life. Beginning today, you'll learn how to

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- Create a fresh start
- Upgrade your “joy software”
- Eliminate destructive emotions
- Develop immunity to negative influences
- Express exceptional gratitude.

I wrote *The 4:8 Principle* to propel you into new ways of thinking, speaking, and acting. For the remainder of this book, think of me as your coach. My goal is to help you achieve your goals! Whether you are at a low point or a high point in your life, this book can help you get to the next level and beyond. It is joy by design—*God's design*.

Are you ready to be full of joy? This is the time. Today is the day. Let's get started!



Finally, brethren,
whatever things are true,
whatever things are noble,
whatever things are just,
whatever things are pure,
whatever things are lovely,
whatever things are of good report,
if there is any virtue and
if there is anything praiseworthy—
meditate on these things.

PHILIPPIANS 4:8 (NKJV)



PART ONE



THINK ON THESE THINGS

Discovering Your Joy

LIFE AS IT WAS MEANT TO BE

Discovering the Secret to a Joy-Filled Life

If you only care enough for a result, you will almost certainly attain it. Only you must then really wish these things, and wish them exclusively, and not wish at the same time a hundred other incompatible things just as strongly.

– William James

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What is the secret to a joy-filled life? Does such a thing even exist? Since the beginning of time, mankind has searched just about everywhere in hopes of finding out this secret. Today, most people are trying to find joy in something or someone outside of themselves. But where exactly did God place this secret to a joy-filled life? Is it possible that our heavenly Father branded joy onto the very fiber of our being? I think God gave all of us a shot at experiencing the proactive happiness I call joy. After all, we are his most beloved creation.

As humans, we search for joy in all the wrong places. And what we receive is just a sporadic sampling, a fraction of the real deal, a clever counterfeit to genuine joy. We look outside, not inside. The secret to a joy-filled life is so close, so obvious, that inside is often the last place we look. We search everywhere but within.

Living with joy is our birthright. It is God's intention for all his children. In 1 Thessalonians, the apostle Paul writes,

“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (5:16-18, NIV). As children of God, we are rightful heirs to the blessing of overflowing joy. God has declared us worthy. As a result, we have a calling, a responsibility to express and demonstrate joy by the way we live.

Being joy filled does not mean that your life is perfect. Who could claim that? It doesn’t even mean that your life is great. What it does mean is that you emphatically trust God and believe that he has great plans for your life, regardless of what is happening right now. Joy is the infectious and uncontainable fruit of divinely inspired growth. It’s a deeply entrenched, unshakable belief, the result of sustained right thinking and dwelling on the nature and character of God.

Joy is an outward sign of inward faith in the promises of God. It is a way of acting, and it is evidence of spiritual maturity. Joy is not a distant destination at which you arrive; rather, it’s a path you choose to travel each day.

Joy is the sum and substance of emotional health. It is a state of mind that must be deliberately cultivated if you are determined to live and love and influence others as God intended. How do you cultivate joy? To begin with, you make the decision never again to settle for anything less than real joy. Independent of outer conditions, joy is the result of practicing what I call the 4:8 Principle. We’ll talk about that more in the next chapter.

My two oldest boys have figured out that I am not the most complex guy in the world. When we’re playing capture the flag with their friends, I often hide the flag out in the open, almost in plain view. You guessed it—for a long

time it's the last place any of the kids look. When playing hide-and-seek, I'll often hide in the same spot two or three times in a row, consistently escaping detection (at least for a little while). Our human nature, with an assist from modern culture, promotes the idea that solutions must be deep and complicated to be valuable. In most cases, nothing could be further from the truth. Lasting solutions are surprisingly simple. **Joy is within us, but it must be released.**

Keep Your Thoughts Fixed on God!

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Mental discipline is the ability to keep your thoughts consistently focused. When you use the 4:8 Principle as the filter for your thinking, you focus on God and goodness to the exclusion of all else. As a result, you will begin to develop mental strength. With high levels of mental discipline, you'll reach your goals faster, upgrade your potential for joy, and become a lot more fun to be around. When you keep your thoughts fixed on God, the things of God will naturally permeate your life, and thus your goals will be in line with his will and his kingdom. Virtually any meaningful goal is within reach when you become mentally disciplined. Without the positive focus demanded by the 4:8 Principle, even relatively easy goals become a strain to reach.

With weak mental muscles, the existence of joy in your life is random and unpredictable. Mental laziness slowly dissolves your potential for joy—first privately, in your thoughts, and then publicly, coming out in your actions and circumstances. The concept of mental discipline may sound scary or even intimidating, but a life without mental discipline is far more daunting. It may be a challenge, but you'll find

that the 4:8 Principle is simple enough for even a child to learn. Even better news is that there is no need to be perfect. After all, perfection doesn't really exist apart from God. All you have to do is concentrate on progress. So as you read the upcoming pages, stop trying to be flawless, and instead, focus on daily improvement.

By deliberately working to improve your mental game, you will steadily upgrade every area of your life. Your family life will be more peaceful. You will hit your financial goals faster. With strong, toned mental muscles, you'll become more fit spiritually, emotionally, relationally, and physically. And along the way, you'll begin to enjoy life as it was meant to be—full of the joy that comes from trusting in God's promises.

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What Can You Do?

When my son Ty was eight years old, he broke his right arm after his first football practice. He had been so excited after his first day of real contact that even before we got into the

The mind is its own
place and in itself can
make a heaven of hell;
a hell of heaven.

— John Milton

car to head home, he insisted on showing me, in slow motion, how he had learned to tackle. Unfortunately, he lost his balance and fell backward on his right arm, creating a buckle fracture

just above his wrist. According to his doctor, Ty would have to be in a cast for at least six weeks to give the bone time to fully heal, and he would likely miss most of the games. This was not a good start to the fall.

After the initial disappointment, Ty seemed to be handling the setback fairly well. Then a couple of days later, while riding home from church, he went into a negative spiral, reciting everything he could not do with only one good arm. He was very thorough, even though his mother, Kristin, and I tried to interrupt him several times to break the self-defeating mental momentum.

When we arrived back at our house, I asked Ty to join me in my study for a few minutes. "Ty, don't you think there are lots of things you can still do, even with your broken right arm?" I asked.

"No, not the really good things," he replied skeptically.

"All right then," I said, "I'm going to give you a quick exercise, like I do in The 1% Club, that will show you how much you really can do."

Because he had no choice, Ty agreed to participate—unenthusiastically.

"Ty," I said, "write down twenty-one things you can still do with just one arm, and we'll be done."

With a curious look, Ty responded, "Dad, I'm in a cast. I can't write."

"Oh, that's right," I said with a laugh, wishing we could start over. "Then you talk, Ty, and I'll write for you."

So Ty started talking, and I started writing. Slowly, with some prodding, the first few answers came. He could read books, ride his bike, watch TV, and play video games. Those things triggered even more ideas. Ty continued, "I could hike or run. I could play in my tree house. I could go to the movies, eat popcorn, and have M&M's. I could still do science experiments. I could do sit-ups, take a bath, and make my

bed.” As we approached the goal of twenty-one ideas, I was writing as fast as I could.

“Okay, that’s twenty-one,” I confirmed to Ty.

“Keep writing, Dad. I want to do some more,” he said, no longer annoyed with the exercise.

Finally, with thirty-five answers, Ty was ready to stop. I handed him the list he had dictated and asked him to read it aloud. As he read, I could see the excitement growing. There really were a lot of things a kid could still do with a broken arm.

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“Can I go show Mom my list?” Ty asked.

“Sure,” I said, “but let me ask you one more question first. Ty, do you think we could have made just as long a list of the things you can’t do with a broken arm?” I asked, hoping to create a coachable moment.

“Yes,” he quickly answered, “but why in the world would we want to do that?”

“Good point,” I said as I enjoyed his smile. “Go show Mom.”

Over the next few days, I have to admit that Ty and I repeated an abbreviated version of that exercise several times whenever his attitude took a dive. Within a minute or two, though, Ty’s mind-set quickly shifted back into positive gear. As the tension faded, you could see the joy return. Ty was learning how to win the battle of his mind and starting to understand the secret to a joy-filled life.

Your Thoughts Are Showing

Almost everything that happens to you, good or bad, originates with a single thought. Neuroscientists can now dem-

onstrate that every thought sends electrical and chemical signals throughout your brain, ultimately affecting each cell in your body. Thoughts can influence your sleep, your digestion, your pulse, the chemical makeup of your blood, and all other bodily functions.

The secret conversations you hold in the privacy of your own mind are shaping your destiny, little by little.

With every thought that races through your mind, you are continually reinventing yourself and your future. Research indicates that the average person thinks approximately fifty thousand thoughts per day. This is either good or bad news because every thought moves you either toward your God-given potential or away from it. No thoughts are neutral.

Whatever you direct your mind to think about will ultimately be revealed for everyone to see. Remind yourself with a smile that *“my thoughts are showing.”* See, you have two options: By your manner of thinking, you can draw out the best in yourself and others, or you can draw out the worst. **What you persistently think eventually but**

The outer world of circumstance shapes itself to the inner world of thought, and both pleasant and unpleasant external conditions are factors which make for the ultimate good of the individual. As the reaper of his own harvest, man learns both by suffering and bliss.
– James Allen

inevitably crystallizes into the words you speak and then the things you do.

Every thought you have shifts your life in a particular direction, sometimes in a minor way and sometimes in a major way. Every individual thought matters. Unfortunately, approximately 90 percent of the thoughts you have today are repeats from yesterday and the day before. This is the primary reason why effecting permanent, positive life improvement tends to be met with such stiff resistance in most people.

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If your aim is to maximize your potential for joy, you must first discipline yourself mentally. This is your responsibility, something for which you must immediately take ownership. Do your part now so that God can honor your faith and empower you to live a life of excellence. Think the thoughts you would think if you trusted God's promises completely. Make the shift from random, reactive thinking to deliberate, purpose-driven thinking. You have authority over your thoughts, but God will not force you to exercise this aspect of your free will any more than he will compel you to exercise regularly, eat a healthy diet, read the Bible, or wear your seat belt. Right thinking is a choice you have to make for yourself the rest of your life. If you are committed, you can select your thoughts and thereby shape your life here on earth into something spectacular. The alternative is to give up this freedom and live a life of mediocrity dominated by uncertainty and suspense. This may sound harsh at first, but I know it is the truth—and I suspect you do as well.

In Romans 12:2, we are taught that transformation is the result of a renewed mind. The apostle Paul writes, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be

1: LIFE AS IT WAS MEANT TO BE

transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (NIV). The idea is that you have to retrain your thoughts and feelings if you want to experience God's ideal for your life and get the most out of every moment of every day. Unfortunately, most people struggle to change or renew their circumstances (lose weight, fix their marriage, make more money), when they should be asking God to help them renew their minds. When our minds are renewed, circumstances take care of themselves.

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The happiness which brings enduring worth to life is not the superficial happiness that is dependent on circumstances. It is the happiness and contentment that fills the soul even in the midst of the most distressing circumstances and the most bitter environment. It is the kind of happiness that grins when things go wrong and smiles through the tears. The happiness for which our souls ache is one undisturbed by success or failure, one which will root deeply inside us and give inward relaxation, peace, and contentment, no matter what the surface problems may be. That kind of happiness stands in need of no outward stimulus.

– Billy Graham

The secret to living an exceptional life *tomorrow* is purely a matter of thinking strong, joyful thoughts *today*. It is the net result of programming your mind with the kind of high-quality ideas and boundless possibilities that will set you free and allow you to soar and thrive as God intends. I can't overemphasize the importance of developing mental discipline. The battle you wage against your human nature is an invisible one that will be won or lost in the mind. Minute by minute, hour by hour, in the hidden workshop of your mind, you are constructing thoughts of good or evil, depression or joy, success or failure. You are writing your own life story as a human being with each subtle and soundless thought you think.

The Gift of the Present

Did you know that you cannot be joy filled without thinking thoughts of joy? You cannot worry without thinking worrisome thoughts. You cannot be afraid without thinking thoughts of fear. Can you remember a time when you were thinking of hope and happiness but felt depressed at the same time? Can you imagine acting loving while thinking bitter thoughts of anger and resentment? While thinking, you have only the present moment. All you have is *now*. Think of it as the gift of the present! A blissful memory is experienced as present joy. A gloomy memory is experienced as present pain. As a result, **thinking, talking, and worrying about what you *don't* want can never bring you what you *do* want.**

The importance of right thinking is emphasized throughout the Old and New Testaments. In Proverbs, we are taught

that “as [a person] thinks in his heart, so is he” (23:7, NKJV) and also that we must “keep [our] heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life” (4:23, NKJV). Protecting our minds from negative input will be the focus of part three.

In Job 3:25, we are warned that the things we intensely fear have a tendency to become reality. And Jesus repeatedly reminds us that what we receive will be the result of what we believe. He underscores this point in the Sermon on the Mount when he teaches that even to think lustful thoughts is a sin, yet if “your eye is good, your whole body is filled with light” (Matthew 6:22, NLT). In Matthew 15:18, we’re taught that people are defiled or made unclean by what is in their hearts—in other words, by the way they think. Jesus knew well that persistent thoughts eventually lead to action. So did Paul, who encourages us to “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5, NIV). Can you imagine a negative, cynical, self-defeating, or “woe is me” thought being obedient to Jesus Christ?

Finally, in the great simplicity of truth, James sums it up when he writes that one who doubts is “a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8, NKJV). Being duplicitous or impure in your thinking is really the opposite of being mentally disciplined. It’s like praying for sunshine and then grabbing your umbrella as you walk out the door. It is forgiving your spouse for a grievance and then repeatedly rehashing it in your mind. It is hoping for the best and secretly fearing the worst. It is the inability to direct your thoughts in a deliberate, preconceived direction. Though God’s grace doesn’t demand mental discipline, living a life of excellence must be preceded by it.

God designed your mind to be immensely powerful. This mental resource is one of the most wonderful blessings from our Creator. Even better, as part of your free will, he gave you command over your mind. This does not mean you *must* use this power, but it is available. This dominion over your thought life can be used to maximize your God-given potential, or it can be misused or even ignored. **The way you think can either multiply or shrink your gifts and talents.** How are you doing in this area? Up to this point in your life, have you been a faithful steward of your mental life?

The Bible clearly teaches that you will “reap what you sow.” This is so simple that it is almost embarrassing to mention; however, it can be difficult to put into practice. We sow first, and then we reap. Nowhere is this more apparent than in our thinking. In Galatians 6:7 we are told, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (NKJV). In 2 Corinthians 9:6, we are warned that if we sow sparingly, we will naturally also reap sparingly, but if we sow bountifully, we shall also reap bountifully. Our thoughts, like our actions, have consequences. **As relentlessly as you may try, you cannot think one thing and experience something else.** You cannot think critically about your spouse, even if you believe it is warranted, and reap true intimacy. You cannot think negatively and live positively any more than you can plant apple seeds and expect to harvest oranges. If you desire to live a joy-filled life—a life that fulfills God’s purpose for you—you must keep your thoughts fixed on the things of God.

In chapter 2, you will learn how to create a fresh start and begin reaping the fruit of joyful thinking.

A Prayer for Joy

Lord,

Thank you for all the goodness in my life and the great plans you have for me, my family, and my future. I praise you for my healthy mind and the power you have instilled in my thoughts. Thanks especially for the freedom you have given me to select my thoughts and thereby influence my state of mind and my circumstances.

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Help me to accept responsibility for my thinking. Lead me, moment by moment, to choose joyful thoughts that line up with the vision you have for my life. Protect me from searching for joy in all the wrong places, and inspire me to enjoy the gift of this present moment.

In Jesus' name,

Amen

This One Thing I Do . . .

Beginning today, I increase my *potential for joy* by identifying in writing one circumstance that I would like to improve and the change in thinking that must precede it.

YOU ARE WHAT YOU THINK!

*May we shout for joy when we hear of your victory
and raise a victory banner in the name of our God.
May the LORD answer all your prayers.*

Psalm 20:5 (NLT)

Well done!

Now that you've reached the end of *The 4:8 Principle*, I want to give you an action plan and some additional tools to make it even easier for you to put the principles you've been learning into practice—sooner rather than later. Most important, you will find some extra resources in this Afterword to help you sustain your progress.

The first step to better thinking and a joy-filled existence here on earth is to become aware of your thought life. Most people are simply swept up in the turbulent current of reactive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Essentially unaware of the connection between their state of mind and their circumstances, they passively live out a frustratingly repetitive life script that eventually causes them to settle for far less than their God-given best. This is *not* for you—especially now that you've learned the 4:8 Principle!

Whatever your life is like right now, you can get to the next level if you truly think you can. Your potential for joy

is limited only by your level of commitment to think joyful thoughts most of the time. But before you'll see improvement, you must change your thinking. Any other type of change will be only temporary.

In a very real sense, you are what you think you are. Start, then, by changing your thought life. Renew your mind! Fortunately, it can be quite simple when you organize your efforts around the 4:8 Principle.

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In the Introduction, I mentioned that I wrote *The 4:8 Principle* to propel you into new ways of thinking, speaking, and acting. Now that you've read the book, in what ways are you already looking at your world a little differently? In what ways are you filtering your circumstances through the 4:8 Principle? As your coach, allow me to challenge you to take just a moment to evaluate your grasp of the 4:8 Principle with the quick review that follows. After reading the questions for each chapter, rate your understanding on a scale of 1–10 (with 10 being the highest level). You'll find these summary questions great for a small-group study as well.

PART ONE

Think on These Things

Discovering Your Joy

— CHAPTER 1 | Life as It Was Meant to Be: *Discovering the Secret to a Joy-Filled Life*

What is the secret to a joy-filled life? In what ways do many people search for joy in all the wrong places? Why is it important to demonstrate joy in the way we run our lives? Why do you choose the thoughts that you think? Up to this point, have you been a faithful steward of your mental life? How so, exactly?

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— CHAPTER 2 | A New Beginning: *Focusing on What Produces Joy*

Why is it so common to tell ourselves destructive things? What would you have to give up to start thinking more consistently in accordance with Philippians 4:8? Can you name some improvements in your life that do not first involve changed thinking? How is it possible to see opportunities where there were previously only problems? How could you use 4:8 Questions to discipline your mind?

— CHAPTER 3 | Wow, That's Me!: *Embracing Your God-Given Identity*

How does your self-concept influence your potential for joy? Where does a mediocre self-concept come from? What is your self-ideal, and how is it relevant to the 4:8 Principle? In what ways could you override past negative programming?