

# renew your mind

THE BIBLE & MENTAL HEALTH



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Horizon Baptist Church

1/15/23-3/26/23

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# The Path to Mental Health

## Romans 8:28-29; Psalm 1:1-3; Romans 12:1-2

### Introduction

Today we begin our first message in our new series entitled “Renew Your Mind: The Bible and Mental Health.”

It’s important for us to know what the Scripture says about this topic because it is a struggle that a lot of people are facing in the world today.

In the US

- More than 50% of people will be diagnosed with some kind of mental health condition at some point in their life.
- In any given year, 1 in 5 Americans will undergo a serious struggle with their mental health. (CDC)

Illustrations of my own struggles

- I became the pastor here at Horizon back in June of 2020, and in the second half of that year I had some intense struggles of my own dealing with stress.
- Liz and I were first time parents and I was a first time pastor trying to figure out what both of those meant in terms of roles, responsibilities, and rhythm. We had sold our house to move into an apartment. We had moved cities. We had left behind in Lancaster everyone and everything that we knew.
- As I was trying to navigate all of these changes and figure out how to be a new dad and a new pastor in a new city with new people, I was doing all of it at the outset of Covid during the most challenging crisis organizational leaders have faced in 100 years.
- I was so stressed and anxious. I was dealing with major heart palpitations to the point that I actually went and saw a cardiologist. I actually wore a heart monitor for two weeks. I preached with it on for a couple of weeks.
- Since that point in time, I’ve made a lot of changes both physically and spiritually that have made a major difference in my life.

By the way, there is an integral connection between your body and your mind. Things like eating wrong, not sleeping enough, not exercising, and consuming too much caffeine can wreak havoc on your body and your mind.

- My cardiologist explained that to me, and I have made some physical changes that have helped me over the course of the last couple of years, but I've also made some spiritual changes based on the Word of God that have been game changers for me in my spiritual and mental health.

That is going to be the focus of our series over the course of the next few months.

Today, we're going to lay the foundation for the series by learning about what the Scripture says is the path to mental health.

As we study that path this morning, we're going to see that for the Christian that path is found first and foremost in the example of Christ.

## Sermon

### 1.) The Example of Christ

Look at what the Bible say in Romans 8:28-29

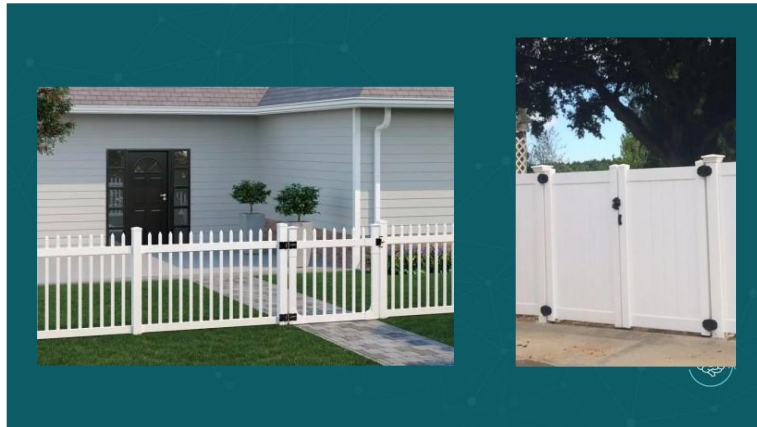
Romans 8:28-29 - 28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be **conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

- The path to mental health for the Christian is found in the example of Christ. Why? Because, for the Christian, the path to health in **every area** of our lives is found in the example of Christ. He, as the God man, is the perfect example/the perfect picture of what it looks like for us to live our lives in the way that God designed us to.
- And the more that we bring our thoughts, words, and actions into alignment with the example of Christ (which is what sanctification is), the more healthy we will be in every area of our life. Why? Because in so doing we are living our lives in accordance with how we were designed, and Jesus Christ is the perfect picture of what that design looks like.
  - o Illustration – if you took your car and you filled up the gas tank with pickle juice, what do you think would happen to that car? It would mess it all up. It wouldn't work. Why? Because you're not operating your car in accordance with the way it was designed.
  - o What's true of that car is true of your life. The path to health is found in living our lives in accordance with God's design for us, and that design is found and foremost in the example of Jesus Christ.
  - o He is the picture/the example/the prototype that we want to model our lives after.



Illustration – About a year ago, Liz and I purchased our home here in Camarillo. When you purchase a home, one of the first things you do is typically engage in some kind of renovation project.

- For me, the big one that I wanted to do at our new home was install a fence across the middle of our front yard.
  - o 4 ft picket fence across the grass
  - o Picket gate across the walkway
  - o 6 ft privacy double gate across the front of the carport
  - o It would give us more yard for the girls to play in and create more private hosting space for us under the carport
- So what did I do?
  - o I planned. I measured, and I purchased the fence materials.
  - o When the materials arrived, guess what? They did not come preassembled. They came in a box with two resources provided to help me construct that fence.
    - You know what the first resource was? It was a picture...a picture of what the end result was supposed to look like.



- - Don't you love it when stuff comes with a picture? That picture is helpful because as you're putting the materials together, if what you are building starts to look more and more like that picture of the finished product, you know that you're on the right path.
  - Application: in the same way, do you realize that as a Christian, in the renovation project of your life, God has provided you with a picture of

the finished product looks like? You know what that picture is? It's Jesus Christ. The more you become like Jesus in every area of your life, the more you are headed in the right direction, and the more healthy you will be. Why? Because you are building your life in accordance with God's design, and Jesus is the perfect picture of what that design looks like for the human race.

Romans 13:8-14

8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

Owe no man anything. - don't place yourself in a situation where you are continuously indebted to another. You shouldn't place yourself in situations where you are going to continuously owe another person money.

- That state of continual financial obligation to our neighbor is one we should avoid. In contrast, we should but to love one another - whereas we shouldn't place ourselves in situations where we perpetually owe other's money, we should live our lives as if we are obligated to love one another.

Why?

For he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law - because if we lives our live that way, we will live in obedience to God's law.

"Just think about it...think about some of God's laws..."

9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

All of these laws of God for how we should relate to one another are really summarized in what the Scriptures say in Leviticus 19:18 - ...thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Just think about it. If you love your neighbor, are you going to have an affair with his wife? If you love your neighbor, are you going to kill him? Steal from him? Lie about him? Become envious of him? No. All of these sins are rooted in selfish desires, and love is the opposite of that. Whereas sin is selfish, love is selfless.

That's Paul's point. All of these commands, these prohibitions, can really be summarized in the command to love your neighbor as yourself...because if you love your neighbor as yourself, you won't do any of these bad things to him.

10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Love worketh no ill to his neighbor – Love does not commit evil to his neighbor

Therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law – if you truly love your neighbor, you will fulfill God's commands for your life.

- If you love your neighbor, you won't sin against him.
- If you love your God, you won't sin against Him.

11 And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep – it's time to wake up. Why?

For now is our salvation nearer than we believed – the day of Jesus' return is fast approaching

12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

The night is far spent- night is almost over

The day is at hand – The day of the Lord's return is almost here

Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armour of light – as people of the day, as people of the light, let us cast off sinful deeds and live righteously.

- The cloak of darkness and the armour of light are metaphors for sinful and righteous living.
- We are people of the day. Let's act like it.

13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

Let us walk honestly, as in the day – let us build our lives in accordance with God's design as if the Lord had already returned

Not in rioting – wild partying.

And drunkenness, - which often goes hand in hand with wild partying

not in chambering – misconduct in the chamber/bedroom (sharing a bed with someone that's not your spouse)

and wantonness – sensuality

not in strife – contention/divisiveness

and envying – jealousy

Why? Because these behaviors are not in accordance with God's design. They're like putting pickle juice into the gas tank of your life. They're going to mess you all up.

Instead of engaging in this kind of destructive behavior, you should...

14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ – clothe yourself with Christ. Live like Jesus.

- Build your life in accordance with the picture that we have in Jesus Christ. For the closer you get to that picture the closer you will get to God's design for your life and the healthier you will be.

For the Christian, the path to health in our lives begins with the example/picture of Jesus Christ, but praise be to God, that is not the only supernatural resource that God has provided us with in the renovation project of our lives. He has also provided us with the...

## 2.) The Instructions of Scripture

Psalm 1:1-3

1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

- Blessed, happy, healthy harmonious is the one who does not live his life in opposition to God's design...but rather...

2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

- Blessed is the one who lives his life in accordance with God's design.
  - o That design is found not only in the example of Christ, but also in the instructions of Scripture: the law of the Lord...the owner's manual.

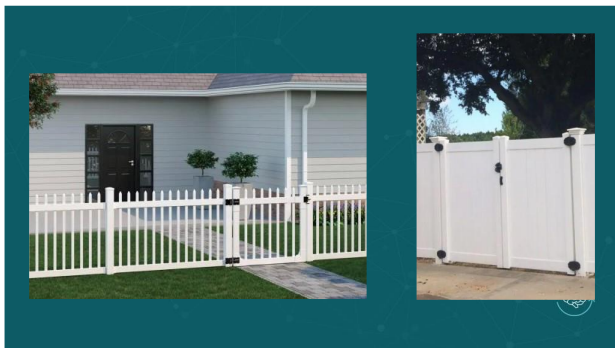


3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

- The path to health for the Christian is found in building our lives in accordance with the example of Christ and the instructions of Scripture.
- Jesus is the picture of the finished product found on the outside of the box.
- The Bible is the instruction manual we find on the inside of the box.



Illustration – when I purchased the fencing materials for my home renovation project, I was thankful for the picture of what the finished product was supposed to look like.



That was really helpful!! I needed that...but I was also very, very thankful for the instruction manual I found inside of the box.



Why? Because that manual that gave me step by step instructions from the designer on how to assemble those raw materials so that I would end up with the finished product.

Application – in the same way, the Bible is our manual from the designer with step by step instructions on how to assemble our lives. What a precious gift! What a supernatural resource.

It's remarkable to me that in the Bible, the most important chapter on the nature of the Word of God just so happens to also be the longest chapter in the Word of God: Psalm 119. It's 176 verses of love, praise, and appreciation for the instruction manual of our lives.

### Psalm 119

- 11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.
  - o God's instruction manual keeps us from sin. It keeps us from operating our lives in contrast with how we were designed.
- 72 The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.
  - o This supernatural manual is more precious than the most precious commodities this world can offer.
- 73 Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.
  - o This manual contains instructions from the all knowing and all wise designer Himself.
- 97 O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.
  - o This manual for our lives should be the focal point of our thoughts.
- 103 How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!
  - o The manual is an easy and enjoyable read.
    - It doesn't just contain instructions. It contains poetry, history, sermons and stories.
- 105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.
  - o This manual provides us with direction for the renovation project of our lives.
- 161 Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word. 162 I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.
  - o It is the greatest treasure you could ever find...the instruction manual for your life that you hold in your lap.

Application – I don't know where you are at in your life this morning, but can I ask you a very serious question? Have you ever read the instruction manual?

- Illustration – Honda CRV manual
  - o I don't mean, "Have you read part of the instruction manual?" I mean, "Have you read the instruction manual?"
- How can you believe that this is the instruction manual for your life and not be actively reading it on a daily basis?
- I'm a huge believer in daily bible reading and bible reading plans.
- Application – how do I get started?
  - o Download the Youversion Bible app.

- Choose one of their read through the Bible in a year plans.
- It would take you ten minutes a day to read through your Bible in a year.

The path to health is found in the example of Christ (the picture of the finished product on the outside of the box) and the instructions of Scripture (the owners manual on the inside of the box).

Ok, that's great Pastor, but what does that have to do with mental health? It has everything to do with mental health. For in both the example of Christ and the instructions of Scripture, God has provided us with a manual for how to operate our minds through a process that it refers to as the renewing of your mind.

### 3.) The Renewing of Your Mind

Romans 12:1-2 - I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the **renewing of your mind**, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

- Ephesians 4:22-24 - 22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; 23 And be **renewed in the spirit of your mind**; 24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.
- Col. 3:9-10 - 9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; 10 And have put on the new man, which is **renewed in knowledge after the image of him** that created him:
- 2 Cor. 10:3-5 - 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and **bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ**;

Do you realize that your mind is a battleground of spiritual warfare? It's a battleground of spiritual warfare because Satan realizes how just important it is.

- It's important because it defines you.
  - You are not merely what you do. You are what you think.
  - But don't take my word for it. The Scripture says in...
  - Proverbs 23:7 - For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he
- It's important because it directs you.
  - Your life is headed in the trajectory of your strongest beliefs and thought habits, and there is a battle for your mind because your mind is the seat of your behavior.

- Proverbs 4:23 - Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.
- Luke 6:45 - A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

Your mind is a battleground of spiritual warfare because Satan realizes how important it is, but it is also a battleground of spiritual warfare that Satan attacks with lies.

- John 8:44 – he is a liar, and the father of lies
- Satan knows that he doesn't first and foremost need to change your behavior. He just needs to change your mind because he knows that if he can change your mind, he can change your behavior.
  - It's the same playbook that he used going all the way back to the garden of Eden.
  - Satan influenced Eve's behavior by first changing her mind/by changing her beliefs...and he did it by lying to her.
  - God said, "Don't eat of the fruit. If you eat of it, you'll die." Eve knew that, and yet when Eve told that to Satan, how did he respond? He lied to her. He changed her mind based on a lie, and when she ate that fruit in disobedience to God she did so because she had chosen to believe the lies of Satan over the truth of what God had said.
  - What Satan did to Eve is what he and his forces seek to do to you every single day.
  - They whisper lies in your head as a battle strategy in an attempt to get you to think and believe and live in accordance with Satan's lies instead of God's truth.
  - Renewing your mind (which is going to be our focus over the course of this series) is the process of recognizing those lies, repenting of them, and replacing them with truth of God's Word.
    - It's the process of reprogramming our minds to think in accordance with the example of Christ and the truth of Scripture, rather than in accordance with the lies of Satan.
    - I'm a big believer that a lot of the mental issues Christians are struggling with today are the direct result of them believing and living in bondage to Satan's lies and not even realizing it.
      - They believe it because they think these thoughts in their head, and because they hear it in their own voice they assume that it's true.
      - Can I tell you something this morning folks? I think things in my head that are not true all the time, and as Christians we need to take hold of those thoughts and bring them into

subjection to Christ so that we might cast down these stronghold of Satan that have been built in our minds.

- Illustration – I think that the easiest way to discover the lies we believe is to start with the behaviors they express themselves in.

**BEHAVIOR** – obsessively worrying about the future

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- Behavior – incessantly worrying about the future
  - Constantly finding yourself mentally not in the present but in the future thinking through some problem, imagining what you would do if this or that went wrong.
  - That’s the behavior, and we think that the behavior is the primary problem...but the truth is that behavior is the fruit of the real root issue.
  - The real root issue is the lie we believe that expresses itself in that behavior. What’s the lie? Now your headed in the right direction.

**BEHAVIOR** – obsessively worrying about the future

**LIE** – I can’t trust God for the future

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- Lie - I can’t trust God for the future. I need to be in control.
  - Your behavior is an expression of your belief. One of the most important steps in the process of renewing your mind is recognizing the lies Satan has deceived you into believing and then replacing it with truth.
  - Satan says that I can’t trust God for the future. What does God say? What does the owner’s manual say?
    - Proverbs 3:5-6
    - Romans 8:28

**BEHAVIOR** – obsessively worrying about the future

**LIE** – I can't trust God for the future

**TRUTH** – I can trust God for the future (Prov. 3:5-6; Rom. 8:28)

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- Truth – I can trust God for the future (Prov. 3:5-6; Romans 8:28)
  - When you find yourself incessantly worrying about the future (that's the behavior), what do you do?
    - You recognize it – hold on. This is based on a lie from the devil.
    - You repent of it – Lord, I'm not going to believe the devil's lies.
    - You replace it – Lord, I can trust you for the future because Proverbs 3:5-6 says....”
  - If you will do this over and over again, choosing to believe the truth of God over the lies of the devil, physiologically, it will literally rewire the neural pathways in your brain and change the way that you think...and by extension, it will change your life.

## Application

The path from here



To here



For you up here (point to head)...is found in the renewing of your mind...the process of bringing your thoughts into alignment with example of Christ and the instructions of Scripture.

My heart's desire for our church as we navigate this series is that we build our minds and our thinking, not on the lies of the devil, but on the truth of God's Word.

# STUDY QUESTIONS

## applying inward

*1.) What resonated most with you from the sermon this past Sunday? How can you practically apply the sermon to your life this week?*

## digging deeper

*2.) Read 2 Cor. 10:3-5. How does this passage of Scripture combine the themes of spiritual warfare and controlling our thought life?*

*3.) Read Matthew 4:1-11. How did Jesus respond to the temptation of Satan in the wilderness? How did his response contrast with Adam and Eve's?*

## looking ahead

*4.) Read Eph. 3:13-21. What happens in this passage of Scripture? Is there anything that sticks out to you? What is something new in this passage that you may have not noticed before?*

*5.) Think application. How does Eph. 3:13-21 practically apply to our lives today? What lessons can we learn from it?*



# The Power for Mental Health

## Ephesians 3:13-16; 4:12-16

### Review

Last week we began laying the foundation for our series by discussing the path to mental health. We saw that in the renovation project of our lives, the path to health is found by living in accordance with how God designed us...and that design can be found in the example of Christ and the instructions of Scripture. We used my fence renovation project as an illustration.

Jesus is like the picture of the finished product on the outside of the box and the Scriptures are like the step by step instruction manual found on the inside of the box.

As we build our lives in accordance with the Scriptures, we should find ourselves more and more like the finished product, like Jesus Christ...and we should find ourselves more healthy. Why? Because we're living in accordance with how God designed us.

That naturally lead us to the question last week: "What do the example of Christ and the instructions of Scripture" tell us about how we should operate our minds in particular?" We went to Romans 12:2 where the Scripture says to not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of our minds: the process of recognizing the lies of the devil ingrained into our thinking and replacing them with the truth of Scripture...and we're going to talk more in depth about that process in the coming weeks.

### Introduction

But for today we are going to continue to lay the foundation for our series by adding on to our study of the path to mental health a message on the power for mental health.

Why does that matter? Why don't we just go to the practical stuff? Why is this so important that you're devoting an entire message to it in this series? Let me tell you why. You could have all the knowledge in the world about what you need to do to get from where you are to where God wants you to be in your life, but if you don't believe that you have the ability to take those steps, none of it will make a difference.

Illustration – Back in the 1950s a biologist by the name of Dr. Curt Richter conducted a survival experiment with rats at Harvard University. He would place them in a container of water with no escape to study how long they could tread water before they would give up and drown. In his initial round of testing, they would on average last about 15 minutes before they gave up and began to sink. But when the rats gave up and began to sink, the

researchers would rescue them, dry them off, and allow them to rest for a few minutes...and then, having rescued them, they would put them back in a second time to see how long they would last. After having been rescued on the first go around, do you know how long those rats treaded water on average the second time around? Not 15 minutes. Not 30 minutes. But 60 hours...Why? The research team concluded that because the rats believed that they would be pulled out of the container eventually, they were able to survive significantly longer. Hope. Belief. Faith.

Henry Ford – Whether you think you can or you think you can't. Either way, you're typically right.

The devil will do anything he possibly can to get you to believe that you can't do it. The lie he tells us as Christians is based on a half truth, because in our own strength we can't do what God wants us to...but the good news is that we don't have to do it in our own strength, because God has provided us with supernatural resources for Christian living.

Just as we saw last week that the path to health in our lives is found primarily in two places (i.e. the example of Christ and the instructions of Scripture), so too today we are going to discover that the power we need to build our lives in accordance with God's design can be found in two primary locations...the first of which is the Holy Spirit within us.

### 1.) The Holy Spirit Within Us

If you don't believe that you can get from where you are to where God wants you to be through the power of His Spirit within you, then you are living in bondage to a lie of the devil.

2 Timothy 1:7 - 7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Folks, we aren't just saved by faith. As Christians, we live by faith. We are a people of faith. We are a people of hope... not in ourselves but in God's mighty power which works among us and within us.

In the renovation project of our lives, the Holy Spirit provides us with the power we need to build our lives in accordance with the example of Christ and the instructions of Scripture.

Take your Bibles and turn over to Ephesians 3 this morning.

## **Ephesians 3:13-16**

When Paul wrote this, he was imprisoned in Rome.

13 Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory – don't allow my imprisonment, my sufferings on your behalf (for your good) to discourage you

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

For this cause – because I don't want you to get discouraged and give up

I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ – I pray intentionally and fervently to God the Father

- Paul was concerned for the Ephesians. So what did he do? Did he fret? Did he worry? No. He prayed for them to the Father of Jesus Christ

15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

Of whom (Jesus) the whole family in heaven and earth is named – As *Christians*, we all bear the name of Jesus Christ. Through Jesus we have been brought into a new family (i.e. the family of God) and been given a new name (i.e. Christian).

Because I don't want you to get discouraged... Because I don't want you to lose hope... Because I don't want you to give up I have prayed to God the Father...

16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory – in accordance with the riches of his majesty and greatness

Look at what he prayed for.

To be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man – Let me tell you something. I pray through our church every week, and there have been a number of you that I have prayed this prayer for specifically. Paul prayed that whereas circumstances and disappointments and pressures from without might tempt them to quit, that God through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit within them would strengthen them with might, with power, with resolve so that they would continue.

- Do you realize this morning that if you are a Christian, you have a supernatural power source within you that never runs out? The Holy Spirit of God. The moment you got saved, God's Holy Spirit regenerated you (Titus 3:5) and took up permanent residence inside of you (Romans 8:9). Now that He lives within you, He empowers you, He strengthens you, He guides you, He directs you. He convicts you when you sin. He comforts you when you grieve. He assists you when you pray. He equips you when you serve. He emboldens you when you witness. Through His power and direction and leading in your life, God has provided you with everything you need to be and do what God has called you to.
- Don't tell me you can't when God says that you can. Ephesians 3:20 says that God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we could ever ask or think according to the power that worketh within us, and you need to believe that! The problem is not that we don't have the power to be and do what God has called us to do. The

problem is when we try to do those things in our own power without relying on the Holy Spirit.



Illustration – Let me illustrate this for you this morning by once more referring back to my fence project. In that renovation project, I had the raw materials and I had resources to help me know how to assemble those materials. I had a picture of the finished product, and I had the instructions...but in order to follow those instructions, the manual assumed that I had access to some power tools that would enable me to get the job done.

- Examples
  - o Fence Post Driver – to drive posts into the ground
  - o Impact driver – to drill holes and screw things together
  - o Table Saw – to cut wood and posts and size the fence to my yard
  - o Level
  - o Measuring Tape
- The instructions assumed that I had access to these tools that would enable me to follow the instructions...but can you imagine what it would have been like if I had tried to build this fence with nothing but my own two hands?
  - o If I had tried to drive the posts in by hand
  - o If I had tried to drill the holes and tighten the screws with my fingers
  - o If I had tried to cut the wood and the posts by hand
  - o It would have maddening and frustrating and impossible, and friend that is what it is like to try to live the Christian life in your strength, in your flesh, with nothing but your own two hands. It's not possible, and it is frustrating beyond belief.
  - o Trying to do the Lords work in your own strength is the most confusing, exhausting, and tedious of all work. - Corrie Ten Boom
  - o But the good news is that you don't have to do it alone. God has provided you with the most substantial power tool in the history of the universe: the Holy Spirit of God inside of you...and through reliance on Him, you can build your life in accordance with the example of Christ and the instructions of Scripture.

Ephesians 6:10 - Finally, my brethren, be strong **in the Lord**, and in the **power of his might**.

- You need to believe that and obey it.

I don't know if you know this or not, but the Bible actually has a term for living our lives in reliance on the power of God's Spirit within us. In the Scriptures this is referred to "walking in the Spirit".

- Galatians 5:16 – Walk in the Spirit and you won't fulfill the lust of the flesh.
- Application: that all sounds great in theory, but what does that look like practically? How do you live each day in reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit?
  - o I'll tell you what I do. I pick up that power tool every morning. I come to God in prayer first thing in the morning and I say, "Holy Spirit, help me to live today in reliance on your power and leading and not my own."
- How do you know if you are living in reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit? Well, the Scripture tells us that when we are, we bear the fruit of the Spirit. We exemplify 9 character traits in our lives. What are they? They're found in Galatians 5:22-23.
  - o Love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith and temperance.
  - o What I'll do when I pray in the mornings is that I will pray through the fruit of the Spirit.
    - I'll pray, "Holy Spirit, help me to be reliant on you today. Help me to be loving, and then I'll look back and I'll ask myself the question: 'was I loving yesterday?' If I wasn't, I repent, and I ask for the Lord's help in doing better today. I'll do that for all nine of those character traits.

Are you building your life in reliance on the power of God's Spirit within you, or have you become discouraged and defeated trying to do it on your own?

Satan wants nothing more than for you as a Christian to live a defeated life.

**BEHAVIOR** – living a defeated life



Behavior – living a defeated life; giving up; quitting

And he'll get you there by tempting you to believe a lie..."you just can't do it."

Belief – I can't do it

**BEHAVIOR** – living a defeated life

**LIE** – I can't do it



And when those defeated and self-deprecating thoughts pop into your head, you respond to that lie with Ephesians 3:16, and you tell yourself, “Through the power of God’s Spirit, I can!”

**BEHAVIOR** – living the defeated life

**LIE** – I can't do it

**TRUTH** – through the power of God’s Spirit, I can (Eph. 3:16)



Truth – through God’s Spirit I can do it (Eph. 3:16)

In the Christian life, God has provided us with the path and power we need to build the raw materials of our lives in accordance with His design. The path is found in the example of Christ and the instructions of Scripture. The power is found (1) in the Holy Spirit within us and (2) in the Body of Christ around us.

## 2.) The Body of Christ Around Us

Ephesians 4:12-16 - 12 For the perfecting of the saints (*helping us become more like Jesus*), for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ (*the Bible describes all Christians collectively as fellow parts of the body of Christ with different functions*): 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: (*that’s the goal. We are collectively as Christians striving to become more and more like Jesus Christ*) 14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head,

even Christ: *(as we become more and more like Jesus, we are growing up spiritually together)*  
16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. *(the different members of the body of Christ are designed to help one another become more like Jesus).*

- In the renovation project of our lives, God has gifted us the Holy Spirit within us and the Body of Christ (the church) around us to help us become more like Jesus...to help us get from where we are to where God's want us to be.
- The spiritual renovation project of your life is a group assignment that you cannot complete isolated from other believers.
  - o Those who attempt to live the Christian life in isolation from other believers are just as foolish as those who attempt to live the Christian life without relying on the Holy Spirit.



Illustration – referring back once again to the fence illustration...when I assembled that fence, do you think I did it alone? Nope. I had a lot of help.

- I did measurements and drawings and planning, but before I moved forward with purchasing the materials, I ran those plans by Jim Bushong to get his thoughts.
- Then I called up Dig Alert (811) to make sure I wouldn't drive a post through a utility line.
  - o Water
  - o Power
  - o Gas
  - o Electric
  - o Cable
  - o They all came out and checked, and I'm glad they did.
- When the time came to actually construct the fence, my dad helped me with the picket gate and fence...and then Chris McPeters and my father in law helped me frame the carport and install the dual gates.
- It was a lot of work involving a lot of people, and I can honestly say that I could not have done it on my own.

Application: that is also true when it comes to living the Christian life. You cannot do it alone. You need the power of God's Spirit within you, but you also need the encouragement and support and accountability of other Christians around you. And that's not just me saying that either, God designed it to be that way going all the way back to creation.

Genesis 2:18 - 18 And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

- If you try to live your life in isolation from other people, you're not going to be healthy. Why? Because that's not how God designed you. God designed us as relational creatures: to be in relation with Him and with others.
  - o Some of you extrovert wierdos in the crowd take this to an extreme, but whether you're an introvert or an extrovert, all of us were designed to be in real relationships with other Christians.

The body of Christ (of which our church is a local expression) is not an accident. Jesus prayed for it in John 17:20-22. The Holy Spirit actualized it according to 1 Cor. 12:12-13, and now the Scripture commands us to be actively engaged with it by participating in a local gathering of other believers.

- Hebrews 10:24-25 - 24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.
- That command to be actively involved in and engaged with a local church is not incidental. That command is given by our designer because He knows that He designed us to be in relationship with one another, and He knows that we need the support and encouragement and accountability of other believers to become more like Jesus.
  - o Those who say they don't need the church are fools who think they know better than the God who designed them and designed the church.

In the body of Christ (the church)

- We find encouragement.
  - o Fellow Christians encourage us to walk the right path...to be more like Jesus.
- We find accountability.
  - o The church not only encourages us when we're on the right path. It calls us to repentance when we're on the wrong path.
  - o We need real relationships with other Christians who can speak truth into our life.
  - o Those can be tough conversations. It's a lot easier to just be accepting and encouraging than it is to hold someone accountable. I hate having those kinds of tough conversations, but I do it. Why? Because that's part of God's design



for the church. Love does not just mean acceptance. It also means accountability.

God designed us to be in relationship with Him and in relationship with one another...and the power for Christian living is found in the Holy Spirit within us and in fellow Christians around us.

Application: Do you ever wonder why we do small groups here? Is it just to add one more program for Josh and I to manage? Is it because we don't have enough going on on the calendar? We do small groups because God designed us and commands us to be in meaningful relationships with other Christians...the type of relationships where they know your names and your kids' names...the type of relationships where they notice when you're not at church...where they encourage you to be more like Jesus and they keep you accountable when you cross lines you shouldn't.

- You say, "I don't want that." You're problem's not with my plan. It's with His. Because He designed the church to provide encouragement AND accountability.
- Application: some of you need to join a small group. You need to stop coming to church and start being a part of the church.
- Church is not content that we consume. It's not a message that we come to listen to and leave. It's a family that we commit to and belong to and are encouraged by and are kept accountable by...as we together seek to build our lives in accordance with the picture of Christ, following the Word of God, in the power of Holy Spirit.
- The church is not about me. It's about we.

## **Application**

You want to be blessed? You want to be healthy in your life? You need to build your life in accordance with God's design. How? We do that by building our lives in accordance with the example of Jesus Christ. Why? Because He's the picture of the finished product. We do that by building our lives in accordance with the Word of God. Why? Because it's the instruction manual from the designer. We do that by building our lives in reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit. Why? Because it's not possible in our own strength. We do that by building our lives in real community with other believers. Why? Because God has designed us to keep each other encouraged and accountable.

Are you living in reliance and faith in the Holy Spirit's power within you?

- Maybe you need to drop the pessimistic "I cant' do it" belief that Satan has ingrained into your thinking are start believing that through the power of God's Spirit within me I can.
- Maybe you need to start building the habit of picking up that power tool in prayer every morning.

- “Holy Spirit, help me to live in your power today sensitive to your leading.”

Are you living in real community with other believers?

- I’m not asking if you’re coming to church. I’m asking if you’re participating in the church.
- Are you in real relationships with other believers that encourage you and keep you accountable? If the answer’s no, then you need to get that right.
  - Well, what do I do? Some of you could join a small group. Some of you could join a ministry team. Some of you could join the church.

# STUDY QUESTIONS

## applying inward

1.) *What resonated most with you from the sermon this past Sunday? How can you practically apply the sermon to your life this week?*

## digging deeper

2.) *Read Gal. 5:22-23. What 9 character traits comprise the fruit of the Spirit? Being completely honest with myself, am I demonstrating these 9 character traits in my life? If not, which traits am I falling short in and how can I remedy that?*

3.) *Read 1 Cor. 12:12-25. How does Paul illustrate the differences that exist within the body of Christ? What is God's design for the body of Christ, and how does it relate to me?*

## looking ahead

4.) *Read Romans 6:1-14. What happens in this passage of Scripture? Is there anything that sticks out to you? What is something new in this passage that you may have not noticed before?*

5.) *Think application. How does Romans 6:1-14 practically apply to our lives today? What lessons can we learn from it?*

## **Next Week in our Series**

Practice 1: Ground your life in purpose  
(Romans 6:1-14)

# Practice 1 – Root Yourself in Your God Given Identity & Purpose

## Romans 6:1-14

### Review

Over the course of the last several weeks we have laid the foundation for our series on the Bible and mental health. We talked first off about the path to health which is found in living in accordance with how God designed us. When we live in accordance with that design, the result is health...and as Christians God's design for our lives can be clearly seen in the example of Christ and the instructions of Scripture. Jesus is the picture of the finished product, and the Scriptures are our step-by-step instruction manual.

We also talked about the power for health. In the renovation project of our lives, God has not just provided us with the instructions to follow, He's also provided with the tools and support we need to live in accordance with His design...and those tools He has provided us with are the empowerment of the Holy Spirit within us and the support of the Body of Christ around us. So God has given to us the example of Christ, the instructions of Scripture, the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, and the support of the church to help us live healthy lives in accordance with His design.

That's foundational for us to understand our topic. However, having laid that foundation, starting today we are going to look at some specific Biblical practices that we can build into our lives that will help us to live the healthy lives that God intends us to. As we do so, I'm going to move beyond the fence illustration and in its place I am going to refer to this plant....and yes, this is a fake plant...but we are going to pretend over the next four weeks that it is not.

- Over the course of the next month, we're going to study four biblical practices: the practice of weeding our minds of untruth, the practice of watering our minds with truth, the practice of guarding our minds from pests, and the practice of rooting our minds in our God given identity and purpose, which is what we're going to talk about today. We need to root our lives in identity and purpose.

Illustration – One of the things that's been most interesting to me as I've studied for this series has been modern psychology's "discovery" of practices for mental health that have been recorded in the pages of Scriptures for thousands of years. Let me give you a couple of illustrations.

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is a mental health treatment that has become increasingly popular over the course of the last few decades. It's all about

recognizing harmful/untrue thought patterns and replacing them with truth. I read a book on it, and I thought to myself this is describing the Biblical process for renewing your mind.

- The Power of Faith & Hope -> we talked about that last week. That's a very Biblical concept.
- Need to Belong -> Designed to be in relationship
- I could go on and on and on, but my point is that the Lord knows what He's talking about. This isn't just some book we read. It's a gold mine of help in our lives.
- And when it comes to identity and purpose, modern psychology has once again recognized the significance of these important biblical principles.
  - o If you're going to live a healthy, fulfilling life as a Christian, you need to have an accurate understanding of who you are and what your purpose is.
    - When we don't know who we are, we sort of live life untethered like a boat floating in the middle of the ocean with no anchor to secure it.
    - When we don't know what our purpose is, we live life aimlessly, like someone who's paddling a boat in circles but never going anywhere because they have no sense of direction.
    - Identity grounds us, and purpose directs us, and without an accurate understanding of identity and purpose, your life and by extensions your mental health is going to be a wreck.

Who are you...and why are you here? Those are the two questions we will seek to answer this morning as we root our lives in our God given identity and purpose.

## **Sermon**

Take your Bibles this morning and open up to Romans 6. As we navigate this passage, the Bible is going to give us step by step instructions on how to root our lives in our God given identity and purpose.

As we look at this process, the first step that we see this morning is that you need to:

### 1.) Know about your identity and purpose

You need to know about your identity and purpose up here.

Having just spent a great deal of time in Romans 1-5 teaching that we're saved by faith in Jesus alone, Paul then begins chapter 6 by asking a question.

### 1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

- Now that we've been saved from the penalty of our sin through faith in Jesus, does that mean that we should just go out and get drunk and sleep around and indulge ourselves in as much sin as we want since God's grace covers that sin?

### 2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

God forbid – No way Jose. Absolutely not.

Then he asks a question.

How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? – Have you ever heard of the phrase “You’re dead to me”?

- Illustration – Mr. Wonderful (Kevin O’leary) on Shark Tank says this all the time
- It’s basically a strong way of saying to someone, “You’re out of my life. You have no influence on me. Don’t talk to me. From this point forward, it is as if you are literally dead to me.”
- What does that have to do with this verse? Look back at what Paul says. You are dead to sin, and sin is dead to you. Here’s what that means.
- You used to be a slave to sin, and sin was a terrible master. But then something happened. Who you were, who you used to be, your old identity died, and now that that is no longer who you are. So why then would you go back and live as if you still were that same person?
- As a Christian, that (someone who intentionally indulges in sin) is not who you are anymore. That old identity died. Really? Well, when did that happen? How did that happen?

3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized (*immersed*) into Jesus Christ were baptized (*immersed*) into his death?

Know ye not – Don’t you know? That’s a key word for us right now: “know”.

Don’t you know...and he’s going to explain to us how our old identity died...Don’t you know

That so many of us (*Christians*) as were baptized (*immersed*) into Jesus Christ were baptized (*immersed*) into his death? – How did my old identity die? The answer is found in Christ.

- Don’t you know/remember what your baptism symbolizes?
  - o Baptism is both a declaration and a symbol.
    - When someone gets baptized they are declaring, “I have put my faith and trust in Jesus Christ. I have been saved. I’m a Christian. I’m not ashamed of it.”
    - However, baptism is not just a public declaration. It is also a symbol.
    - It’s a picture of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection, but it’s also a picture of the newness of life that we have through Jesus Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection.
    - Just as Christ died, was buried, and rose again. So too, when I became a Christian, when I was brought into union with Jesus Christ, who I used to be died on that cross with Jesus and now in Christ I am a new creation. I have a new identity.
    - 2 Cor. 5:17 - therefore if any man be in Christ, He is a new creature. Old things are passed away. Behold all things are become new.

- Now that I've been saved from my sin, why would I indulge in sin? That's not who I am anymore. The cross of Jesus Christ didn't just save me. It changed me. It gave me a new identity.
  - As a Christian my identity is not found in who I used to be. It's not found in how I feel. It's not found in what others think of me. It's found in Jesus Christ.
  - Who am I? I am who He says I am. I am the new creation that He has made me to be.
- "Paul now reminds his readers that when they were saved, they were immersed by the Spirit of God into the body of Christ and therefore into His death." (Sorenson, 2007)
- "All Christians, have been baptized into Christ Jesus, thus permanently being immersed into Him, so as to be made one with Him. It should be noted here that the Greek term as well as the concept call for water baptism being by immersion in order to symbolize this reality properly. In other passages, Paul affirmed the importance of water baptism in obedience to the Lord's direct command (see 1 Cor. 1:13-17 and Eph. 4:5). But that is only the outward symbol of the baptism to which he refers here. He is speaking metaphorically of the spiritual immersion of believers into Christ through the Holy Spirit, of the believer's intimate oneness with his divine Lord." (MacArthur)

Here's what cool about this. There is a direct connection between your identity and your purpose. When your identity changes, so too do your purpose. Why? Because your God given purpose flows out of your God given identity.

4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death – if you are a Christian, then just as Christ died on that cross, so too your old identity died on that cross. This happened for a purpose. Think about it. Did Jesus stay dead? No He did not.

That like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father. - Christ rose from the dead...and in the same way, when you became a Christian, your old identity was not just executed. You were given a new identity in Jesus Christ...and you were given that identity for a purpose.

even so (having been given this new identity) we also should walk in newness of life (there's our new purpose) – when you became a Christian, God Himself executed who you used to be and gave you a new identity so that you might live your life in accordance with a new purpose as you walk in newness of life.

- Your old identity, your old purpose, is dead, gone, and done away with...and in contrast, our new identity has provided us with a new purpose.

What is that purpose? How do we walk in newness of life?

1 Cor. 10:31 - 31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

- Your purpose as a Christian is to honor and glorify God in everything thing you do in every area of your life.
- What does it mean to honor and glorify God? It means to do it to the best of your abilities as an act of worship to Him that exalts Him and makes Him look good.
- You can do that in every area of your life. You can glorify Him in how you treat your family, the way you carry out your work, the words that you say, how you honor your parents.
  - o Friend, that is the purpose of your life, and friend it is a worthy purpose. It is a high calling that flows out of your new identity in Christ.
  - o Why would you live your life for money? Why would you live your life for fame? Why would you live your life for leisure? Those are old purposes that flow out of old identities. Those things are beneath you. You have a higher calling, a new purpose that flows out of a new identity.

5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

- If my old identity died on the cross with Christ, it would make sense that I have a new identity in light of His resurrection.

6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

- Our old identity was crucified so that our old purposes would be done away with.
  - o That's not who I am anymore, and that's not what I live for anymore. Those things died on the cross of Calvary when I became a Christian.

Paul continues in verses 7-10, and he basically repeats the same concept as we've already seen.

When we became Christians our old identities and purposes died on the cross with Jesus Christ and we were given a new identity and purpose. Here's my point. This is the first step in the process of rooting our lives in identity and purpose. If we are going to live the healthy, fulfilling lives God intended us to, we need to know up here about this new God given identity and purpose.

7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him - if we are a Christian, then we are in Christ. We are identified with Christ. And just as Christ died to sin and rose from the dead victorious over sin, we too should be dead to sin and live victoriously in



newness of life. The believer has died to his old life, and through Christ has been given the power to enjoy a new life victorious over sin.

9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him - When Jesus rose from the dead, he conquered death and will never die again. He holds the keys of hell and death.

10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God - He died once to sin, and now lives and reigns forever, and we too, if we are saved, died to sin once, and will live and reign with Christ forever and ever.

But that's just the first step in this process of rooting/of grounding your life. In Romans 6, Paul teaches that you must not just know about your identity and purpose, you must also believe in your identity and purpose.

2.) Believe in your identity and purpose

You must not just know it to be true generally. You must believe it to be true personally. You must not just know in your head that Christians in general have a new identity and purpose. You must believe it in your heart that you have a new God given identity and purpose.

Look at verse number 10.

10 For in that he (Jesus) died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth (*perpetually*) unto God

11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord - I love the word *reckon*. It's a good old southern word like y'all, grits, sweet tea, and biscuits and gravy. However, when the word *reckon* is used here, it's not being used as it would be in the South to mean I reckon or I suppose.

- Reckon - to apply, to consider, to believe personally.
- What Paul is saying here is that we must not only know the doctrine that Christians have a new identity and a new purpose in light of their union with Christ. We must also believe that to be true individually of ourselves.

We must believe in our new identity.

- I, personally, am not who I used to be. I am a new creation in Jesus Christ.

- When Satan tells you...
  - o That you're no different than you used to be.
  - o You tell him that you're a new creation in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:17)."
- When Satan tells you...
  - o That you're worthless
  - o You tell him that you were purchased with the priceless blood of Jesus Christ and adopted into the family of God (1 Peter 1:19).
- When Satan tells you...
  - o That you'll never be good enough
  - o You tell him that you have been accepted in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:6)
- When Satan tells you...
  - o That you are a failure
  - o You tell him that you are more than a conqueror through the one who loves you (Rom. 8:37)
- When Satan tells you...
  - o That you're life is all about you.
  - o You tell him that you are a servant of the most High God (Romans 6:22)
- When Satan tells you
  - o That you're God's gift to the world
  - o You tell him that you are a sinner saved by grace (Eph. 2:8)
- Folks, you don't just need to know of your new identity in Christ. You need to believe it, and you need to recognize and replace the lies of the devil with the truth of God's Word.
  - o You are not who Satan says you are. You are who Jesus Christ says you are. You need to believe that.
  - o We are elevated in virtue of our relationship with Christ, but we are not Jesus Christ, and we need to remember that too.

We must believe in our new identity, but we must also believe in our new purpose.

1 Cor. 10:31 – whether therefore ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

Although, as Christians, we all share the same purpose generally (*to glorify God*), the ways in which God calls us to fulfill that purpose specifically in our lives are different because God calls us to different roles in our lives.

- Illustration: I will never be able to glorify God as a mother. I will probably never be able to glorify God as a Seabee or an officer. I am not yet able to glorify God as a grandparent, and I can no longer glorify God as a teenager living under my parents' roof. However, I can glorify God as a Christian, as a husband, as a father, and as a Pastor. Why? Because those are the primary roles that God has called me to at this point in time in my life.

- We know from the Scriptures that God does has different roles that He calls us to. A great example is found in 1 Cor. 12 when it talks about the body of Christ.
  - We are all a part of the body of Christ, and we all have different parts with different roles.
- God may have gifted you and called you to be a pinky toe or an ear or a hand within the Body of Christ.
  - If you're a pinky toe, don't get mad that you're not an ear.
  - Fulfill God's calling on your life and glorify Him in what He's called you to.
- Part of the problem for many people today is that they have never taken the time to actually pause, evaluate their life, and ask some big questions: "what roles has God called me to in my life?" ...and "How can I glorify God in those roles?"
  - We run around in circles doing what's urgent feeling like we're accomplishing nothing because we've never taken the time to evaluate what's important. We live busy lives, but we don't live purposeful lives...because we haven't taken the time to pause and ask God what's really important.
  - Illustration – back in 2021, I was reading a book that challenged me to do this...to take a step back and evaluate what the primary roles God had called me to in my life were and how I could glorify God in those roles.
    - I think it took me a day or two. It's not something that you do in 5 minutes.
    - I came up with seven primary roles that I believe that God has called me to in my life. I've placed a copy of them on the very back of your bulletin.
      - Faith
        - Christian (2 Cor. 5:17) – seek to glorify God by following Jesus
      - Family
        - Husband (Eph. 5:25) – seek to glorify God by loving my wife as Christ loved the church
        - Father (Eph. 6:4) –seek to glorify God by bringing up my children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord
      - Work
        - Preacher (2 Tim. 4:2) – seek to glorify God by faithfully preaching the word
        - Shepherd (1 Peter 5:2-3) – seek to glorify God by caring for His sheep
        - Soulwinner (Acts 1:8) – seek to glorify God by sharing the gospel

- Leader (2 Tim. 2:22; Heb. 13:17) – seek to glorify God by leading the church
- I took this list. I showed it to Liz and to my family. I framed it. I pray over it every morning. I schedule my weeks in light of it.
  - As I am scheduling my days and weeks in light of those roles, it ensures that I am living purposefully.
  - I am not running around in circles doing what is urgent.
  - I am doing what God has called me to do in light of my new identity, and it is fulfilling.
    - Part of the struggles that some people have with their mental health is that they're not living their life as God intended them to. God didn't intend you to drift. God didn't intend you to live purposelessly. He has given you an identity and a purpose and a calling.
    - When you find that purpose and start living in light of it, it's awesome. Folks, God didn't design you to just survive. He wants you to thrive. He wants you to live in accordance with purpose.

If we're going to ground/to root our lives in our God given identity and purpose, we need to know about our identity and purpose. We need to believe in our identity and purpose (how does this apply to me?), and we need to live out our identity and purpose.

3.) Live out your identity and purpose.

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

You have been given by God a new identity and purpose. Stop living in accordance with your old identity and purpose. That's not who you are anymore. That's not the direction you're headed in anymore.

13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

It's time for you to live out what you know in your head and believe in your heart. You know that you are a new creation whose purpose is to glorify God. You believe that you are a new creation whose purpose is to glorify God. It's time to put your money where your mouth is and live like it.

How do you know if you're living out what you know and believe? There's one really easy way to tell. Look at your calendar. You might take the time to put something like this together (to identify the primary roles God has called you to in your life), but if it never

makes it from here onto your calendar, what good does that do? These roles (time with God, time with your family, time working on the important aspects of your job), they need to go on the calendar before anything else does.

- Illustration - Put the big rocks in the jar first.
  - o These roles are the big rocks of your life. They go on the calendar first.
  - o You fit the urgent around the important, not the other way around...because when you try to fit the important around the urgent, the important gets squeezed out.
  - o Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least. - Goethe (Covey, 2020, p. Loc 2053)
  - o You have to decide what your highest priorities are and have the courage—to say “no” to other things. And the way you do that is by having a bigger “yes” burning inside. (Covey, 2020, p. Loc 2206)
- Example
  - o Christian – Bible reading, prayer, church, small group (those go on the calendar first)
  - o Husband – when’s our date night going to be
  - o Father – what’s our family activity going to be? When’s our devotion time going to be?
    - Tuesday is my day off, and I protect that thing.
  - o Preacher – sermon prep is built into the calendar
  - o Pastor – who do I need to care for this week?
  - o Soulwinner – who am I going to try to share the gospel with this week?
  - o Leader – who am I going to develop this week? (e.g. staff meetings, deacons meetings)
    - What am I doing? I’m trying to live out God’s calling on my life by taking that which I know and believe God would have me to do and putting it on the calendar before anything else.
    - When you start living out your God given identity and purpose, it is so fulfilling and it will do wonders for your mental health.

## **Application**

If you’re going to be grounded in your life...if you’re going to have direction and fulfillment in your life, you need to know who you are and where you’re going. Have you forgotten about your identity in Christ? Have you allowed the lies of the devil to warp your mind into believing that you’re something different than what God has made you into? Recognize those lies. Repent of them, and replace them with the truth of God’s Word. You are not who you used to be. You are a new creation with a new identity in Jesus Christ.

Are you living in accordance with your God given purpose? Have you ever taken the time to actually step back and evaluate the primary roles God has called you to in your life?...and then live out those things by putting them on the calendar before anything else? One of the

best things you can do for your mental health is live a purposeful life. Know that purpose. Believe in that purpose, and then put that purpose on your calendar.

Stop surviving and start thriving as you recognize and live in accordance with your God-given identity and purpose.

# STUDY QUESTIONS

## applying inward

1.) *What resonated most with you from the sermon this past Sunday? What are some of the primary roles that God has given to you in your life? In what ways does Satan attack our identity in Christ?*

## digging deeper

2.) *Read 2 Cor. 5:17. When did you receive a new identity in Christ? Think through and write out your salvation story. Share it with you group if you feel comfortable.*

3.) *Read 1 Cor. 6:19-20, 1 Cor. 10:31, Matthew 5:14-16, John 15:8, and Revelation 4:11. Our purpose is to glorify God in all areas of our lives. What does it mean to glorify God?*

4.) *Who am I? Write out the primary roles in your life, and using Ephesians, think through some specific ways you can glorify God in these roles.*

*Ephesians 4:22-5:2: everyday life*

*Ephesians 5:25-6:4: families: husband/wife, parent, child*

*Ephesians 6:5-9: workplace: employer/employee*

## looking ahead

5.) *Read 2 Cor. 10:3-5 and Matthew 4:1-11. In 2 Cor. 10:3-5, how does the Bible describe the war within our minds? In Matthew 4:1-11, what are the lies beneath the surface of Satan's temptation of Jesus?*

## **NEXT WEEK IN OUR SERIES**

Practice 2: Weed your mind of untruth  
(2 Cor. 10:3-5; Matt. 4:1-11)

# **SERMON 4 – TEAR DOWN THE STRONGHOLDS OF SATAN IN YOUR MIND**

## **2 Cor. 10:3-5**

### **Review**

Over the course of the last month or so, we have been studying the topic of the Bible and mental health. As we have done so, we have discovered from the Scriptures a number of resources and practices that God has given to help us live healthy lives in accordance with His design.

We've looked at 4 primary resources that He has given to us.

1. The Example of Christ – He is the picture of the finished product. He is the prototype of Christian living.
2. The Instructions of Scripture – the word of God is a step-by-step instruction manual for our lives.
3. The empowerment of the Spirit – the Holy Spirit is the supernatural power tool God has placed within us to help us follow the Word of God.
4. The support of the church – the body of Christ is designed to help us encourage and keep one another accountable as we together seek to live in accordance with God's design.

God, in His grace, has also provided us specific practices to help us operate our minds in accordance with His design.

- Last week we looked at practice number one which is grounding our lives in our God given identity and purpose. In Christ, we are a new creation with a new purpose, which is to glorify God in every area of our lives. If we're going to have good mental health, we need to know, believe, and live in accordance with our God given identity and purpose.
- This week we're going to continue our series by looking at practice number 2 from 2 Cor. 10:3-5. So please go ahead and take your Bibles and turn to 2 Corinthians 10 as we study the Biblical practice of tearing down the strongholds of our minds.

### **Sermon**

2 Cor. 10:3-5 - 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of



strong holds;) 5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

As we take some time to break down this passage of Scripture this morning, the first truth that we're going to see is...

## 1.) THE REALITY OF STRONGHOLDS

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh – though, we as Christians, are physical beings that live physical lives, the battles that we fight, the campaigns that we embark on are not primarily physical battles. They are spiritual.

Although we may not be fighting physical battles, Christian, make no mistake about it, we... are....at....war!

- Ephesians 6:10-13 - 10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities (*chief rulers*), against powers (*dark powers*), against the rulers of the darkness of this world (*Satan's forces*), against spiritual wickedness in high places. 13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.
  - a. Folks, you don't part on armor to go swimming at the beach. You put on armor to go to war.
- 1 Tim. 1:18 – Paul told Timothy to war a good warfare.
- 1 Tim. 6:12 – fight the good fight of faith...
- 2 Tim. 2:3 – endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ
- Make no mistake about it. We are at war.

In that war, we have an enemy.

- 1 Peter 5:8 - 8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:
- In Eph. 6 the Bible tells us that roaring lion Satan schemes against us.
- In 2 Cor. 4:4 we are told that he is the god of this world system.
  - o As such, by appealing to your flesh through the propaganda of this world, he seeks to attack the most vulnerable and important part of who you are: your mind.
  - o Why?
    - As a man thinketh in his heart so is he. – Proverbs 23:7
    - Your mind is the seat of your behavior. – Luke 6:45
    - Your mind is where your sanctification happens. – Romans 12:1-2.
    - The battle for your life is won or lost in your mind. (Groeschell, 2021, p. 107)

- How does he attack? What are his go to tactics? Lies.
  - John 8:44 – there is no truth in him. He is a liar and the father of lies. At the heart of his very nature is lies.
  - From the very beginning, in the garden of Eden, Satan lied to Eve, and Paul warned the church at Corinth in 2 Cor. 11:3 - But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty (*deceitfulness*), so your **minds should be corrupted** from the simplicity that is in Christ.
  - Folks, we are in a spiritual war with the forces of evil and the enemy's weapon of choice is lies.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh.

Then look back down at verse number 4. Paul, in this parentheses, gives us further explanation regarding the war that we are in.

4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

For (*because*) the weapons of our warfare are not carnal – we know that we are not fighting physical battles, because the weapons that God has given to us for this battle are not physical weapons.

- Illustration – when you got saved, God didn't give you a cross bow, a baretta, or a flame thrower.

Rather, He gave you spiritual weapons which are...

Mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds – God has given to us spiritual weapons for a spiritual battle endued with supernatural power so that we might tear down strongholds.

- What is a stronghold?
  - “The word used for ‘stronghold’ here literally means ‘to fortify.’ In ancient times this kind of secure stronghold was the fortress built on top of the highest peak in the city. Twenty-foot walls often surrounded this citadel where its leaders met, where treasure was stored, and where precious documents and holy relics were guarded. From this highest vantage point, soldiers could spot approaching enemies before they attacked, ensuring their ability to defend and protect the city's greatest assets. Paul made the comparison between those fortresses and the lies of Satan that people believe. Like the walls of the strongholds, these lies have been reinforced again and again. They have been believed for so long that it's as though they have become a part of that person's identity.” (Groeschell, 2021, p. 27)

- What's really interesting to me in this passage is that Paul when Paul talks about strongholds, his primary application is not in reference to Christians, but to unbelievers.
  - If you think about it, when someone is lost, when someone isn't saved, their whole mind, their thought process, their world view is a stronghold of Satan whose reasoning stands in opposition to the truth of the gospel.
    - 2 Cor. 4:4 – Satan has blinded the minds of the lost in an effort to keep them from getting saved, and he's done it through an onslaught of lies.
    - The primary application is to the lost, and yet, as a Christian, if you're not careful, you too can buy into the lies of Satan and allow strongholds/fortresses of slavery/ unbiblical thinking habits to be built in your mind/to be ingrained into your neural pathways...thinking habits that are not built on the truth of God's Word, but on the lies of the devil...thinking habits that will ruin your life. Satan knows that he can't take away your salvation, but he can ruin your life if you listen to his lies.

We are at war. The devil is our enemy. His weapon is lies, and his goal is to establish strongholds in our minds (i.e. habitual patterns of thinking and behaving that are built on lies and that stand in opposition to the truth of God's Word). (Crabb, 2022, p. 137)

We've seen the reality of strongholds. However, as we look at this passage of Scripture, we see not only the reality of strongholds. We see also...

## 2.) The identification of Strongholds

At the beginning of verse number 5, Paul provides us with a more detailed picture of the types of strongholds that can take root in people's minds.

5 Casting down (*tearing down*) imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

Casting down imaginations – false beliefs/reasonings. These are **strongholds of error** that take root in the mind. These are habitual thinking patterns built on the lies of the devil that stand in opposition to God's truth.

- For lost people, these deeply ingrained beliefs could take a number of forms.
  - God doesn't want what's best for me. He's just a kill joy.
  - The supernatural doesn't exist.
  - There's too much suffering in the world for God to exist.
  - There are many ways to God.
  - All religions are equal.

- Sin's not that bad.
- Belief in God is irrational.
- But sir/ma'am as a Christian, if you're not careful, you can also have deeply ingrained thinking habits that are built on lies. What do you mean?
  - You incessantly **worry** about the future. That's the behavior, and you want the behavior to stop, and you've tried to stop. But you can't stop, and the reason that you can't stop is because at the root of the behavior is a stronghold belief that God can't be trusted for the future. Folks, that lie didn't come from God. It stands in opposition to His truth.
    - Proverbs 3:5-6 – in all thy way acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.
  - You live in constant **fear** of the worst happening in your life. You think that at any given moment, everything is going to fall apart, and you live your life in constant fear. Why? Because at the root of that behavior is a stronghold belief that God can't/won't protect you. Folks, that lie didn't come from God. It stands in opposition to His truth.
    - Ps. 56:3 – what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.
    - 2 Tim. 1:7 – for God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love and of a sound mind.
  - You **assume the worst** in other people. You rehearse conversations in your head taking note of only the negative, and then you imagine that person saying hostile things to you and how you would respond. It either terrifies you or enrages you and the whole thing is a lie. You're getting mad at someone/afraid of someone for something you're imagining them saying in your head. That didn't come from God. It stands in opposition to His truth.
    - 1 Cor. 13:7 – love believes the best/assumes the best in other people
    - Illustration – it's like when your spouse gets mad at you for something you did in their dream
  - You think **dirty thoughts**. You look at dirty images. You watch dirty movies. You want to stop. You've tried to stop, but you can't. Why? Because at the root of that behavior is the belief that it's harmless. It's not that big of a deal. That didn't come from God. It stands in opposition to His truth.
    - The bible says in Matt. 5:28 that lust is adultery, and in Prov. 6:32 the Bible says that the one who commits adultery destroys his own soul.
  - You constantly seethe with **anger**. People walk around you on eggshells because they're never quite sure what might set you off. At that root of that behavior is a false belief. It might be the belief that anger is an expression of strength. That didn't come from God. It stands in opposition to His truth.
    - Ecclesiastes 7:9 - 9 Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.
    - Proverbs 25:8 - He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls

- I could go on and on and on. My point is this: if you look at the sin struggles in your life, the bad habits in your life (fear, worry, wrath, lust, drunkenness, gluttony, bitterness, greed, cursing)...at the root of those behaviors is a thinking habit...a false belief that has been ingrained into your thinking...a belief that has not come from God's Word, but that has been built on the lies of the devil...a stronghold of error.

Casting down imaginations...

And every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God – every selfish/exalted/prideful opinion that stands in opposition to God's truth. These are **strongholds of ego** that take root in the mind. These are another type of habitual thinking patterns built on the lies of the devil that stand in opposition to God's truth.

- For lost people, these deeply ingrained beliefs could take a number of forms.
  - o God has no right to tell me what to do. I'm going to live my life how I want.
  - o My life's purpose is money.
  - o My life's purpose is pleasure.
  - o My life's purpose is fame.
  - o If it feels good, I should do it.
  - o I am who I say I am, and my purpose is what I determine it to be.
- But sir/ma'am, as a Christian, if you're not careful, you too can also have deeply ingrained thinking habits in your mind that are built on lies of selfishness and pride.
  - o You wallow in a pit of **self-pity**. You think incessantly of yourself in a negative light. You think incessantly of your situation in a negative light. Your mind is perpetually oriented towards yourself. At the root of that behavior is a stronghold of self-centeredness...of ego...a belief that it's all about me. That didn't come from God. It stands in opposition to His truth.
    - Philippians 2:4 – look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.
  - o You bask in the glory of your own **pride**. You think incessantly of yourself in a positive light. You think of yourself as better than other people. At the root of that behavior is a stronghold of self-centeredness...of ego...a belief that it's all about me. That didn't from God. It stands in opposition to His truth.
    - James 4:6 - 6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.
  - o You are looking for **satisfaction in things**. Maybe it's food. Maybe it's alcohol. Maybe it's drugs. Maybe it's inappropriate images. At the root of that behavior is a false belief that you can find satisfaction outside of God. That didn't come from God.
    - Romans 6:23 – the wages of sin is not satisfaction. It's death.
    - Ps. 16:11 – Fulness of joy is found in His presence.
- What strongholds do you have in your life? What habits do you have in your thinking that are not built upon the truth of God's Word, but rather upon the lies of the devil?

- Here's the temptation you're going to face.
  - o Rationalize the stronghold.
  - o Defend the stronghold.
  - o If you don't destroy that stronghold, that stronghold is going to keep destroying you. It's not a negotiation. It's a violent demolition.

Well, how do I do that? If I've looked at my life and identified these ungodly, habitual behaviors and beliefs, how do I tear them down?

We've seen the reality of strongholds (we're at war, and there's a battle for our minds). We've seen the identification of strongholds (strongholds of error and strongholds of ego). Finally, this morning we see...

### 3.) THE DESTRUCTION OF STRONGHOLDS

Look back at verse number 4 with me.

for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds – God has provided us with everything we need to tear down the strongholds of Satan both in the minds of sinners and saints alike.

“To assault and throw down the fortresses of false religions, opinions, beliefs, and philosophies, only one weapon will suffice: the truth. That is so obvious that Paul does not mention it. Only one thing exposes and corrects lies—the truth. Thus, the only offensive weapon in the Christian soldier's armor is “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17). Spiritual warfare is an ideological conflict, fought in the mind by assaulting the proud fortresses of ideas that are erected against the truth.” (MacArthur, 2022)

- If you are going to tear down the strongholds of Satan's lies that have burrowed their way into your thinking habits, you need to have a supernaturally empowered weapon, and that weapon is the Word of God.
- It is the Sword of the Spirit.
  - o As we put on the armor of God to defend ourselves against the schemes of the devil, we take the word of God, the Sword of the Spirit and start tearing down those strongholds that have been built in our minds brick by brick.
  - o What does that mean? What does that look like practically? Look back at the end of verse 5.

And bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ – You tear down the strongholds of your mind by taking every thought captive...by filtering every thought by the Word of God so that you might live in obedience to the Son of God.

- The tearing down of strongholds is the process of renewing your mind.
  - o Rom. 12:2 – don't be conformed to this world. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.
  - o Eph. 4:22-24 – stop living like you used to. Renew your mind and start living like Jesus Christ.
- Renewing your mind is the process of recognizing the lies of the devil (identifying the strongholds), repenting of them, and then replacing them with the truth of God's Word.
  - o It's the process of doing that over and over and over again until brick by brick you have torn down the stronghold and built your mind/your thinking on the solid foundation of the Word of God.
- Application – last week I challenged you to take a deep look at your God given identity and purpose. This week I'm going to challenge you to take a deep look at the strongholds in your life.
  - o I'm going to challenge you to say as David did in Psalm 139:23-24, "Search me O God and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me..."
  - o Start by examining the sinful habits that you struggle with (the worry, the fear, the greed, the anger, the covetousness, the lust), and look for the lies of the devil that lay at the root of those behaviors.
  - o We have got to open our eyes to the lies at the root of our rebellion to God, and then we need to repent of them.
    - Proverbs 28:13 – he that covereth his sin (makes excuses) shall not prosper, but who confesses (agrees with God) and forsakes them will have mercy
    - When you make excuses for your sin (when you rationalize it, when you defend it), you cover it. When you confess and forsake it, God forgives it. Case dismissed. Forgiven.
      - It's done! It's gone! Let it go.
    - God does not forgive excuses. He forgives confessed sin.
  - o Recognize the lies of the devil that had made their way into your thinking. Repent of them, and replace them with the truth of God's Word.
    - Matthew 4:4 – man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.
    - The Word of God is a lamp unto our feet. It is a light unto our path. It is a filter for our minds by which we can take every thought captive and bring it into subjection to Christ.
  - o Illustrations

**BEHAVIOR** – consistently responding in anger

**LIE** – I have been wronged, and I have a right to get even

**TRUTH** – Vengeance is mine saith the Lord (Romans 12:19) 

- 
- Maybe your struggle is anger. You are consistently responding in anger. You know that. Everybody knows that, but you're not sure why you do it. What do you do?
  - Recognize the lie – maybe it's something like, "I've been wronged and I have a right to get even."
  - Recognize the lie, repent of the lie, and then replace it with the truth of God's Word.
    - Romans 12:19 -Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay saith the Lord.
  - So what do you do? Every time you feel that wrath welling up inside of you, you recognize the lie. You say to yourself, "I don't have a right to get even because Romans 12:19 says vengeance belongs to God and He will repay it."
  - You do it over and over and over again until the stronghold is torn down and that habit is changed.

**BEHAVIOR** – living in fear of failure

**LIE** – success is found in avoiding failure

**TRUTH** – God calls us to live obediently by faith (Romans 1:17) 

- 
- Maybe you struggle with the fear of failure. It's a constant in your life. It paralyzes and you don't know why. What do you do?
  - Recognize the lie – maybe it's something as simple as believing that success is found in avoiding failure.
  - Does God's Word say that? It doesn't, does it?



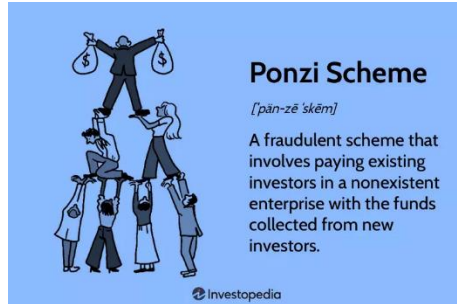
- Truth – Romans 1:17 – the just shall live by faith.
  - God doesn't call us to avoid failure. He calls us to live by faith in reliance on Him.
- So what do you do? Every time you start feeling that paralyzing fear of failure, you recognize the lie. You say to yourself, "Success is not found in avoiding failure because the Bible says in Romans 1:17 that the just will live by faith."
- You do it over and over and over again until that stronghold is torn down and your mind has been renewed on the solid foundation of the Word of God.

## Application

I'm going to bring the sermon to a close today with in an illustration of the devastation that comes when you build your life on the lies of the devil.

Illustration – Bernie Madoff

- How many of you are familiar with the name Bernie Madoff?
  - That doesn't surprise me. He sort of became the face of the financial crisis.
- If you're not familiar with Madoff, he was a titan of Wall Street.
- He got his start in the industry back in the 1960s when he started a legitimate business as a broker facilitating trades for smaller stocks on Wall Street.
  - The business took off and so too did his reputation.
  - He helped found NASDAQ. He was the chair of NASDAQ in the 90s.
  - He was Wall Street. He was successful. He was rich. He was a titan of industry.
- Well, unbeknownst to many, Bernie had also started a side business back in the 1960s investing pools of people's money. He ran this investment business for decades, and over time it became bigger and bigger and bigger.
  - The reason it grew so much was that Bernie was apparently some kind of an investing genius that generated consistent high returns for his clients. He always time the market right. His clients were earning 15-20% on their investments every year without fail. It was almost too good to be true.
  - People did everything they could to try to get their money in Bernie's hands, and by 2008, Bernie was managing a pool of \$65 billion of investor money...or at least that's what people thought.



- (Chen, 2022)
- Because when the financial crisis hit and everyone was trying to withdraw their money from banks and investments, what Bernie's clients soon discovered was that there was no money. The whole thing was built on a lie. It was a Ponzi scheme in which Bernie never actually invested people's money. What he did was take the money from new investors as the business got bigger to pay off old investors. The \$65 billion was gone. It was a built on a lie and destroyed the lies of Madoff's investors.
- Application – I thought to myself, “What a great illustration of the lies of the devil.”
  - He promises astronomical returns, and it may seem that way for a time...but friend, his promises are all built on lies, and sooner or later those who build their lives on the lies of the devil, will end up just like Bernie's investors: bankrupt and devastated wondering how they could have been so foolish as to have placed their trust in a fraud.

Will you build your life on the truth of God's Word or on the lies of the devil? The choice is yours, but so too are the consequences of that choice.

The time has come for you to renew your mind...to tear down the strongholds of lies that have been built in your mind and replace them with the truth of God's Word.

# STUDY QUESTIONS

## applying inward

1.) *What resonated most with you from the sermon this past Sunday? What strongholds are you facing in your life? What lies lay underneath them? What truths from God's Word can you combat them with?*

## digging deeper

2.) *Read Eph. 6:10-18. What are the different components of the armor of God, and how do they aid us in spiritual warfare? What does this passage teach us about spiritual warfare?*

3.) *Read Matthew 4:1-11. Look at the positive example of Jesus. What three passages of Scripture did Jesus quote from to combat the lies of the devil? How do the truths of these passages deal with the specific temptations Jesus was facing?*

4.) *Read Romans 6:20-23 and James 1:13-15. List some negative examples from the Bible in which people gave into sin and what the outcome was.*

## looking ahead

5.) *Read Philippians 4:4-8. Paul provides a number of practical instructions in this passage of Scripture for the Philippians. List them and describe how they relate to mental health.*

## NEXT WEEK IN OUR SERIES

Practice 3: Feed Your Mind with Truth  
(Philippians 4:4-8)

# Feed Your Mind with Truth & Purity

## Philippians 4:8

### Review

Illustration – when it comes to your physical health, what are the two most crucial factors? If you want to be healthy, what matters most? Diet & Exercise.

- What is true of your body is also true of your mind. Exercise is how you operate your mind. Diet is what you allow into your mind.
  - o The last two weeks, with the practices we've studied, we've focused primarily on exercise (i.e. operating our minds in the right way).
    - We saw, first off from Romans 6, that we need to exercise our minds purposefully (i.e. in accordance with our God given identity and purpose).
    - Then, last week, from 2 Cor. 10, we saw that we need to exercise our minds truthfully. We need to take every thought captive and evaluate each of them in light of the truth of God's Word.
    - If we're going to be healthy up here, we need to **exercise** our minds in accordance with purpose and truth.
  - o Over the course of the next two weeks, we're going to focus on diet (i.e. what we feed our minds with and what we guard/protect our minds from).
    - Illustration – how many of you have ever seen the documentary *Supersize Me*?



- (IMDB)
- The main character of the film also happens to be the director of the film, a man by the name of Morgan Spurlock. The basic question at the heart of the documentary is, “What would

happen if you ate McDonalds three meals a day, every day, for thirty days?...and what would happen if every time you were asked by the cashier if you wanted to supersize your meal, you had to say, 'Yes'?"

- Before beginning the experiment, Morgan saw three doctors in order to establish a baseline for his health. He saw a cardiologist, a gastroenterologist, and a general practitioner. All three characterized his health as outstanding, and at the beginning of the experiment, Morgan stood 6 ft 2 inches tall and weighed 185 pounds.
- During the course of the month, he found himself with feelings of depression, lethargy, and headaches that were only relieved by a McDonald's meal. One doctor characterized him as "addicted". About 21 days in, he began having severe heart palpitations, and after thirty days, Morgan weighed in at 210 pounds (an increase of roughly 25 pounds). (IMDB)
  - At the end of the month, all three doctors were shocked at how quickly Morgan's health had deteriorated. His cholesterol went up 65 points. His body fat went from 11% to 18%. He nearly doubled his risk of coronary heart disease, and his liver had developed enough fat around it that it began to leak out enzymes, the definition of a sick liver. (Gaille, 2017)
  - It took Morgan 14.5 months to lose the 25 pounds that he had put on within a thirty-day period.
  - Today's message is not sponsored by McDonalds.
- Application – what you put into your body matters as it pertains to your physical health, and what you allow into your mind matters as it pertains to your mental health. You are what you eat, and you are what you think.
  - Next week, we're going to focus in on the garbage we should be guarding our minds from, but for today, we're going to study the types of things we should be filling our mind with.
  - We're going to begin our message today by looking at Philippians 4:8.

## Sermon

Philippians 4:8 - Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Now I would assume that all of us in this room have at one point in our lives heard of the food pyramid put out by the USDA. Well, this morning in Philippians 4:8, God has provided us with a food pyramid for our minds...a list of the types of things we should be thinking on as Christians...and that list begins with that which is true.



Whatever things are true – This ties in directly with what we talked about last week: combatting the lies of the devil with the truth of God’s Word.

- Satan wants our thoughts focused on that which is false. God wants our thoughts focused on that which is true.
- Believe it or not, one of the most powerful questions you can ask yourself when you find yourself going down a mental rabbit hole is, “Is this even true? Is what I am thinking on true?”
- God says, “#1, I want you to think on that which is true. I want you to put on the belt of truth (Eph. 6:14).”

But He doesn’t stop there. He says, “I also want you to think on that which is honest.”

Whatever things are honest – honorable, dignified (as opposed to trash)

- Do you realize that just because something is true, that does not necessarily mean that God wants us obsessively thinking about it? This world is full of a lot of awful truths (murders, violence, sexual sins, demonic activity, etc.)...things that will take you to very dark places if you obsess over them in your thoughts.

- Now, that doesn't mean that we bury our heads in the sand and completely ignore that which is unpleasant in this world. What it does mean though is that we should not obsess about those things.
- God says, "I don't want you to **just** focus your thought life on that which is true, but also on that which is honorable."

Think on that which is true. Think on that which is honorable. Think on that which is just.

Whatsoever things are just – righteous, upright in the eyes of God (conforming to the standard of God's law).

- I want you to think on good things, holy things, righteous actions. Put on that breastplate of righteousness.
- I want you to think about loving your neighbor, giving to the poor, being kind to your family. Think on righteous things.

Think on pure things.

Whatsoever things are pure – holy, wholesome, uncontaminated.

- Friend, if the contents of your thought life were broadcast in the throne room of heaven, would they belong? Would they be out of place? Are they holy?
- "In a world overflowing with sensuality and immorality of all forms, the thought life of a Christian ought to be channeled through the filter of purity." (Sorenson, 2007)

Think on that which is true, honorable, righteous, pure...lovely.

Whatsoever things are lovely – *prospheilo* - only used in this verse in the Bible; worthy of your affection; lovable

- We talked a little about this in our message on purpose and identity. As a Christian, there are things in this world, there are life purposes of this world, that are beneath you. Money, fame, climbing the corporate ladder...these are purposes that are not worthy of your affection. They are beneath you.
- God says, "I want you to think on that which is worthy of your affection."

"I want you to think on that which is of good report."

Whatsoever things are of good report – *euphamos* – only used in this verse in the Bible; reputable, honorable...

Then Paul switches his sentence structure up to add a little bit of variety here. He says...

If there be any virtue – if there's anything at all virtuous (i.e. morally excellent, good, pure)

If there is anything at all that is praiseworthy...

If there be any praise – anything that is praiseworthy

Think on these things – God says, “I want you to intentionally and continuously focus your thought life on these things.” (Spence & Exell, 1883)

- God’s food pyramid for our minds...
- If you were to really take this thought pyramid and condense it down to a summarized format, what God is basically saying is this: “I want you to think on that which is true and pure.”



- Why is that? Here’s why. If your thoughts are continuously governed by that which is true and pure, then do you know what’s going to happen? You are going to live a life of truth and purity because the mind is the seat of your behavior.

Well, how do you do that? How do you direct your thought life to be in accordance with that which is true and pure? Well, remember, we’re talking about diet today.

If you want to think on that which is true and pure, then what types of things do you think you should be feeding your mind with?

- That which is true...and that which is pure.
- What are you feeding your mind with?
  - o This morning we’re going to discuss three practical ways that you can fill your mind with truth and purity.

## 1.) Meditation

What do you mean like yoga meditation? Nope. I mean Biblical meditation, which is actually the opposite of Eastern meditation. Eastern meditation is all about the emptying of the mind. Biblical meditation is about the filling of the mind. Eastern meditation is about mindlessness. Biblical meditation is about mindfulness.



Joshua 1:8 - 8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Psalm 1:2-3 - But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

You want to be prosperous in your life? You want to be successful in your life? God's formula for that is meditation on and obedience to the Word of God.

What is Biblical meditation?

Meditation is chewing on the Word of God. It's savoring it. It's thinking on it over and over again throughout the day.

Illustration – how many of you like beef jerky? I like beef jerky, and what I like about beef jerky is that you don't just bite it and swallow it. No, you chew on it...and the longer you chew, the better it tastes.

- What's true of jerky is true of the Word of God. The longer you chew it, the better it tastes.
- It's not just reading your Bible in the morning. It's reading your Bible in the morning and then looking for a verse/truth to chew on throughout the day. You could memorize it. You could write it out. You could rewrite it in your own words. You could think about how it applies to your life. You could investigate it for deeper truths.
  - o Application – By the way, this is why we have notes and study questions in the bulletin every week. I don't just do that because it's fun spending an hour every week putting that together. I do that because I want you to chew on what you heard on Sunday throughout the week. This is not a bulletin. This is a meditation manual.
  - o Are you meditating on the Word of God? Are you chewing on it throughout the week?
    - For the more you meditate on the Word of God, the more you fill your mind with truth and purity.

The question each of us must answer this morning is not, "Do I meditate?" The truth is that we all meditate every single day. We think on things. We mull them over. The question we must answer this morning is, "What am I meditating on? What am I feeding my mind with?"

- I would venture to say that the answer for most of us has to do with our phones.
  - o According to data from iPhone and Android, the average American spends 4 hours a day on their phone (7 hours a day on screens in general).

- The average American watches three hours of television, spends two hours on social media, and checks their phone 60 times a day. (Bank My Cell, 2023) You know what that is? It's meditation.
  - Application: I don't know if you're aware of this, but you can actually check the screen time setting on your phone and it will tell you your daily screen time, how many minutes you spent on every app, and how many times you picked up your phone in any given day.
- Once again, my question is not, "Are you meditating?" My question is, "What are you meditating on?" What are you filling your mind with?
- Application: being convicted about this myself after seeing my own screen time statistics, I deleted social media from my phone. Now, I just post and check it in the morning and maybe at night if I have time.
- Why? Because throughout the course of my day, I don't want to be meditating on Twitter. I want to be meditating on the Word of God.

Illustration - Meditation is like brewing tea. Your mind is like a cup of hot water and the tea bag represents the Scripture. Hearing God's Word is like one dip of the tea bag into the cup. Some of the tea's flavor is absorbed by the water, but not as much as would occur with a more thorough soaking of the bag. Reading, studying, and memorizing God's Word are like additional plunges of the tea bag into the cup. The more frequently the tea enters the water, the more permeating its effect. Meditation, however, is like immersing the bag completely and letting it steep until all the rich tea flavor has been extracted and the hot water is thoroughly tinted reddish brown. Meditation on Scripture is letting the Bible brew in the mind. Thus we might say that as the tea colors the water, meditation likewise "colors" our thinking. When we meditate on Scripture it colors our thinking about God, about God's ways and His world, and about ourselves.

If you want to think true and pure thoughts, you need to fill your mind with truth and purity. How can you do that practically?

- #1 – Meditation
- #2 - Music

## 2.) Music

Music is powerful.

- God created music as one of the most powerful and influential aspects of creation. He created it to be one of the primary and enjoyable ways in which we worship and glorify Him.
  - The Bible contains over four hundred references to singing and fifty direct commands to sing. The longest book of the Bible, the Psalms, is a Hebrew song book.

- Psalm 98:4-8 - 4 Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. 5 Sing unto the Lord with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm. 6 With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the Lord, the King. 7 Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. 8 Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together
- God created music, and He designed us as well as the rest of creation to sing praises to Him.
- “Music is communal and universal, binding us across cultural and even linguistic barriers. We remember words to songs much sooner than we remember prose or movie lines or even our wedding vows. Without us even realizing it, we are being moved, shaped, and changed by music every day.” (The Gospel Coalition, 2013)
- “We marvel when we hear music in which one voice sings a simple melody, while three, four, or five other voices surround it in artistic harmony ... A person who thinks on music and yet does not regard it as a marvelous creation of God, must be a clodhopper indeed and does not deserve to be called a human being; he should be permitted to hear nothing but the braying of donkeys and the grunting of hogs.” – Martin Luther (Kauflin)
- What the Scripture tells us about the importance and power of music is confirmed by science today. Neurologically, music impacts nearly every area of your brain.
  - In the honors college at the university in central Florida I attended, there is a class called *Music and the Brain* which explores all the different ways that music impacts the brain.
    - It reduces stress and depression. It improves cognitive and motor skills. It can foster fear, aggression, or happiness. It improves memory. It improves communication skills. It makes you smarter. It boosts your immune system. It assists in repairing brain damage. It’s being used to combat diseases like Alzheimer’s and Parkinsons.
    - It’s powerful in both a positive and negative way, and that’s not my opinion. That’s a scientific fact. (Your Brain on Music)
    - We’re not even talking about lyrics. We’re just talking about music. You take the power of music and combine it with the vile lyrics that are being pumped out by the music industry, and it will give you a brand new understanding of how Satan has a stranglehold on the thoughts and feelings of most of our world today.
      - “Pastor that stuff doesn’t affect me.”
        - You’re a fool. The music is like super glue that binds the lyrics to your brain. It impacts you a lot more than you realize.
        - What type of music are you feeding your mind with? Are you supergluing to your brain song lyrics about sin

and drugs and alcohol, or are you filling your mind with truth and purity?

In the New Testament, we're commanded not once, but twice, to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

Ephesians 5:19 - Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

Col. 3:16 - **Let the word of Christ (*the Word of God*) dwell in you richly** in all wisdom;

- How do we do that? How do we fill our minds with the Word of God? How do we allow the Word of God to dwell in us richly?

... *by* teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

- "We are commanded to sing the Word of God—the truth revealed in the Scriptures, the story of redemption. The more that we fill our minds with Godly Christian music, the more Biblical truths and thinking habits are glued into our brains.
- Christ-filled songs can help motivate us into a day when we would rather stay in bed than get up and face that chore or meeting or project. They support us when we lack courage and need to bolster our faith. They help us remember Scripture. They keep uprooting the weeds of worry and fear that tangle our feet and trip us up. They help us when we don't know how to explain the gospel to a friend...They comfort us when we are hit with something unexpected or tragic." (Getty, 2017, p. 48)

Good godly Christian music ought to permeate our lives, our homes, our families, and our church.

- What are you listening to on your playlist?
- What are you singing along to in your car?
- What types of things are you allowing music to glue to the neural pathways of your brain?
- Are you filling your mind with truth and purity, or are you pumping your mind full of junk?
  - o "Pastor, I don't like Christian music."
    - That's because you've been pumping your brain full of junk food for so long that you can't tolerate the taste of that which is actually good for you.
    - There is this deeply ingrained lie in our American culture that feelings and tastes are permanent, indelible parts of our makeup that must be obeyed unconditionally.
    - Folks, that is a lie. Your tastes and feelings are malleable. When you remove the junk food from your life and replace it with a steady diet of truth and purity, you know what will happen over time? Your taste

buds will adjust and those things will start to taste sweeter and sweeter and sweeter.

- Illustration – getting off of processed sugars back in 2017.
  - Natural sugars tasted so much sweeter.
  - Processed sugars became bitter.

What type of music are you feeding your and your family's minds with?

If you want to think true and pure thoughts, you need to fill your mind with truth and purity. How can you do that?

- #1 – Meditation
- #2 - Music

### 3.) Mentors

Proverbs 12:15 - 15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.

Proverbs 11:14 - 14 Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.

I'm a really big believer in the importance of surrounding yourself with godly, experienced men and women that will speak wisdom into your life and that you can get counsel from before making major life decisions.

Illustration – I've got 5 or 6 older experienced pastors that I'll often seek counsel from (guys in Lancaster, Canoga, Michigan, Maryland, Florida).

- Before taking the pastorate here at Horizon, I think I talked to every single one of them.
- My conversation with Tim Christoson was instrumental in me taking the pastorate here.

Beyond that, here in our church, there's a number of folks that I look to for counsel.

I don't know if you realize this or not, but in the roughly three years that I've been here, I've not made a single major decision in isolation. Why? Because I believe that in the multitude of godly experienced counselors, there is wisdom.

- We haven't always made the right decision, but a lot more often than not, we have.

What type of counsel are you filling your mind with?

- I'll tell you this. There is a LOT of bad counsel out there on the internet and from people with no grasp of the Scriptures, no life experience, and no idea what they're talking about.

I want to encourage you this morning with 5-character traits of a good mentor.

- Godly
  - Psalm 1:1 - Blessed is the man that does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly
  - If they don't know God, they're not going to be a good source of counsel for you in your life.
    - Why?
    - 1 Cor. 3:19 – the wisdom of this world is foolishness in the sight of God.
  - Do they know God, and then do they KNOW GOD?
    - Do they have a real, genuine, obedient, Spirit filled relationship with their Creator? That's the type of person you want speaking truth into your life.
- Caring
  - They care about you. They have an interest in your life. There's a two-way relationship there.
  - Proverbs 17:17 - 17 A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.
- Experienced
  - Proverbs 16:31 - 31 The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.
  - Experience is a crown of glory if it's paired with godliness.
  - You can learn a lot of lessons the easy way if you'll listen to the counsel of someone who's learned a lot of lessons the hard way.
- Encouraging
  - 1 Thess. 5:11 - 11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.
  - Heb. 10:24-25 - 24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.
  - You and I need a lot of encouragement. There's also a need for constructive criticism at times, but if there's more criticism than encouragement that relationship's not going to be helpful. It's going to be toxic. It's going to tear you down. We need people in our lives that will build us up.
- Honest
  - Proverbs 27:6 - 6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.
  - Proverbs 27:17 - 17 Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.
  - We need people in our lives that will build us up, but we also need people in our lives that will keep us accountable and speak the truth in love.

When we surround ourselves with godly, experienced, caring, encouraging and honest men and women, it's another way in which we feed our minds with truth and purity.

## **Application**

Philippians 4:8 - Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, ... honest,... just, ... pure, ... lovely, ... of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

- Folks, if we're going to think on these things, we need to feed our minds with these things.
- How do you do that? Three practical ways this morning...
  - Meditation - meditate on the Word of God throughout your day (let the tea bag of Scripture brew in your mind throughout the day).
    - Remember, the question is not, "Will you meditate?". The question is, "What will you meditate on?"
  - Music - inundate your mind with goldy music (in your car, in your home, on your playlist, when you're at church)
    - Glue the truths of God's Word to your brain through the singing and consumption of good godly Christian music.
  - Mentors - surround yourself with godly, experienced men and women that will speak the truth and purity of God's Word into your life.

What you put into your body matters when it comes to your physical health, and what you put into your mind matters just as much when it comes to your mental health. What are you feeding your mind with this morning?

# STUDY QUESTIONS

## applying inward

1.) *What resonated most with you from the sermon this past Sunday? What do you meditate on/think on throughout the day? In what ways did God work in your heart about filling your mind with truth and purity?*

## digging deeper

2.) *Meditate on Joshua 1:8. Rewrite it in your own words. Break down each part of the verse. What's the context of the verse? What truths are found within it? How does it apply to your life?*

3.) *Read Acts 16:22-36. In this passage, Paul and Silas sang and praised God while in prison. What impact did their singing have on the different characters in the story (i.e. themselves, their fellow prisoners, the jailor, and their God)?*

4.) *Read 1 Kings 12:1-17. What can we learn from the example of Rehoboam and the bad counsel he adhered to? What were the consequences of his actions? Who are some of the primary mentors in your life, and how have they ministered to you?*

## looking ahead

5.) *Read Proverbs 4:23. This past week we studied practical ways to fill our minds with truth and purity. What are some practical ways that we can guard our minds from untruth and impurity?*

## NEXT WEEK IN OUR SERIES

Practice 4: Guard Your Mind from Garbage (Prov. 4:23)



# GUARD YOUR MIND

## Prov. 4:23

### Introduction

Take your Bibles this morning and open up to Proverbs 4:23 as we study our fourth and final practice from the Scripture for mental health.

As you're turning there, I want to ask you a question by way of introduction. Does it really matter what you allow into your mind? Is it that big of a deal? Does what you allow yourself to see and hear have a measurable on impact how you think and behave?

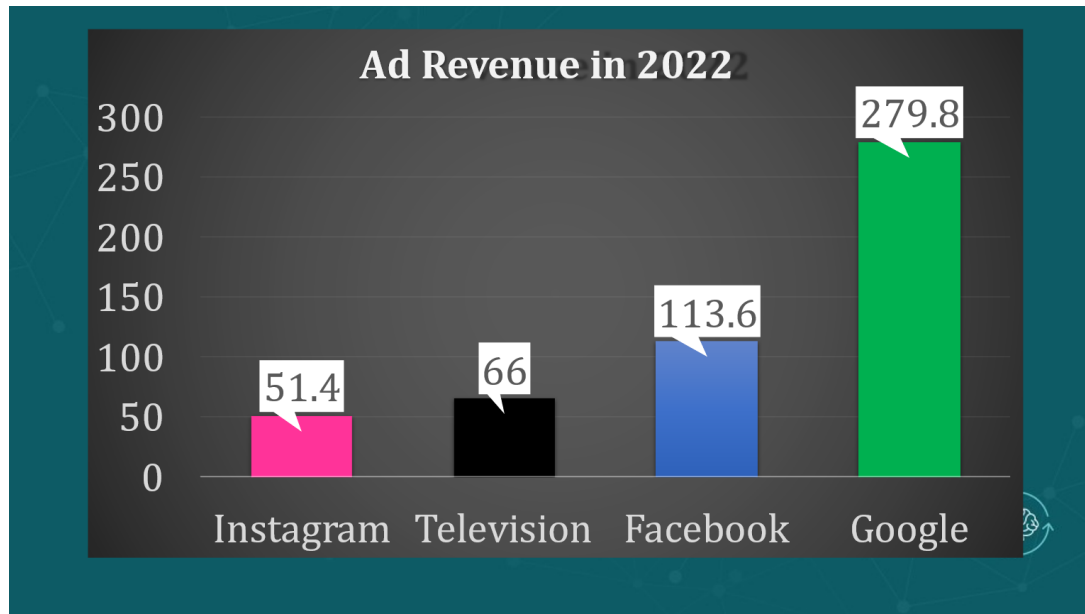
Illustration – Super Bowl Commercials

- Last weekend was the Super Bowl, and within America, the Super Bowl is typically the most watched television event of the year. Last week, there was an estimated 113 million people that watched the Super Bowl. To put that in perspective, 40% of US households watched the game, and of US households that had their television on during the time frame of the Super Bowl, 77% of them were tuned in to the Super Bowl.
- But if you've ever watched the Super Bowl, you know that throughout the course of the game, you will not only watch the big game, you will also be treated to a steady diet of what? Commercials.
- Those commercials are not cheap! The average price tag of a 30 second commercial slot for last weekend's Super Bowl was \$7 million (\$233k per second). Why would someone spend that much money on an advertisement? Do they just hate money? No.
  - o They spend \$7 million because they believe that within a 30 second time period they can sufficiently influence the thoughts and behaviors of 100 million Americans so as to generate greater than \$7 million in revenue.

You might not think that what you allow yourself to see and hear influences your thoughts and behaviors, but corporations are spending billions of dollars every year because they believe the opposite. We live in a time period with the internet and social media and smart devices in which we are inundated with ads targeted at influencing our thinking and behavior.

Illustration – This is especially true with tech companies. You might think that services like Instagram, Facebook, and Google are free services, but they're not. That's not how businesses work. Someone is paying for those services. Who is it? Advertisers. What are they buying? Your attention. That's why everything about those apps is designed to keep you online for as long as possible. You're not paying for the product because you are the

product. Those advertisers are buying your attention with the intent of shaping your thoughts and behaviors, and they're spending billions of dollars a year to do it.



- For instance, do you want to know how much advertising revenue Instagram generated off of your attention in 2022?
  - o \$51.4 billion
    - That is more than double the total income of McDonalds which means that Instagram is twice as good at selling your attention as McDonalds is at selling hamburgers.
- In 2022, Facebook generated \$113.6 billion in ad revenue which is nearly double the amount of ad revenue that all of television combined generated over the same time period.
- In 2022, Google generated \$279.8 billion dollars of ad revenue selling your attention, selling advertisers the opportunities and resources needed to influence your thoughts and behaviors.
- 

Pastor, what's your point? In the digital age that we live in, there is a multi-billion dollar war going on for your attention the result of which is, according to Forbes, the average person encounters between 4,000-10,000 ads every single day. (Simpson, 2017)

# THE AVERAGE PERSON ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN 4,000-10,000 ADS PER DAY



- 
- If there were ever a period in time in which we needed to make a concerted effort to guard our minds, it is today.

Proverbs 4:20-23 - 20 My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. 21 Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. 22 For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh. 23 Keep thy heart (*guard your mind*) with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

- Solomon wrote this three thousand years ago before the advent of computers, television, the internet, social media, and smart phones.
- If what he said was true then, how much more so is it true today?

As we dive into our text this morning, let's take a moment and break down what Solomon says in verse 23.

- Keep your heart – when the bible talks about the heart it's talking about the center of your being, more so than your feelings. It's referring to what we today would call the mind. Solomon is saying to keep/guard/protect your mind.
- with all diligence – above all else.
  - o Guard your money. Guard your valuables. Guard your property...but above all else, guard your mind. (Spence & Exell, 1883)
- Why?
- For out of it are the issues of life – the moral conduct of your life is determined by the condition of your mind/your heart
  - o Illustration - Physiologically, if your heart fails, what happens to the rest of your body? It fails too. Why? Because in your body, everything flows from the heart.
  - o Application – this is Solomon's point. Just as your physical health is dependent upon the condition of your heart, so too your spiritual health is dependent upon the condition of your heart/your mind.

- Guard it. Protect it above else. Why? Because everything flows out of it.

Illustration – what is the most valuable possession that you have? Maybe it's a bank account. Maybe it's a precious metal. Maybe it's a retirement account. Maybe it's a business. I don't know what it is for you, but I would venture to say that it's likely protected. You probably have not posted the bank account and routing numbers on your social media page. There's probably some kind of two factor authorization. There is some kind of a security plan in place for that which is most valuable to you.

Application – My contention this morning is that just as you have some sort of security plan in place for those things, you need to have a security plan in place for your mind. Guard your mind, protect your mind, above all else. For out of it are the issues of your life.

- Last week we looked at how practically to fill our minds with that which is true, pure, and significant. This morning, we're going to take a few minutes to study how we can protect our minds from that which is untrue, impure and insignificant.

As we do so, I'm reminded that with any good security plan, there are two primary components: prevention and preparedness. We want to prevent bad stuff from happening, but we also want to be prepared for if/when it happens. As we begin our study this morning of how we can protect our minds, the first practical step we're going to look at is prevention.

## 1.) Prevention

Prevention – keeping that which is untrue, impure, and insignificant out of your head in the first place.

How do you do that? Number 1 – through prayer.

### A.) Through Prayer

Philippians 4:6-7 – 6 Be careful for nothing (*don't worry*); but in everything (*every situation*) by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving (*gratitude*) let your requests be made known unto God.

- Instead of worrying, pray.
- Instead of harboring stressors, give them to God. And do you know what will happen?

7 And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep (*guard/protect*) your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

- When we take our worries to God in prayer, do you know what it does? It protects our minds. It creates a barrier around our thinking that prevents the circumstances of life around us from producing untrue thoughts within us.
- Prayer is a preventative measure by which we can guard our minds.

Illustration – there’s a pastor by the name of Craig Groeschel that has a really practical means of using prayer in this way in his life. Craig has a little God box and whenever he catches himself worrying about something, he writes that worry down, prays over it, and literally gives it over to the Lord by placing it in that God box.

- If, later on, he feels compelled to worry about that which he gave to the Lord in prayer, the only way he will allow himself to do so is by pulling that note out of the box and saying out loud to God, “Sorry, I don’t trust you with this. I’m going to deal with it myself.”
- It’s a powerful visual representation of the way in which prayer can guard our minds from worry.

Illustration – Corrie Ten Boom Quotes

- Prayer changes our attention from the problem to the Power, from anxiety to the Almighty. (Boom, 1978, p. 72)
- If you look at the world, you’ll be distressed. If you look within, you’ll be depressed. But if you look at Christ, you’ll be at rest.
- There is no panic in Heaven! God has no problems, only plans. (McDaniel, 2023)

Prayer protects our mind from worry.

Prayer empowers us for temptation.

- Matt. 26:41 - 41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Answered prayer can also protects our minds.

- Psalm 77:11-12 - 11 I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. 12 I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings.
- As we look back on instances in which God answered our prayers, it reminds us in the present that He has been faithful in the past and that we can trust Him in the future.

In the security plan for our minds, how do we prevent what which is unwanted from gaining a foothold in our thinking?

- Prayer – it helps protect our minds from that which is untrue and insignificant as we hand our worries over to God.
- But that’s not the only preventative measure we can take. Another preventative measure that the Scripture speaks of is...

## B.) Guard Rails

Guard Rails – boundaries that we set up in our lives to prevent that which is untrue, impure, and insignificant from entering our minds.

Job 31:1 - I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid (*lust after a woman*)?

Psalms 101:3 - 3 I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.

1 Thess. 5:22 – Abstain (keep your distance) from all appearance of evil.

Proverbs 4:14-15 - 14 Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. 15 Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.

I'm not talking about becoming an isolationist who hides under a rock and never talks to unsaved people for fear of being exposed to evil. Folks, we live in an evil world. Our mission is to take the gospel to lost people. You can't do that without interacting with lost people, and as you do that, you'll be exposed to sin. By the way, you'll be exposed to sin by interacting with saved people too, because we're not perfect either.

But my point is this. There is a difference between being exposed to evil and exposing yourself to evil. There's a difference between seeing a wicked thing with your eyes and setting a wicked thing before your eyes. There's a difference between hearing profanity at work and entertaining yourself with it in your living room at night.

We need guard rails in our life that are set up to keep out that which is untrue, impure, and insignificant.

Illustration – can you imagine what it would be like if your bank had no doors, no locks, no cameras, and no preventative measures for safe guarding your valuables (which aren't FDIC insured)? What would you think of that bank? You'd be outraged due to their negligent handling of that which is most valuable to you.

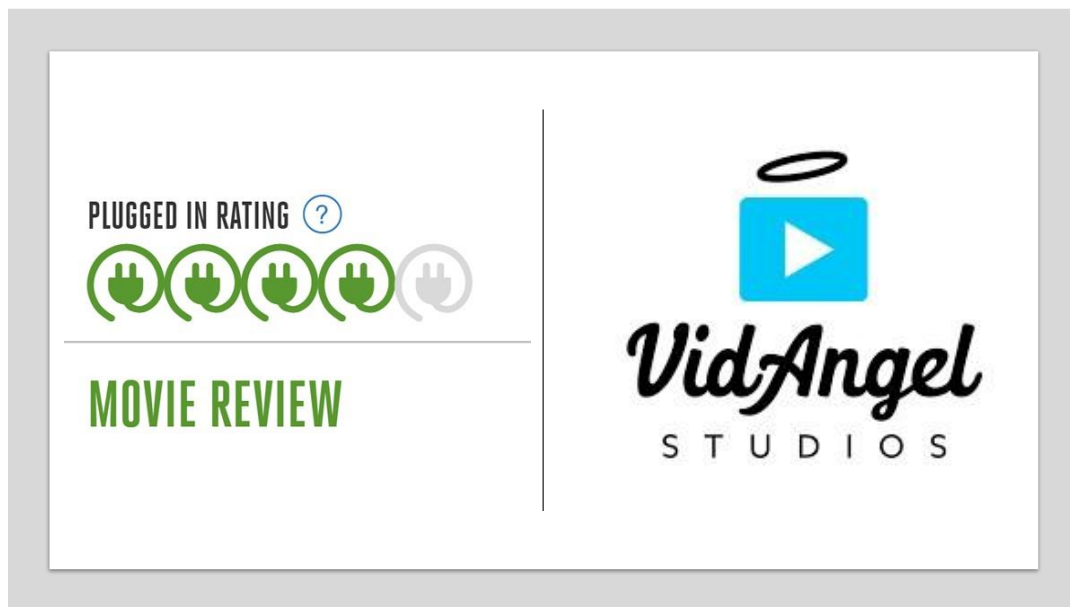
- Friend, according to Prov. 4:23, do you know what's more valuable than your money? Your mind. What safe guards/security measures do you have in place for protecting it? If your answer is none, then that's just as egregious as a bank with no doors and no locks.

This morning I want to talk about guard rails as it pertains to entertainment and social media. With the entertainment industry in particular, there is so much impurity and filth within it.

Illustration – The Last of Us

- Episode 1 – 81 minutes
  - “The f-word is used more than 45 times. The s-word is heard more than 25 times. We also hear occasional uses of “a-,” “b-ch” and “h—.” God’s name is abused six times, including twice in the form of “g-dd-n.” Jesus’ name is used in vain four times.” (Unthank)
  - That’s just the profanity content, and that is very typical of the impurity that is being pumped out by the entertainment industry today.
  - Friend, that’s the kind of stuff we should be guarding our minds from...not pumping it full of.

This morning, I want to provide you with two practical resources that can help you with setting up guard rails for your entertainment (what you fill your mind with in your living room).



#### Application – Resource 1

- Plugged In Movie/TV Review
  - This is put out by focus on the family. They have a website and an app.
  - You can look up just about any movie/tv show and it will give you a detailed overview of the profanity, violence, nudity, and sexuality within.
  - If you’re not using it, you should.
  - You should know what you’re watching before you sit down to watch.

#### Application – Resource 2

- Vidangel
  - It’s a filtering software that costs around \$8/month.

- It works on most content on Netflix, Amazon Prime, Apple TV, Paramount Plus, etc. and allows you to filter out in detail all of the profanity, nudity, sexual content, and violence that you'd like.

These are fantastic resources that you can use as guard rails in the entertainment you consume, but I also want to take a moment here this morning to talk about having guard rails on social media usage.

- Before, I dive into the weeds I want to clarify up front that I am not anti-social media. I am not against social media. I am against the unmitigated use of social media. I am for social media as a tool. I am against being used by social media as a tool in a way that is really bad for your mental and emotional wellbeing.

Google, FB, Instagram, and TikTok are competing for your attention. Their business model is to keep you on the screen. The more time you spend on the screen, the more money they make from advertisers. Everything about the app is designed to keep you on as long as possible.

- You ever wonder why the apps prompt you to enable push notifications? It's so that when you're off the app, they can prompt you as many times as possible to get you back on the app.
- You ever wonder why when you get tagged in a photo, the push notification doesn't include the photo in it?
- You ever wonder why you get really random notifications?
  - Your friend who hasn't posted in a while just posted. See what he said.
  - Your phone contact just joined on FB. Send him a wave.
  - It has nothing to do with your mental wellbeing. It has everything to do with monetizing your addiction to a screen.
- You ever wonder why when you hit the refresh button something new shows up, even when nothing new has been posted?
  - Why is that? It's because it's designed like a slot machine and the affect that it has on your brain, the dopamine hit, it triggers on your brain is similar to that which is triggered in addictions.
- There is advanced AI technology on the back end that tracks everything about your usage (how much time you spend looking at every single post/video) and then custom curates your content so as to maximize the amount of time you spend with your head glued to the screen. Once again, it's not for your wellbeing. It's to make money off of you.
- The whole set up is designed to make money off of your attention, and in many ways that set up is detrimental to your mental health.
  - It addicts your mind to that which is insignificant.
  - It trains to measure your self-worth in terms of like, comments, and views.
  - It leads you to evaluate your self-image in light of people's highlight reels and filtered pictures that are not a reflection of their real life.



“However, multiple studies have found a strong link between **heavy** social media and an increased risk for depression, anxiety, loneliness, self-harm, and even suicidal thoughts... Even if you know that images you’re viewing on social media are manipulated, they can still make you feel insecure about how you look or what’s going on in your own life...a study at the University of Pennsylvania found that high usage of Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram increases rather decreases feelings of loneliness... Social media platforms are designed to snare your attention, keep you online, and have you repeatedly checking your screen for updates. It’s how the companies make money. But, much like a gambling compulsion or an addiction to nicotine, alcohol, or drugs, social media use can create psychological cravings. When you receive a like, a share, or a favorable reaction to a post, it can trigger the release of dopamine in the brain, the same “reward” chemical that follows winning on a slot machine, taking a bite of chocolate, or lighting up a cigarette, for example. The more you’re rewarded, the more time you want to spend on social media, even if it becomes detrimental to other aspects of your life.” (Help Guide)

A study carried out at the University of Pennsylvania found that students who limited their social media use to 30 minutes a day reported significantly lower levels of depression and loneliness than those who had no time constraints.

- The author of the study Melissa G. Hunt said this, “Here’s the bottom line. Using less social media than you normally would leads to significant decreases in both depression and loneliness. These effects are particularly pronounced for folks who were more depressed when they came into the study.” (Walton, 2018)
- If you are spending hours of unmitigated time on social media every day, addicted to a screen inundated with ads deriving your self-worth from and comparing your self-image with other people’s fake realities, you are more than likely doing major damage to your mental health. It’s because you’re not using social media. Social media is using.

# GUARD RAILS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

- 1.) Use it knowing that your well being is not in their best interest.
- 2.) Eliminate push notifications
- 3.) Limit social media usage to <30 min. daily
- 4.) Delete social media from your phone
- 5.) Utilize focus settings on devices



## Practical Guardrails for Social Media Use

- Use social media knowing that your well-being is not in their best interest.
  - o These media companies see you as a cash cow and their financial interests do not align with your mental wellbeing.
  - o Prioritize your mental wellbeing over their bottom line.
- Eliminate push notifications from most apps.
  - o They're distracting. They're addicting. They're like junk food for your brain.
  - o They're designed to get you and keep you on the app as long as possible.
- Limit social media usage to 30 minutes or less per day total
  - o You can set this up in the screen time setting on your phone. Parents you can password protect this setting so that when your teen hits whatever time limit, that's it.
- Delete social media from your phone.
- Utilize focus settings on devices.
  - o to limit phone call, text message, and email notifications

Through prayer and guardrails, we can prevent a lot of that which is untrue, impure, and insignificant from entering our minds...but you can't prevent all of it. So what do you do when stuff slips through the cracks? What do you do when impurity bypasses the preventative measures of the security plan for your mind?

We've looked at the importance of prevention, and now we shift our focus to emergency preparedness.

## 2.) Preparedness

1 Cor. 10:13 - 13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

How do we deal with temptation, impurity, and evil when confronted with them on a day by day basis? God provides us with some ways of escape. What are they?

#### A.) Run from Temptation

2 Tim. 2:22 - 22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

- There are times in life in which you will be faced with temptation that you did not expect to run into, and you just need to get out of there.
- This is particularly true in areas where you have real struggles.
  - o When temptation comes, you don't need to rationalize. You need to run.
  - o Positive Illustration - Joseph with Potiphar's Wife (Gen. 39:1-23)
    - 1 Cor. 6:18 - Flee fornication.
  - o Negative Illustration - David & Bathsheba
    - Joseph ran. David rationalized. One of those two men found the way of escape, and it was Joseph.
- Run from temptation.

#### B.) Fight with Scripture

There are going to be instances in life where you can't run from evil. What do you do? You resist the devil. You fight back with Scripture.

- James 4:7 - 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.
- 1 Peter 5:8-9 - 8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: 9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.
- Matt. 4:4 - man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God
- Psalm 119:11 - Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.
  - o The areas of your life in which you know you have the greatest struggles are the areas of your life in which it is most important that you have Scripture memorized by which you can parry the attacks of the devil with the Word of God.
  - o That is exactly what Adam and Eve failed to do in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3, and that is exactly what Jesus succeeded in doing in the Judean wilderness in Matthew 4.

- Satan tempted Jesus to step outside of God's will for personal gain, to test God and His Word, and to take a shortcut to satisfaction that avoided suffering.
  - Jesus replied with Deut. 8:3, 6:16, and 6:13-14 all of which He had committed to memory.

Thy word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee. In what areas of your life do you need to commit Scripture to memory so as to be able to resist the temptation of the devil?

Run from temptation.

Fight with Scripture.

C.) Call out For Help

Dial 911

- To God and to your brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Hebrews 4:15 and 2:18 tell us that Christ was tempted in all points as we are yet without sin, and as result He is especially equipped to help us when we are tempted.
- Galatians 6:1-2 says - 1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. 2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Illustration – sponsors with AA

- One of the things that AA gets right is sponsors. When we face temptation alone, we are facing it in a way that God doesn't want us to. God desires to help us, and He has provided us with a system of support within the church that better equips us to handle temptation as we fight it together.

Application – if there's a very real struggle in your life, it might be time for you to get an accountability partner...someone who can help encourage you to do right and keep you accountable when you don't...someone who will check up with you on a weekly basis...someone you can dial 911 to and call when you're confronted with major temptation in your life.

### **Application**

The most valuable possession that you have in your life is not your bank account. It's not your car. It's not your safe. It's your mind. What kind of a security plan do you have in place to protect it? Have you set up preventative guard rails in your life to keep it safe, and are you mentally prepared for the attacks of the evil one that you will face on a day-to-day basis?

In what ways do you need to beef up the security plan for your mind this morning?

# STUDY QUESTIONS

## applying inward

1.) *What resonated most with you from the sermon this past Sunday? In what ways did God work in your heart about guarding your mind?*

## digging deeper

2.) *Read Proverbs 4:20-27. What further details do these verses provide us about what it means to fill our minds with good and guard our minds from evil?*

3.) *Read the Lord's prayer in Matthew 6:9-13. What are some of the different aspects of this prayer, and how can they help guard our mind through Christ Jesus?*

4.) *Read Genesis 39:1-20. How does Joseph's response to temptation compare and contrast with David's response in 2 Samuel 11. What immediate and long term consequences did both men face?*

## looking ahead

5.) *Read Haggai 1:1-15. What was the people's attitude toward building the house of God? What had been the result of their actions? What did Haggai call upon them to do, and how was that an act of faith?*

# Participating in the Constructive Work of God's Anger

## Eph. 4:26, 31-32

### Review

Well, today after having taken a brief two week pause, we're going to jump right back into our series on the Bible and mental health.

- As a reminder, up to this point we have talked about a number of things. We first off, talked about 4 God given resources that we have for our mental health: (1) the example of Christ (2) the instructions of Scripture (3) the empowerment of the Spirit (4) the support of the church.
- We then talked about 4 Biblical practices that God has given to us for our mental health: (1) grounding our lives in our God given identity and purpose (2) tearing down strongholds in our minds (3) feeding our minds with truth and purity and (4) guarding our minds.
- Now starting today and over the course of the next several weeks, we're going to tackle three pertinent topics as it pertains to mental health: anger, grief, and stress.
  - o I'm speaking on anger this morning.



**DR PAUL LENDERMAN**



**DR GEORGE CRABB**

- o
- o Dr. Paul Lenderman, who is a nationally certified grief counselor, will be speaking for us next Sunday on grief. The title of his message is "Understanding Loss in an Unprecedented Time".

- The following Sunday, Dr. George Crabb, who is both an MD for Kaiser as well as an undergraduate instructor in Biblical counseling, will be speaking for us on 3/26 on stress. The title of his message is “Overcoming Stress”.

We’ve got some exciting topics coming up over the course of the next three weeks, but for today’s message, we’re going to be tackling the topic of anger, and the title for today’s message is “partaking in the constructive work of God’s anger”. I thought about titling the message “showing others the wrath of God”, but I figured that might be a little bit too strong.

## **Introduction**

As we dive into today’s sermon, I want to start off the message with a very simple question. What is anger? If you had to define anger, how would you do it? Is it bad? We know it can be bad, but is it always bad? When it’s not bad, is anger sort of neutral, or can it actually be a good thing?

I feel like a lot of the preaching that I have heard on anger has been overwhelmingly negative, and I understand the reason why. It’s because most of the time when we do anger, we do it wrong. So, a lot of the preaching on the topic is naturally negative and, I believe, has unintentionally created this perception among Christians that anger is bad. We don’t do anger because “anger” is a dirty word. But the problem with that understanding of anger is that all throughout the pages of Scripture, who is presented as angry? God. This has resulted in a lot of Christians misunderstanding and being ashamed of the wrath of God, and that’s not good either.

In understanding what anger is and the morality of it, we find ourselves in this interesting paradox. For, on the one hand we know from both first-hand experience and from the Scripture that anger can be very, very bad (half of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5 are anger related). But then, on the other side, we know that anger is an integral part of God’s character, which means that it also can be very, very good. What is anger, and should we do it? How can we take part in God’s anger, and it not be a bad thing?

These are all loaded questions that we need answers for if we are going to be good and angry. In order to find the answers to these questions, we are going to look at both the example of our Father and the instructions from His Word. We’re going to start our study this morning by discussing the definition of anger.

### 1.) The Definition of Anger

What is anger?

- Anger at its core is an emotion of intense displeasure at something or someone.

- These intense feelings express themselves physiologically.
  - “A general nervous tension pervades your body. Your adrenaline surges. The muscles in your face and chest—maybe your fists too!—clench. Your stomach churns. The sympathetic nervous system fires up. You actually feel hot, as blood rushes to your muscles preparing you for action. Your face gets red. Your eyes glitter—you’ve heard of a person having ‘fire in his eye’!” Your brow and mouth tighten into a disapproving scowl and frown. You’re in a state of high alert with alarm bells clanging. The limbic system of your brain lights up the MRI scan with anger’s distinctive neuro-electrical pattern.” (Powlison, 2016, p. 49)
- These intense feelings can also express themselves in any one of a number of behaviors that we then choose to engage in.
  - Outbursts
  - Violence
  - Protests
  - Constructive Activity
  - Bitterness
  - Unforgiveness
  - Backstabbing
  - Passive Withdrawal
  - Anger can be hot or cold. It can be fostered externally or internally, but at its core, anger is a feeling of intense displeasure at something or someone.
  - Nevertheless, as the Scripture talks about anger, in a broad sense, it describes two different types/categories of anger, and I want to give you a side by side example of those two different categories.

#### Illustration – examples of the two different types of anger

- Aaron Hernandez (NFL superstar)
  - How many of you have ever heard of Aaron Hernandez? Aaron Hernandez was a football superstar. He played college football for the Florida Gators, and then he was drafted to the New England Patriots where he became one of the best tight ends in all of football. His career was on an astronomical trajectory, up until June of 2013 when he, in anger, made a life altering decision.
  - On June 14, 2013, Hernandez became enraged when he saw a friend of his, Odin Lloyd, chatting with some men that Hernandez had had a previous altercation with. Over the course of the next several days, the NFL star, held onto that rage as it festered within him. Three days later on June 17, Hernandez and some friends picked up Lloyd from his house in the middle of the night and murdered him in an industrial park in Boston.



- Nine days later, Hernandez was charged with first degree murder. His \$40 million contract and all sponsorship deals were immediately canceled, and in April of 2015, Hernandez was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. He remained in prison until 2017, at which point in time he took his own life in his prison cell. (Margaritoff, 2020)
- That's one category of anger. Let me give you an illustration of another category.
- Candice Lightner (founder of MADD)
  - How many of you have ever heard of Candice Lightner?
  - In May of 1980, Candice's 13 year old daughter was killed by a drunk driver named Clarence Busch. Upon striking the teenager with his vehicle while inebriated, Clarence fled the scene, and when he was eventually arrested by police, it marked his fifth arrest for drunk driving.
  - Candice was both grief stricken and enraged. As a result of the tragic injustice, she founded an organization called MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) to fight for stronger punishments on those who drink and drive.
  - She started the organization four days after her daughter's death, and it has grown in size and influence over the decades. It now receives more than \$40 million in funding every year, and the organization claims that since its inception, drunk driving has been cut in half. (Terry Bryant Accident & Injury Law)

In both of these examples of anger, at the foundation of both parties' behavior, was the same feeling of intense displeasure at something. However, the ways in which they channeled those feelings were very different. Their differing expressions of anger are a great example of the two different categories of anger that the Bible talks about: righteous anger and unrighteous anger.

"Pastor, I understand that there's unrighteous anger, but is there really such a thing as righteous anger? Absolutely. How do you know that? Three reasons.

- God is angry, and God is righteous. (Ps. 7:11 – God is angry with the wicked every day)
- Jesus got angry, and Jesus is perfectly righteous.
- The Scripture commands you and I to be angry. Really?

Take your Bibles and turn to Ephesians 4 this morning. Look with me at Eph. 4:26.

26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

- We are commanded to be angry without sinning. Don't have unrighteous anger. Have righteous anger.

Pastor, if anger is intense displeasure at something or someone, then what is the difference between righteous anger and unrighteous anger?

Let me define both of these categories for you, and then we'll establish these definitions from the Scripture.

**Righteous Anger** - directed at  
(1) the right things  
(2) with the right attitude  
(3) for the right purpose



Righteous anger – anger directed at the right things with the right attitude for the right purpose

In contrast,

Unrighteous anger – anger directed at the wrong things with the wrong attitude for the wrong purpose

What do you mean by that? Let's break it down.

Righteous Anger

(1) Directed at the right things

What are the right things to get angry about? Evil....

How do you know that? That's what God gets angry about it.

Romans 1:18 – For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

If you really take a moment to think about it, God's anger at evil makes a lot of sense. For, if God is good, how could He not get angry at things that are plain wrong? Could you imagine a God that did not get angry at the Holocaust? Can you imagine a God that was indifferent towards child abusers, human traffickers, and murderers? Such a being would not be morally superior, but rather morally deficient.

We need to understand this morning that God's anger at evil is not a bad thing. It is not something to be ashamed of. It is a good and holy expression of His righteousness and love. His anger flows out of His love. For, He gets angry at the evil that harms that which He loves. (Powlison, 2016, p. 103)

- Illustration - If I love my daughters, and someone is harming my daughters, you better believe that I'm going to get angry about that, and I'm going to do something about it. That anger does not contradict my love for my daughters. It flows out of my love for my daughters.
- By the way, if my daughters are harming themselves, engaged in some sort of self destructive behavior, you better believe that I'm going to do everything can to prevent that as well. In such a situation, the loving thing to do is not to affirm them in that behavior, but to do everything I can to break them from it. Why? Because I love them.
  - o When it comes to God, His approach to us in our sinful self destructive behaviors is the same.
  - o Someone might ask, "If God really loves the LGBTQ crowd, then why does He tell them not to act in accordance with their desires?" I'll tell you why. It's not because He doesn't love them. It's because He does. Love doesn't stand by and do nothing or, even worse, affirm someone as they are engaging in self destructive behaviors. In love, it does everything it can to stop that behavior.

God's righteous anger is directed at that which is evil, and just as God is angry at that which is evil, so too He commands us to be angry at that which is evil.

Psalm 97:10 – Ye that love the Lord hate evil

- The emotion of anger is hardwired into us so that when we see injustice in the world, we are energized to do something about it. That's a good thing, not a bad thing. The emotion of anger helps us to recognize evil in the world and take action to opposite it.
- Illustration
  - o When someone grossly misrepresents another and defames their character, that ought to make us angry.
  - o When a man physically abuses his family, that ought to make us angry.
  - o When someone murders a child, that ought to make us angry.
  - o When someone abandons their family, that ought to make us angry.
  - o Anger at its very core expresses, "I'm against that. That is wrong, and it matters, and I want to do something to make that wrong right."
- The problem comes when we take the place of God...when we become enraged at violations, not of God's will, but of our own will.
  - o James 1:20 – For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

- If we're going to have righteous anger, our anger needs to be directed at the right things: evil...not merely at violations of my will, my desires, my wants, but at violations of God's will.
- Righteous anger is directed at evil, and righteous anger is a good thing.

We've got to be angry at the right things. Number 2, we've got to be angry with the right attitude.

## (2) Directed with the right attitude

Injustice has occurred. This emotion of opposition to that injustice has welled up within us. What now? How do we channel that emotion with the right attitude?

This is important because the difference between righteous anger and unrighteous anger is not just what we're angry about. It's also what we then do with that anger. You can be angry at the right things in the wrong way.

What's the right attitude? Once again, we're going to look to the best example of righteous anger that we have anywhere, the righteous anger of God.

With what kind of attitude does God channel His anger?

- Patience – God's channels His anger in a way that is under control with the big picture in view
  - What is wrong does not change right away. This is nowhere else more evident than in God's patience with us. Aren't you thankful that God's been patient with your sin?
  - One of my biggest pet peeves is people who say that the God of the New Testament is different than the God of the Old Testament. The New Testament God is loving. The Old Testament God is angry. I'm convinced that those who say such things have never truly read the Old Testament or the New Testament.
    - Exodus 34:6-7 - 6 And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, 7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.
      - Does anyone know where in the Bible that was written? Exodus. Old Testament.
    - Numbers 14:18 – The Lord is longsuffering, and of great mercy
    - Psalm 78:37-38 – despite Israel's unfaithfulness to Him, many times in compassion and forgiveness, God turned his anger away and did not stir up all His wrath

- Micah 7:18 – God does not retain His anger forever because He delights in mercy.
    - Nahum 1:3 – the Lord is slow to anger
    - Joel 2:13 – the Lord is slow to anger and of great kindness
  - Over and over again, in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, we are told that God’s anger is not short fused. It is longsuffering. It is not impulsive. It is reasonable. It is not reactive. It is proactive. It is never out of control. It is always under control.
  - How do we channel our anger in the right way? We do it like God does it. We channel our anger patiently and under control.
    - Proverbs 14:29 - He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding (*wise*); but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.
    - Proverbs 16:32 - 32 He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty (*strong*); and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.
    - James 1:19 - 19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:
      - God commands us to be slow to anger.
    - What does that look like practically?
    - When anger wells up inside of us at injustice, we don’t just react impulsively. We take a moment, and we evaluate the situation so that we can be proactive with the big picture in mind. We move from the part of our brain that is reactive to the part of our brain that is proactive. We do not allow our anger to control us. We take control of our anger. Why?
      - Because that is how God channels His anger, and because that’s how God commands us to channel our anger.
      - Righteous anger requires an attitude of patience, but it also requires an attitude of mercy.
- Mercy – God not only channels His anger slowly. He also does so with a heart that is eager to forgive.
  - Once again, aren’t you thankful for that this morning? Aren’t you thankful that God is eager to forgive you?
  - Is God’s anger really like that? Is it really merciful and eager to forgive? That’s a hard concept to wrap our heads around because we don’t have a lot of experience with that type of anger. Yet, over and over again throughout the Bible when the Scripture talks about God’s wrath, do you know what’s connected to it? Both Patience and mercy.
    - Exodus 34:6-7 - 6 And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, (*there’s the mercy*) longsuffering (*there’s the patience*), and abundant in goodness and truth, 7 Keeping **mercy** for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty;

- Wrath, mercy, patience
- Numbers 14:18 – The Lord is longsuffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty
  - Wrath, mercy, patience
- Micah 7:18-19 - 18 Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. 19 He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.
- How is that possible? How can God be both filled with wrath at evil on the one hand and then so eager to forgive it on the other hand? How can God be angry at our sin and then forgive our sin at the same time?
  - Let me tell you how. His name is Jesus, and upon the cross of Calvary He bore the full weight of the Father's wrath poured out upon your sin in His body.
  - What do you mean by that?
    - The Bible is very clear in Romans 1:18 that wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness. Do you understand what that means? Every single act of evil that ever has been committed or ever will be committed will bear the full weight of God's wrath upon it...and it will bear that weight in one of two locations: the cross of Jesus Christ or the eternal flames of Hell.
    - God in His righteousness must punish every act of sin, and yet God in His mercy provides us with an alternative means of payment in His Son.
    - Romans 5:8-9 - 8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.
      - Because He bore the wrath of God upon my sin in Himself upon the cross.
      - John 3:16-18, 36 - For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. He that believeth on the Son

hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

- Friend, have you by faith accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior as the one who bore the punishment for your sins upon the cross? If not, I beg you to do so today. Because the wrath of God will be poured out upon your sin. The only question that remains is where...the cross of Jesus Christ or the flames of Hell.
- All evil will be punished, and yet God's anger is eager to forgive. That is why He sent His Son.
  - 2 Cor. 5:21 – for He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.
- How do we channel our anger in the right way? We channel our anger as God does, with an attitude of mercy and with a heart eager to forgive.
  - Ephesians 4:31-32 - 31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another tenderhearted even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.
  - Did you catch that? According to Ephesians 4, we as Christians don't forgive people because they deserve our forgiveness. We forgive them because we have been forgiven, and we will never be asked to give more than that we have received in Jesus Christ. For friend, we did not deserve forgiveness either.
    - We owed a debt we could not pay. Because of our sin we deserved nothing less than the eternal wrath of God poured down upon us in the flames of Hell. And yet Christ took that wrath upon Himself while He hung on the cross of Calvary in our place...and because Christ bore the Father's righteous wrath in Himself in our place, we have access to a forgiveness that is beyond all human comprehension.
    - When we demonstrate an attitude eager to forgive someone who has wronged us, we are doing nothing less than reflecting to a much smaller degree that grace which we ourselves have received in Jesus Christ.
    - For no one could ever do to us anything remotely approaching what Christ has done for us. His grace is greater than any hurt or offense.

We need to be angry at the right things (evil). We need to be angry in the right way, with an attitude of patience and forgiveness. Number 3, we need to be angry for the right purpose.

(3) Directed for the right purpose

What is that purpose? It is constructive rather than destructive.

We're talking about being a construction crew, rather than a demolition crew.

It sees wrong and is willing to do the hard work of making that wrong right, of overcoming evil with good.

This is why an attitude of patience and forgiveness is so essential. For, you cannot do the hard and long work of trying to overcome evil with good apart from an attitude that is longsuffering and eager to show mercy.

It's anger that says, "I don't like that. I care, and in love I will do something to change it."

- Is God's anger like that? Oh man, is it ever.
  - o 2 Peter 3:9-10 – 9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; (the reason that God's destructive wrath has not yet been poured out upon evil is not because He's hesitant to keep His Word...rather it is because He is...) <sup>but is</sup> longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.
    - God desires to save all men. He does not want anyone to fall under the destruction of His wrath. That's why He sent His Son to die in our place, to bear His righteous indignation in our place.
    - He saw our sin. He saw our evil. He saw our unrighteousness, and yet His heart's desire was to overcome evil with good.
- Just as God's anger is first and foremost constructive, so too He calls on us to direct our anger towards the same purpose.
  - o Romans 12:17-21 - 17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. <sup>18</sup> If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.
  - o Every evil act that has ever been or will ever be committed will be punished. But guess what? That final judgment in which all evil is punished is not yours to dish out. It is God's. He will do so in His timing, but in the mean time, during our time here on earth God calls us to overcome evil with good.
  - o Illustration – responding to alcoholism, sexual sin, drug abuse with a constructive rather than destructive purpose
    - That doesn't mean there aren't consequences. That doesn't mean that there isn't a call to repentance. There is. But what it means is that when injustice rears its ugly head, the righteous indignation within us doesn't just lead us to react impulsively, embittered, and destructively. It leads us to roll up our sleeves, call someone to



repentance, and to work with them over the long run to overcome evil with good.

- “Pastor, that’s messy.” It’s about as messy as the cross of Calvary.
- We respond to injustice and evil that way because that is how God has responded to our injustice and evil. There’s coming a day in which God’s destruction will rain down on all evil, but it has not come yet. Why? Because God is longsuffering and not willing that any should perish but that all should receive forgiveness through faith in Christ’s death in their place.

Righteous anger – directed at the right things (evil) with the right attitude (patience and mercy) for the right purpose (construction)

Unrighteous anger is the reverse of that.

That’s great in theory, but what does that contrast look like in real life?

Did you know that there is a book of the Bible that I believe is in its entirety about anger? It is a book that tells a story in which the righteous anger of God is vividly contrasted with the unrighteous indignation of man. Does anyone know what book that is?

Take your Bibles and turn over to Jonah.

## 2.) The Example of Anger

I had never seen the story of Jonah in this light until I read through it this past week looking for references to anger, and now that I’ve seen it, I don’t know how I ever didn’t see it before.

Jonah

- Jonah 1:2 - Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.
  - God’s wrath is positioned against Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, because of the people’s gross sin.
  - God calls on a man, Jonah, to take part in the constructive work of His righteous anger by going to this wicked city, preaching against the people’s sin, and calling on them to repent. God calls on Jonah to show the Ninevites the righteous wrath of God.
  - What did Jonah do? He hopped on a boat and went the opposite way to Tarshish. Why?
    - Jonah tells us in Jonah 4:2 – Therefore, I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.
    - Jonah hopped on a ship to Tarshish because he hated the barbaric Ninevites and wanted to see that city burn before God not turn before God.

- God's anger was patient, merciful, and constructive, and Jonah didn't like that. Why? Because his anger was impatient, unforgiving, and destructive.
      - He wanted Nineveh to burn, not turn.
- What happened next? God brought a storm. Jonah told the men to throw him overboard, but God was not going to allow him to die. He prepared a great fish to swallow him and spit him up on the shore. Why? So that Jonah could take part in the constructive work of God's righteous anger.
- Jonah 3:4-5 - And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.
- Jonah 3:10 - And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that He had said that He would do unto them; and He did it not.
  - God responded to their repentance with mercy and forgiveness. Why? Because His righteous anger is merciful and forgiving.
  - What did Jonah think about God's mercy and forgiveness towards the Ninevites?
- Jonah 4:1-4 – 1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.
  - Why? Because God was willing to forgive someone that he wasn't.
- 2 And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. 3 Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live. (*bitterness*) 4 Then said the Lord, Doest thou well to be angry?
  - Jonah was angry not because God's will had been violated, but because his will had been violated.
- Jonah went up on a hill outside of the city where he could get a good view in hopes that God might change His mind and still destroy the city. While on the hill, God provided Jonah with a plant to give him some shade from the scorching sun. Jonah was very happy about the plant. Then God took the plant, and Jonah became even more angry.
- Listen to how the book of Jonah ends.
- Jonah 4:9-11 – 9 And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. 10 Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:
  - You were sad because the plant died despite the fact that you didn't plant it and you only had it for a day.
- 11 And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?
  - You were sad that your plant died, and yet you were eager to see the destruction of hundreds of thousands of people despite their repentance and turning to me.

- Wow. What a vivid depiction of the contrast between the unrighteous anger of man and the righteous anger of God.
  - Jonah's anger was impatient, unforgiving, and bent on destruction. God's anger was patient, forgiving, and constructive.
- Here's the hard truth for us to swallow. Our anger more often than not looks like Jonah's. We get angry not because people have violated God's will, but because they have violated our will. Then, in our anger we are impatient and unmerciful with a heart set on destruction, just like Jonah.
- God says to forgive because we have been forgiven. When we refuse (as Jonah did) to take part in the constructive work of God's righteous anger, we are doing exactly what Jonah did. When we say no to God and hold on to unforgiveness and bitterness, we're hopping on a boat Tarshish, when God has told us to go to Nineveh. God help us.
  - Whether we like or not, most of the time when we get angry. It's not righteous anger. It's Jonah anger.

We've seen the definition of anger. We've seen a great example of anger. Now finally this morning, we'll end with ...

### 3.) The Response to Anger

Pastor, in my life, how can I be good and angry? How can I take part in the constructive work of God's anger?

Here's how. When you feel anger (intense displeasure at something or someone) welling up inside of you, ask yourself these three questions.

#### (1) Why am I angry?

Am I angry because someone has offended me, or am I angry because someone has offended God? Those aren't exclusive either. At times people can commit egregious sins against God to us.

And yet, in asking yourself this question, what you will discover most often is that your anger has welled up because your will has been violated.

- I just want to watch my show in peace and quiet, and my kids won't stop screaming.
- I wanted my husband to do this, and he didn't do it, and he's going to get it now.
- I need to get this project done, and this person at work is being intentionally difficult.

More often than not, our anger is directed at the wrong things. What do you do if you ask yourself this question and you discover that you're not angry at evil, but rather you are angry because reality has fallen short of your expectations/desires?

I would encourage you to have a passage of Scripture memorized/written down somewhere to help calm you down by reminding you of the goodness of God in your life.

- Example 1 – Psalm 23
  - 1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. 3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. 5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.
- Example – Matthew 6:9-13 (the Lord's prayer)
  - 9 Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. 10 Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.
  - In reciting a passage of Scripture like these, do you know what you're doing? You're stepping down from the throne of your heart and putting God back in His place.

Well, what if I am angry at the right things? You move on to question number 2.

(2) Do I have the right attitude?

Am I ready to be patient in this situation? Am I ready to forgive (am I willing to forgive if this person repents)?

What do you do if you're not there? You need to get there.

How do you do that? By meditating on the Scripture.

- Once again, you could go to any one of a number of Scriptures, but the one I would recommend is Matthew 18:21-35.
- It's the story Jesus told about the man that had been forgiven a debt that would have taken him 320 life times to repay who then right afterwards went to someone who owed him 3 months wages and choked the guy out and threw him in prison because he couldn't pay up.
- Jesus ended the story with this application: 33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? 34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. 35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Well, what if I've got the right attitude? You move on to question 3.

(3) Do I have the right purpose?

Am I approaching this situation like a construction crew or a demolition crew? ...with an intent to destroy or with an intent to overcome evil with good?


How can I practically get my hands dirty in the constructive work of God's righteous anger? How can I see Nineveh and have a part in those people turning to God? How can my daughter be killed by a drunk driver and me have a part in making sure that doesn't happen to anyone else?

What if I'm not there? You could chew on a passage like Romans 12:17-21, and it will help you get there.




### **Application**

Be ye angry and sin not. Let not the sun go down up your wrath. Neither give place to the devil. How's your anger this morning? Is it righteous and good, or is it unrighteous and evil? Does your anger look more like Jonah's or God's? Is it directed at the right things in the right way for the right purpose, or is it selfish, impatient, unforgiving, and destructive?

# STUDY QUESTIONS

applying inward 


*1.) What resonated most with you from the sermon this past Sunday? In what ways did God work in your heart about being good and angry?*

digging deeper   

*2.) Read Jonah 4. What do we learn about Jonah's anger in this passage? How does it contrast with God's anger? In what ways can our anger look more like Jonah's than God's?*

*3.) Read Nahum 1. The book of Nahum is a book promising God's judgment on Nineveh written roughly 150 years after the book of Jonah. What does the book teach us about God's anger?*

*4.) Read Romans 1:18, 2:1-5, 5:8-9, and 12:17-21. What do these first 3 passages teach us about the wrath of God upon our sin? As those who have received salvation from God's wrath, how are we to channel our anger according to Romans 12:17-21? What does this look like practically?*

looking ahead 

*5.) Read Psalm 42. What does this passage teach us about grief?*

## COMING UP NEXT IN OUR SERIES ON THE BIBLE & MENTAL HEALTH

3/19 - Grief by Dr. Paul Lenderman

3/26 - Stress by Dr. George Crabb

# Understanding Loss in an Unprecedented Time

By Dr. Paul Lenderman

## Introduction

Grief - the automatic reaction to loss of anyone or anything that you love

- It is the feeling you get when you lose something you value.
- It is a lifelong adjustment to the reality of loss.
- It is the price we pay for love. – Queen Elizabeth II

Proverbs 14:13 - Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; And the end of that mirth is heaviness.

You have either gone through a loss, are going through a loss, or will go through a loss.

## Sermon

### G - Give yourself and others permission to grieve

1 Thessalonians 5:14 – Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.

Galatians 5:22 – But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Hebrews 12:1-2 - Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

When you lose someone, your loss is unique to you. We all grieve in different ways and on different schedules.

### R-Reach out for support from sources that can help you

Take advantage of both social and spiritual support such as from a friend, support group, pastor, or counselor.

Proverbs 17:17 - A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

Galatians 6:2 - Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

2 Cor. 1:3-4 - 3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; 4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

Psalms 34:18 - The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

Hebrews 13:8 - Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

### I-Ignore the insensitive remarks of others

Prov. 18:21 - Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

Prov. 25:11 - A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.

There are people who mean well, but just don't say the right things.

### Examples

- Get over it (you get through grief, you don't get over it)
- You find someone else
- Well, at least...(saying "at least" before offering your condolences minimizes the loss of the other person)

### E-Expect roller coaster days until the pain lessens

#### Stages of Grief

- 1 Denial
- 2 Anger
- 3 Bargaining
- 4 Depression
- 5 Acceptance

You don't graduate from one grief stage to another. Often times you alternate between them.

Look at the vast range of emotions from David in Psalms 42 and 55.

- Psalm 42 (sadness, depression)
- Psalm 55 (anger, judgment)



## F - Focus on forgiveness and good memories

Luke 23:34 - Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

Ephesians 4:32 - And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

We don't move on from our grief. We move forward with our grief.

Anger is the number 1 reason people get stuck in grief.

There is a big difference between regret over how things turned out when you tried your best and guilt over wrong actions that you intentionally committed. Sometimes grief will take regret and try to turn it into guilt and depression. The solution to both regret and guilt is found in the forgiveness of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:1).

Negative thinking comes naturally. Positive thinking comes purposefully.

Philippians 4:8 - Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

# STUDY QUESTIONS

## applying inward

1.) *What resonated most with you from the sermon this past Sunday? In what ways did God work in your heart about the topic of grief?*

## digging deeper

2.) *Read Psalm 55. In this passage, David is working through the grief of a deep betrayal by someone who was close to him. What can we learn from his words in this passage of Scripture?*

3.) *Read Genesis 3:6-19. Where did death originate, and why did it originate there? Read Romans 5:12-21. How was the curse of sin and death reversed? How does Christ compare and contrast with Adam?*

4.) *Read Isaiah 25:8, Hosea 13:14, 1 Cor. 15:50-58, and Revelation 21:4. In what ways does death sting? How can we as Christians have ultimate hope in the midst of the pain of loss?*

## looking ahead

5.) *Read Matthew 6:19-34. What does this passage teach us about stress?*

## COMING UP NEXT IN OUR SERIES ON THE BIBLE & MENTAL HEALTH

3/26 - Stress by Dr. George Crabb

# Overcoming Stress

## Matthew 6:19-34

By Dr. George Crabb

**Mat 6:19** Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

**Mat 6:20** But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

**Mat 6:21** For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

**Mat 6:22** The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

**Mat 6:23** But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great *is* that darkness!

**Mat 6:24** No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

**Mat 6:25** Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

**Mat 6:26** Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

**Mat 6:27** Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

**Mat 6:28** And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

**Mat 6:29** And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

**Mat 6:30** Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith?

**Mat 6:31** Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

**Mat 6:32** (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

**Mat 6:33** But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

**Mat 6:34** Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day *is* the evil thereof.

### Introduction:

20-25% of the US population has a diagnosable mental illness.

A culture of transparency will help people find healing and help through the power of the Scripture. We must have a heart to help. Diagnosis without treatment is negligence.

## Our Make Up

**Gen 1:26** And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

**Gen 1:27** So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

**Psa 100:3** Know ye that the LORD he *is* God: *it is* he *that* hath made us, and not we ourselves; *we are* his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

We just didn't happen. We were purposely created by God in His image and after His likeness.

Substantively - we are conscious and volitional.

Relationally - made for relationship (God and others)

Functionally - there is a purpose to our thoughts, words, and behaviors

**1Th 5:23** And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and *I pray God* your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Material -     Physical  
                  Biological  
                  Body which gives us other awareness

Immaterial - Soul (mind / will / emotions)  
                  Psychological  
                  Gives us self-awareness

                  Spirit  
                  Spiritual (worship / fellowship with God)  
                  Gives us God awareness

God has brought the material and the immaterial parts of who we are together so that they function in a beautiful and synchronous way.

The brain and the mind are intricately connected, but different.

Brain - hardware (material)

Mind - software (immaterial)

When you have a hardware problem, you deal with the hardware. When you have a software problem, you deal with the software.

**Psa 139:14** I will praise thee; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made: marvellous *are* thy works; and *that* my soul knoweth right well.

In our struggles with stress, illness and physical weakness is an opportunity for the works of God to be displayed.

**Joh 9:1** And as *Jesus* passed by, he saw a man which was blind from *his* birth.

**Joh 9:2** And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

**Joh 9:3** Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

Fight or flight response - in a potentially threatening situation, you are designed to fight or flee the threat.

Adrenal gland - sits on top of kidneys; secretes chemicals such as adrenaline and cortisol into our blood; it's good for a short period of time; when you're stressed out too much, those chemicals can be harmful.

Physical stress can affect us spiritually. In a stressed state, spiritual disciplines are of no interest.

Worry - taking responsibilities that belong to God and putting them on ourselves

There is no doubt that one of the most common struggles in a person's life is that of stress / anxiety / worry.

A Swedish Proverb says, "Worry often gives something a big shadow."

Mark Twain said, "I am an old man and have known a great many troubles, but most of them never happened."

Please remember that there is no victory over strongholds without a steady diet of the Word of God and turning your battle over to the Lord.

Now, let's look at this text together and see what we are to do in the midst of worry...

1.) PERCEIVE – vs. 25-32,34

A.) Perceive The Father's Care – vs. 25-32

(1) Fowls of the Air – vs. 26

*Said the robin to the sparrow*

*Said the sparrow to the robin*

*I really do not know*

*I think it must be*

*Why is it these human beings  
That they have no heavenly Father  
Rush about and worry so  
Such as cares for you and me.*

\*Spurgeon said, "God who gives you Heaven will not deny you your bread on the road either."

Birds don't lose feathers over stress even though they live their lives one day at a time.

God provides the worms for the birds, but he doesn't shove them down their throats.

Birds get up in the morning singing. Humans get up in the morning stressing. This is the day that the Lord has made.

(2) Flowers of the Field – vs. 28-29

\*George Mueller based his whole life on trusting God on these two great promises concerning birds and lilies."

1 Peter 5:7 Casting all your cares upon him; for he careth for you.

Ps 55:22 Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.

B.) Perceive The Father's Knowledge – vs. 32

Proverbs 27:1 Boast not thyself of to morrow; For thou knowest not what today may bring forth.

He knows exactly what we need: food and clothing.

Since He's aware, He's able to meet our needs. Take life one day at a time.

God doesn't say, "oops." God doesn't say, "I don't know that."

\* John Newton said, "We can easily manage if we will only take each day the burden appointed to it. But the load will be too heavy for us if we carry yesterday's burden over again today and then add the burden of the Morrow before we are required to bear it."

\*Someone has said, "Do not be afraid of tomorrow; for God is already here."

Roman 8:32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

2.) PRIORITIZE – VS 19-24,33

Don't worry. Be holy. Don't worry. Be holy. Most of us are more concerned with our happiness than our holiness.

A.) Seven Daily Tasks to Give God Your Heart:

**Pro 23:26** My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.

### **#1 Search the Scriptures**

**Act 17:11** These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

### **#2 Pray**

**Psa 86:3** Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily.

### **#3 Praise God**

**Psa 119:164** Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments.

Look for opportunities to praise God throughout the day.  
Most people blame God for everything. We need to start praising God for everything.  
I am probably unaware of more blessings that God has bestowed upon me than the ones I'm aware of.

### **#4 Exhort**

**Heb 3:13** But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

When you're thinking about someone else, it lowers your stress levels.

### **#5 Take Up Your Cross**

**Luk 9:23** And he said to *them* all, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

### **#6 Die Daily**

**1Co 15:31** I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

I die, and Christ lives in me. I die to myself and live to God's will.

### **#7 Perform Your Vows (Live Honestly)**

**Psa 61:8** So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows.

### 3.) PRAY – PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

Instead of being care full, we need to be prayer full and thank full.

Prayer + thanksgiving = peace

When your mind is racing like a hamster on a wheel, go to the Lord in prayer and thanksgiving.

The Scripture never commands us to understand Him. It commands us to obey Him. You can't understand an infinite God with a finite mind.

It has been said that the care and prayer oppose one another. Therefore, when you are being attacked with care turn it into prayer!

### 4.) PHYSICAL

A.) Proper nutrition

B.) Proper exercise

**1Ti 4:8** For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

A simple 20-30-minute walk.

C.) Proper sleep

D.) Deep breathing

Deep breathing while you meditate on the Word of God.

**Psa 119:11** Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

### **Application**

Stressing out is senseless because it doesn't benefit us. It is sinful because it's a manifestation of self reliance. It is slanderous to our God because were acting as if our God isn't big enough to handle our needs.



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# STUDY QUESTIONS

## applying inward

1.) *What resonated most with you from the sermon this past Sunday? In what ways did God work in your heart about the topic of stress?*

## digging deeper

2.) *Read Genesis 1:26-27. As humans we are made as spiritual and physical beings. How does this truth help us as we work through the problem of stress? Give an example of a time in your life where you have noticed stress in both.*

3.) *Read Exodus 3:10-15, 4:1-5 and 10-14. Who did God reveal himself to be to Moses, and how did Moses respond? How should he have responded? How does this apply to stress in our lives?*

4.) *Read Matthew 6:9-13. How do the different parts of the Lord's prayer help us with stress in life?*

## looking ahead

5.) *Read Mark 2:1-5. What happens in this passage of Scripture? How can we apply it to our lives today?*

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