



## The Battle Between Our Ears We Could All Use Some Good News, Part #5

If you have a Bible—and I hope you do—let me invite you to open with me to Philippians 4. I love walking through this text and the way it speaks to us right where we are. A few weeks ago God spoke to us in such a timely way, addressing agreement and unity in the Lord in a moment when we needed to hear that word. Then these last two weeks, Mike has led us to hear how God calls us to unexplainable gentleness, perpetual joy and peace that passes all understanding

Don't we all need these things, particularly as a pandemic rages around us, as our country is embroiled in so much conflict, as struggles pile up in our lives and in our families? We hear God saying in His Word, "I want you to have joy. I want you to experience gentleness and peace that passes all understanding." Today God is going to speak to us about how to experience these things. What do we do in order to step into the joy, gentleness and peace He has designed for us?

Let's read the first eight verses of Philippians 4 together. Many of you have taken the challenge to memorize the chapter this summer, so if that's the case, try to say this with your eyes closed. If not, just read along out loud, wherever you are. Here we go—Philippians 4:1-8:

*Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.*

*<sup>2</sup> I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. <sup>3</sup> Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.*

*<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. <sup>5</sup> Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

*<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*

So we have this command from God to rejoice always, in any circumstance. Remember Paul is writing these words from prison, where he's confined to a cell because he was proclaiming the gospel—the good news of God's love in Jesus. He says, "Rejoice always." This is not a flippant, happy-go-lucky

approach to life that never experiences suffering and pain. This is a kind of life that experiences joy in the middle of suffering and pain. Just in case we didn't catch it the first time, he says it again, *"I say rejoice."*

Then he says, *"Let your reasonableness"* —or gentleness—*"be known to everyone."* There is a way to be gentle, even in the face of the injustice Paul is experiencing. Then he says, *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."* And here it is: *"The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* What a great promise! Who doesn't want that? Peace. Calm. Quiet. Stillness. Serenity that surpasses all understanding, in a world that is constantly spinning. So how do we get that?

That leads to verse eight: *"Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."* So let's make the connection here. This is the main truth God is showing us today. It is a totally life-transforming truth and I would encourage you to write it down.

### **The battle for joy, gentleness and peace in life begins in your mind.**

The battle for joy, gentleness and peace in life begins in your mind. He's using battle language here, because—let's be honest with each other—joy, gentleness and peace don't come naturally or easily. Do you know what comes naturally or easily? It's not joy, but despair, distress and discouragement. When we're going through hard times, when the diagnosis is not good, when the circumstances are getting worse and not better, when the pandemic is not showing signs of abating, joy is not natural. Despair, distress and discouragement are.

When we're going through stressful times and we're on edge, gentleness is not natural. No, we snap at our kids, we snap at our spouses, we're insensitive, we speak without thinking through what we're saying. We're prone to be harsh or unkind, not gentle. When we're walking through the middle of all kinds of unknowns, peace is not natural. Instead, worry and anxiety are.

We talked about this the very first Sunday of this pandemic. The first Sunday, when we gathered together online, we looked at Jesus' words in Matthew 6, where three times He says, *"Do not be anxious."* We talked about how we're all prone to worry in different ways. We worry about our families, whether or not we'll get married, stay married, have kids, how those kids will turn out. We worry about finances. We worry about the future. And this is just normal life. Then you add on a pandemic and we have more anxieties. What is school going to look like? What is work going to look like? What is our economy going to do?

If you put all this together, joy, peace and gentleness don't come naturally. There's a battle in each of our lives to know, experience and live in the joy, gentleness and peace that God is calling us to. So where does that battle begin?

The answer God is giving us today is that the battle begins in our minds. Joy, gentleness and peace take place between your ears. Look at the command in Philippians 4:9. What is God telling us to do in order to rejoice, be gentle and experience other-worldly peace? He's telling us, "Think about certain things." So stop and think. What's going on between your ears? So many times we don't slow down and consider what we're thinking about. As a result, so much of our thought life becomes filled with unhelpful things. It's no wonder we're unhappy or on edge or down or struggling in different ways.

This leads us to another truth that I believe will be life-transforming and I'll show you in God's Word where that is not an overstatement.

## **What you think determines how you live.**

We just talked about how the battle for joy, gentleness and peace in life begins in your mind, so "think about these things." Why is that so important? It's because what you think determines how you live. What you think—what happens in between your ears—determines what happens in your life. That's a bold statement, but let me back it up straight from Scripture. Proverbs 23:7 (NAS), talking about a man, says, "*For as he thinks within himself, so he is.*" That verse is actually translated in different ways in different translations. There's some debate about exactly all it means, but we won't take a deep dive into now.

Let's not stop there in Scripture. Let's just ask this question throughout the Bible: How important are our thoughts to our lives? Well, Jesus said the greatest commandment is, "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind*" (Matthew 23:37). You are to love God with the way you think.

Then listen to these commands as well:

- "*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind*" (Romans 12:2).
- "*Be renewed in the spirit of your minds*" (Ephesians 4:23).
- "*Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth*" (Colossians 3:2).
- "*Take every thought captive to obey Christ*" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

See the relationship between thinking and acting? Your thoughts are to be taken captive to obey Christ. This makes sense.

Look at Romans 8:5-6:

*For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.*

Do you see it? How do you get life and peace? You set your mind on the Spirit. It's what's happening in your mind that leads to life and peace. This is why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:16: *"We have the mind of Christ."*

This is a major theme in this book of Philippians that we're walking. Remember what we've already seen from earlier in Philippians. Look at Philippians 1:27. *"Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind..."* This is what we talked about a few weeks ago, talking about unity: *"...one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel."* That begs the question: whose mind do we have? The very next chapter says, in verses one through five:

*So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.*

So the mind we're called to live with is the mind of Christ. This is why in Philippians 3 he's talking about people who have not trusted in Christ and who have rejected the mind of Christ. He says in verse 19, *"Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things."* Then remember what we read a moment ago in Philippians 4:7: *"The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*

Now, let me show you two other examples of this in Scripture that are really important. I hope these will connect some dots for all of us, connecting how the way we think determines how we live. The first is Genesis 3. This is the story of how sin—disobedience to God, first entered the world. Genesis 3:1-6 says:

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.*

Did you hear that? Where did sin first start in the world? It wasn't when they ate a piece of fruit. No, this started way back when the woman heard the adversary say, *"You won't die. God knows when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."* There's a ton we could talk about here, but in other words he was saying, "You will be the determiner of what is good and

what is evil. It's up to you. It's not up to God." The woman thinks about that and says, "Yeah, it does look good for food. It is appealing to me. It's to be desired to make me wise." Then she took the fruit and ate.

Do you see that sin started in their minds and their actions followed? Don't miss this. Sin always starts in our minds. We think our way is better than God's way. We think our thoughts are wiser than God's thoughts. That's where sin begins. We fail to even think about what God's way is, so we either act without thinking about God's way or we act in deliberate disobedience to God's way. Either way, sin starts in our minds. What we think determines how we live.

Here's the other example. I mentioned Matthew 6 earlier when Jesus tells us not to be anxious. What is Jesus' remedy for anxiety? Listen to what He says in Matthew 6:25-26:

*Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?*

Do you hear that? How do you not be anxious? Jesus says, "Here's how. Look at the birds. Think about the birds." Faith here is thinking. Faith says to stop and think, "Wait a minute. God provides for birds and I'm more valuable than birds. Therefore God will provide for me which means I don't have to worry." Don't miss this. According to God, thinking is the antidote to worry in this world.

You've seen the battle that takes place between our ears. Our mind is a battleground, so the adversary wants every single one of our minds to spiral in all kinds of unhealthy ways. "Will I get into this school? What will happen if I don't? What will happen if I do? What will I major in? Will that be the right major? Will it not be the right major?" Or "Will I ever get married? Will I ever have kids? How are my kids going to turn out?" Or "Will I get this job?" Or "Will I get this disease? Will I be healed of this disease?"

These questions aren't even touching on thoughts of loneliness, isolation, abandonment, dejection and rejection. Thoughts that maybe we aren't good enough or smart enough or successful enough. Thoughts about how we don't look the way we want to look or have the things we want to have, how we don't act the way we want to act. Thoughts about how we don't measure up as a mom or a dad, a wife or a husband or a child. We all have thoughts like this.

People wonder if something is wrong with them because they're thinking so many unhealthy thoughts in their head. The reality is the Bible is instructing us about thinking because we all struggle here. Let's just put it out on the table: we all have a battle that takes place between our ears. We all have thoughts that can spiral in unhealthy ways, leading to despair, discouragement, distress, disappointment, bitterness, unkindness, worry and/or anxiety. They can lead us to snap and speak and act and live in ways we don't want.

Jesus is saying to us right now in His Word that there is a way to stop that spiral. There's a way to halt the unhealth in our minds, emotions and lives. There's a way to live in joy and gentleness, with peace that passes all understanding, that totally transforms the way you live day to day, moment to moment, and the way you love the people around you.

So what's the way? The way is to think about certain things. In other words, you and I have a choice in what we think about. Just like Jesus said, "Look at the birds." Stop worrying and think differently from the way you're prone to think. Listen to this quote from Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who was a famous preacher from the past:

Christian faith is essentially thinking. The problem with most people, however, is that they will not think. Faith can be defined like this: faith is insisting upon thinking when everything seems determined to bludgeon and knock you down. The trouble with the person of little faith is that instead of controlling your own thought, your thought is being controlled by something, and you go round and round in circles.

### **We don't always have a choice in our circumstances, but we do have a choice in our thoughts amidst those circumstances.**

What God is saying in His Word to us today is, "Don't do it. Stop and think." So here's a third truth, maybe a different way to look at this. We don't always have a choice in our circumstances, but we do have a choice in our thoughts amidst those circumstances. In many circumstances we do have a choice, but in many of them, we don't. Even then, we do have a choice in our thoughts amidst those circumstances.

Now, I want to clarify one really important thing here, because when I say that, I'm speaking specifically to followers of Jesus. The reason I want to make that specific clarification is because it is Jesus Who makes this truth a reality in our lives. So at this point I want to pause and say something to those of you listening who are not followers of Jesus. I think about Mr. Jerry, who I met last night and was sharing with. He told me he'd tune in this morning. So, Mr. Jerry—and others who may not be followers of Jesus—please listen closely.

The Bible teaches that we have all turned from God and His ways to ourselves and our own ways. In and of ourselves, this is the way the Bible describes our minds. It says our minds are hard toward God and His Word (2 Corinthians 3:14). They're even hostile toward God (Romans 8:7). They're blinded to the truth of God's love for us (2 Corinthians 4:4). Our minds are focused on the things and the ways of this world (Romans 8:5), to the point where we're actually enslaved to the ways of this world, controlled by the ways of this world (Ephesians 2).

Ultimately, the Bible teaches that if we die in this state we will spend eternity experiencing God's just judgment due our sin. But the good news of the Bible is that God loves us. This is what I was sharing with Jerry last night. God loves you, regardless of who you are. He loves you so much that He sent Jesus to pay the price for all your sin against Him. Jesus died on the cross to experience the just judgment of God

for your sin and for my sin. When we place our faith in Jesus and turn from our sin and ourselves—when we trust in Jesus and God’s love for us—God not only forgives us of our sin, as if that’s not enough, He also gives us a new heart and a new mind. We are given supernatural power from His Spirit to think in a way that is totally different from the way this world thinks.

This, by the way, is why the self-help power of positive thinking people in this world promote is ultimately futile and it’s definitely not what we’re talking about here. The self-help power of positive thinking basically says you can be a better version of yourself through just thinking positive thoughts about yourself and your circumstances, but that’s not what the Bible calls us to. The Bible doesn’t call us to a better version of you. The Bible calls us to an entirely new you.

We read this in our Bible reading this past week in Mark 8:34. Jesus said, *“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me...”* The Bible calls us to die to ourselves, picking up a cross, experiencing an entirely new life in Jesus and following Him. We now have, not a better version of our minds, but the mind of Christ—a totally different mind. Jesus’ mind and the life that flows from His mind are available to all who trust in Him.

So Mr. Jerry, and anybody else hearing this, I urge you today to put your trust in Jesus and God’s love for you. Let Him totally transform your life from the inside out for all eternity and let that affect the way you live every single day here and now.

To bring this home—and for all who have the mind of Christ—we are no longer subject and enslaved to worldly ways of thinking. We’re already looked at 2 Corinthians 10:5 which says, *“Take every thought captive to obey Christ.”* Let me remind you of the context of that verse. Look at verse four which says, *“For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.”* Then it says in verse five, *“We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.”*

Do you hear what this is saying? In this battle between our ears, all who are in Christ have spiritual weapons with supernatural power to destroy strongholds of thought, arguments, opinions and destructive patterns of thinking that go against God’s Word. Christian, you are not subject to them. You have power over them. To all who are in Christ, you have God-given, Christ-bought, Spirit-empowered freedom to choose what you think in ways that bring total transformation in your life in any and every circumstance.

Just let this soak in, wherever you are. For you who are in Christ, who have the mind of Christ and the power of the Spirit of Christ, when you begin to spiral downward into anxious thoughts, , by God’s grace you have power and a choice to stop and trust God and His love for you and His good, sovereign purposes for your life. You have a choice to stop and think Romans 8:28: “I know God is working all things together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.” It transforms the way you think.

- When you begin to think or spiral downward into loneliness, you have a choice to stop and shift your mind to the fellowship you have in Christ and in His body.
- When you begin to think or spiral downward into discouragement or despair, you have a choice to stop and shift your mind to hope and faith.
- When you begin to think or spiral downward into pride—including concern, preoccupation with what others think about you, how you look or are perceived, driving drives you into despair or unhealthy pride in who you are—you have a choice to shift your mind to humility and preoccupation with what God thinks about you. God approves you as His child, so you are free from thinking about what others think about you.

Stop thinking about what others think about you and think about what God says about you. Think about what God says about everything. Don't just think about what the doctor or the news or the pundits are saying about the future. Think about what God says about the future. We don't always have a choice in our circumstances, but we always have a choice in our thoughts amidst those circumstances.

God is calling us today, right now, to think about two words. The Greek for “think about these things” is *logizomai*. An English word we get from this is “logarithm.” Think “complex mathematical equation problem,” the kind of thing that requires prolonged contemplation. That's the kind of thinking God is calling us to here, to “prolonged thinking” on certain things. We are to fixate our minds on certain things.

We all know what it's like to fixate our mind on something. How many of you know somebody who gets on a health kick and starts fixating their minds on certain ways of eating or exercising, then that's all they think about and all they talk about? You can fixate your mind on a certain person, such that you cannot get them out of your mind. You can fixate your mind on work, such that you can't put your phone or email down. You just can't get it out of your mind. You can fixate your mind on a game, to the point where you can't stop thinking about it. You can fixate your mind on news, so you're constantly looking for the latest updates. When you have a free moment, you pull out the phone just to see, “What have I missed?” You can fixate your mind on social media in the same way, constantly looking for the latest post or latest video. You can pass scores of time without even realizing it. You give so much attention to it you don't even realize you're ignoring really important things and people around you.

There are all kinds of things in this world we're prone to fixate our minds on. And in the middle of it all, God is saying, “Fixate your mind on these things. Consume yourself with them, over and above everything else.” So whatever you eat, however you exercise, whoever you think about, in your work, in your play, in the news, in social media—in all of it, fixate your mind on these things.

The list the Bible gives us is pretty comprehensive. Did you notice? He uses “whatever” six times. And then he says, “*If there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*” Think about, ponder, consider, fixate your mind on “whatever is true.” We could start another

whole sermon on each of these, but we won't. Suffice it to say, if the battle for joy, gentleness and peace in your life begins in your mind, then that battle begins with believing what is true.

You will not have joy, gentleness and peace in your life if you start with believing what is false about God. Just ask Adam and Eve. Sin entered the world and destroyed their lives when they believed what was not true about God. And you will not experience joy, gentleness and peace in your life if you don't believe what is true about you. Fixate your mind on what God says about you, not on what others think about you, not on what you think others think about you. Fixate your mind on the truth of what God says about you.

So much worry, anxiety, despair or distress is grounded in lies about Who God is, lies about who we are, lies about other people around us and lies that fill the world around us. God is telling us right now, "Fixate your mind on truth." Reading and meditating on God's Word every day is vital, because every day, every one of us is bombarded with millions of messages. If God's Word is not guiding our thoughts, we will inevitably be conformed to the pattern of this world. It is impossible to be transformed by the renewing of our minds if we're not fixating our minds on truth from God's Word—and truth in this world.

We're not going to get into a discussion about fake news, but we all know it's a reality. On news, social media, in articles we read or posts we see, they all seem to picture people in the world, in ways that are not true, either negatively or positively. Just stop and ask, "Is this true?" Ask that question through the filter of truth revealed in God's Word. So much destruction happens between our ears by us believing that which is not true.

Just ask the question, "Does this thought come from God or not?" Stopping and asking that question will be transformative in our lives. When we begin to replace lies in our minds with truth from God in His Word, we'll begin to experience the joy, gentleness and peace that God has designed for us in this world.

Fixate your mind on whatever is true, then on "whatever is honorable." Ah, what a great word. Some other translations say "noble" or "dignified." The picture is basically something on a higher plane, thoughts that are worthy of respect, honor and awe. So much of what we're prone to fixate our minds on in this world is on a lower plane. It's just frivolous and meaningless, sometimes even dirty and vulgar. God says, "Lift your minds. Don't live down there in your minds. Lift your minds to higher thoughts, to that which evokes awe and dignity, the things that really matter." What matters most right now? What matters most forever? Fixate your mind there. Think about those things.

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, "whatever is just." Again, there's another whole sermon here—actually, many sermons. About a thousand people are over halfway through a class right now on justice and race. We've seen justice defined biblically as that which is right for all people, as exemplified in God's character and expressed in God's Word. We want to fixate our minds on what is just and right and good for people according to God. Not according to our definition of right and good, but according to

God's definition of right and good. Fixate your mind on justice in these ways. Think, "Are these thoughts right, fair, impartial, just—for and about others?"

Fixate your mind on "whatever is pure." What a great word. Just think pure motives, pure desires, pure words, pure truth, pure thoughts. This extends to so many facets of our thought life, certainly including sexual purity. Flee any and all sexual thought outside of marriage between you and your spouse. Fixate your mind on sexual purity, on moral purity, on purity in worship, on purity in work—whatever is pure.

"Whatever is lovely." Ah, just read that word and think about the way the Bible describes love in 1 Corinthians 13. Think about, ponder, fixate your mind on whatever is patient and kind and humble, not that which is envious, boastful, arrogant, rude, self-centered, irritable or resentful. Have nothing to do with those thoughts. Fixate your mind on that which is lovely. Just ask, "Is the thought I'm having lovely?" That's a question I don't think we often ask, but we really need to ask.

Then, "whatever is commendable" or admirable. Think about this one this way. Would you commend a particular thought to someone else in a way that they would be edified, helped and encouraged by thinking that same thought you're having? Think about those kinds of things. Not the kinds of things that if someone else was in your mind, they would be discouraged or disgusted. No, fixate your mind on things that if someone else was in your mind, they would be so encouraged. They would be so edified. They would be so helped to be thinking this way. Think on things like that.

"If there is any excellence, anything worthy of praise..." This is what I love about this list—it's so comprehensive. You and I may be prone to think about justice, but not to think about purity. Or we may be prone to think about what we would say is lovely, but if it's not true, it's not lovely. Or we may be prone to think about what we deem just, but if it's not true, it's not just.

When you put these all together, you have a picture of excellence, you have a picture of thoughts that are worthy of praise. What a phrase! Are my thoughts worthy of praise before God and others? Fixate your mind on these kinds of things. This requires the discipline to stop and think about what you're thinking about. This is an incredibly important spiritual discipline that affects every facet of our lives.

Obviously, we could turn this around and say, "Don't think about the opposite of these things. Don't think about that which is untrue. Don't think about that which is dishonorable. Don't think about that which is unjust. Don't think about that which is impure, unlovely or uncommendable. Choose to remove those thoughts from your mind."

This is what Martyn Lloyd-Jones was saying in that quote used earlier. Christian faith is thinking. It's choosing to remove those thoughts from our mind, replacing them with that which is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent and worthy of praise.

So, I want to close by giving you a homework assignment. Obviously, I realize—and you realize—you don't actually have to do this, but I encourage you to do it. If you want to experience perpetual joy,

unexplainable gentleness and surpassing peace in your life, then I want to encourage you to ask and answer these six questions. Spend some time today or sometime this week, thinking through these questions and let God's Word do the work. These all start with this phrase: "In what specific ways do I need to replace...?" These might have some overlap between them, but just think about them through the categories God has given us in His Word.

1. In what specific ways do I need to replace untrue thoughts with true thoughts? What are some things I am prone to think that are not true and how can I replace them with that which is true? What is true and what's not true, in the way I'm thinking right now?
2. In what specific ways do I need to replace dishonorable thoughts with honorable thoughts? How are my thoughts prone to go down here, when God has called me to think on a higher plane? What are some specific ways I need to replace dishonorable thoughts with honorable thoughts?
3. In what specific ways do I need to replace unjust thoughts with just thoughts? This is the journey that a thousand people have been walking through on Sunday nights. I know in my own heart—and I trust in all our hearts—we need to bring to the surface ways we are prone toward partiality, prejudice, pride and injustice in our own thoughts. How do we replace thoughts that are not right and just with just thoughts?
4. In what specific ways do I need to replace impure thoughts with pure thoughts? Just take a catalog of your thought life and ask, "What is impure?" Again, sexual purity, moral purity. Think of your motives, desires, aims. Where are there impure thoughts that need to be replaced with pure thoughts?
5. In what specific ways do I need to replace unlovely thoughts with lovely thoughts? What would be categorized as unlovely in the way I think? How can I replace that with lovely thoughts?
6. In what specific ways do I need to replace uncommendable thoughts with commendable thoughts? Just picture somebody else stepping into your mind. What would be discouraging or even maybe disgusting? What would lead someone to worry or anxiety or distress? Replace those uncommendable thoughts with that which would be so good for them. If other people were thinking these thoughts, they would be edified, built up and encouraged. They would be growing and thriving in their relationship with Christ.

In asking these questions specifically, I want to encourage us to ask God to transform us by the renewing of our minds, that we might experience the joy and gentleness and peace He designed for us in Christ.

Will you bow your heads with me? As you bow your heads in this room or at home or anywhere else right now, let me ask that question I asked Mr. Jerry and others who may not be followers of Jesus. Have you trusted in Jesus to save you from your sin against God, such that you know you have eternal life with God, today and forever?

This is what I was talking about with Jerry just last night. He had experienced a car accident that he should not have lived through. I said, "Jerry, God has given you another chance. If you were to die today or tomorrow in some sort of accident, do you know if you would have eternal life with God?"

If your answer to that question is no and today you want to trust in Jesus, I invite you just to pray this in your heart right now:

“God, I know I have sinned against You. I’ve chosen my way over Your way. Today I believe that Jesus died on the cross for my sin. And I don’t just believe that, but today I trust in You, Jesus, to save me from my sin, to restore me to relationship with God, that I might have life in You.”

As you express that to God, God desires to save you from your sin. He says, “All who call on My name will be saved.” Not only does He forgive you of your sin, but He puts His Spirit inside you. He will then transform you so you’re a new creation with a new heart and a new mind.

O God, I pray, for those who are experiencing this for the first time today, as well as for those who have trusted in You for many, many years. I pray that You would cause the mind of Christ to be in each of us. We pray that You would transform our lives by the renewing of our minds, that You would take every thought captive in us to obey Christ this week. Help us, God, to replace thoughts that are not of and from You, not glorifying to You, with thoughts that are of You and from You and glorifying to You, no matter what we’re walking through right now. Please, please, please, transform our minds and thoughts that we might experience the joy, gentleness and peace You’ve designed for us.

Jesus, we praise You for making all these things possible. We praise You for the truth of Your Word. We praise You for the hope we have in You. We praise You for the joy and the peace and the gentleness that You make possible through what You did on the cross and Your resurrection from the dead. We praise You that this joy and gentleness and peace are not just for now, but they are ours forever. All glory be to Your name, Jesus. Transform our thoughts to be like Your mind, we pray, in Your name. Amen.

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All Scriptures are quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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