

Joke: The patient's family gathered to hear what the specialists had to say. 'Things don't look good. The only chance is a brain transplant.

This is an experimental procedure. It might work, but the bad news is that brains are very expensive, and you will have to pay the costs yourselves.'

'Well, how much does a brain cost?' asked the relatives. 'For a male brain, \$500,000. For a female brain, \$200,000.'

Some of the younger male relatives tried to look shocked, but all the men nodded in understanding, and a few actually smirked. Then the patient's daughter asked, 'Why the difference in price between male brains and female brains?'

'A standard pricing practice,' said the head of the team, 'women's brains have to be marked down because they are used.'

Before I get to my message today let me address something totally unrelated. I didn't see the opening celebration of the Olympics personally, but have heard the backlash from it. So, I want to address it before we get to our series on mind wars. The Olympics has gone woke as with much of the world. They have a few transgender athletes participating, but more importantly if you haven't heard about it, they made a mockery of the last supper by Leonardo da Vinci using drag queens in a depiction of the story.

And it has stirred quite the uproar. Elon Musk spoke out against it saying, "it was extremely disrespectful to Christians." The Muslim faith has spoken out against it saying, a "it offended three religions." Many others as well but someone that really caught

my attention with it was Julian Michaels the fitness guru who is openly gay addressed the LGBTQ+ community herself about the hypocrisy and lack of understanding that she saw in the opening ceremony.

In part she said, "Dear fellow gays. . .we demand tolerance and respect but then make a mockery of something sacred for over 2 billion Christians. This type of hypocrisy and lack of understanding is a bad look. We get outraged when the extreme right bashes us, but then we do this s—. What kind of reaction do you think they will have towards the LGBTQ+ community after this. This is not how we break down barriers, it's how you build them."

Just speak from the heart after reading.

We have been looking at a series I'm calling mind wars.

My hope and prayer is that it's transforming the way you think.

I have mentioned that that many of life's battles are won or lost in the mind.

And it's almost impossible to have a positive life when your mind is consumed with negative thoughts.

And there in lays the problem because all too often our mind races with negative thoughts and irrational worries. Maybe that's just me maybe all you real spiritual people never have that issue. Your thoughts are always right, pure, noble, and never irrational. But I know for me from time to time there not always that way. Maybe you can relate to those irrational thoughts and runaway fears that often consume our thoughts.

I don't know what it is for you, maybe you worry about something, something that seems pretty normal.

You're a student and you're worried about making a bad grade on a test because you know if you make a bad grade, then you won't get into the right college, and then you won't have the right job, and if you don't have the right job, you won't marry the right person, and if you marry the wrong person, you'll have kids with problems. And if you don't have the right job you won't have the money to pay for the braces that they are going to need. And if they can't get the braces they will never smile and so they won't ever get married because we all know women needs a man who can smile. And if they get the braces then they will not be able to go to college because you'll still be paying for the braces. And since they won't be going to college they won't get the edgeumacation so they will probably just resort to a life of crime.

And you start to get a headache just thinking about how you failed, but now your thinking that headache might actually be a brain tumor, and your mind just continues to race in the wrong direction.

I know I'm exaggerating, but I'm not sure it's by much.

I'm just joking about the getting a bad grade with all those consequences. If I'm being honest I've had my share of not getting the best grades but I think I'm doing ok.

But honestly you watch what's on the news, or you've got more bills than you have money. You're trying to make some kind of decision about the future, and it's so easy for your mind to race and to be overwhelmed with very real feelings of anxiety and fear.

Let's begin looking once again what the Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Philippi.

We'll be reading from Philippians chapter four, its somewhere around AD 61 or 62 when the apostle Paul was writing this letter from a Roman prison awaiting his possible execution.

And he said these words under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT) - Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

He said what? Don't worry about anything except. . . (**Name some things**)

No he said, don't worry about anything. We'll thanks Paul that ones easy.

Instead, pray about everything.

Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and (what else?) your minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Then he continues with these words. . .

Philippians 4:8 (NLT) - And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

And if you do that what will happen?

Philippians 4:9 (NLT) - Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.

Today I want to talk about worry, about anxiety, and ultimately about the mind.

If you recall a key thought I shared over the last couple weeks was that your life is always moving in the direction of your strongest thoughts.

Which if your thoughts are good, helpful and positive then that is really good news.

But it's not so good of news if your thoughts are mostly negative.

When God created your mind it put a portion about the size of shelled peanut in there called the amygdala.

And the amygdala that little part of the brain and it's the part of the brain wired for survival. It plays a role in many aspects of our behaviors and emotions.

If you ever find yourself in a moment where you feel like fight or flight, that's because your amygdala is engaged.

Any time you're in danger, this God-given little portion of the brain, the amygdala, kicks in and what it does is it sends your body strong doses of adrenaline, and it says, "Be on guard, be alert, and run if you have to."

If you're driving and someone in the car next to you isn't doing the Bluetooth hands free thing we are supposed be doing now but instead they are texting and they aren't paying attention, and

they start swerving over into your lane. Your amygdala kicks in and says, "Be aware, be alert, be careful, could be danger."

God gave us that portion of our brain for our protection.

The problem is that the amygdala is not objective. It's simply hard-wired to protect, and it's very easily triggered.

I'll give you an example about how it works. . .**show video of tickling foot in car.**

The amygdala that God gave us is hard-wired to protect. That's why our amygdala, needs a little help from another thing that God gave us called the prefrontal cortex.

This is the logical part of the brain that tends to think logically, so if there's a noise at night in the house, the amygdala screams, "You're gonna die!" And the prefrontal cortex steps in and says, "No, it's probably just the cat. You're not gonna die. There's very likely a logical explanation." Now if you don't have a cat then maybe you need to rethink that as well. But you get the point. It's most of the time not as bad of a situation that we think it is.

The amygdala is all panic. The prefrontal cortex is all logic. The problem with the amygdala is it always responds according to the pre-programming.

In other words, if you because of some hurt or some fear or trauma or even perhaps a misunderstanding of something that happened to you, maybe there are certain people or places or events that triggers you with feelings of anxiety and fear and tension, and without even knowing it, your mind can race and run to a worst case scenario where you find yourself sometimes short of breath and panicking and wondering and trying to control

things that you can't control, completely overwhelmed by that runaway mind.

That's why Paul said this from a Roman prison. He said, let's read it again he said. . .

Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT) - Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Some other translations use the word anxious.

Don't worry, don't be anxious about anything.

That job interview, your health situation, that decision about the future, that financial burden.

He said, Don't be anxious about anything,

But in every single situation, in other words, if it's on your mind, it's on God's heart. He cares about you more than you can imagine. It cares about the sparrows and says are we not more valuable than them.

So, instead, pray about everything. And tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.

And when you give your burdens to God, scripture says,

His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

I love this. . .he says instead, pray about everything.

Yet why is it that even those of us in the body of Christ undervalue the power of prayer.

We see it all too often, maybe you have done something like this yourself.

You're in a situation, we might be talking, and someone will say, "Well, all we can do now is pray."

And I can almost imagine God going, "About time, what took you so long, do you think that's nothing?"

The God who can move mountains, who could raise the dead, who could heal the sick and open blind eyes. . .and all you can do?

Hear this church, prayer is powerful, and as followers of Jesus, we have to recognize that prayer is never our last line of defense. It should always be our first line of offense.

The author to the Hebrews said this. . .

Hebrews 4:16 (NLT) - So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

Let us come how? Boldly.

We can come in prayer boldly, with confidence. Why, to find help in time of our need.

James told us this. . .

James 4:2 (TPT) - You jealously want what others have so you begin to see yourself as better than others. You scheme with

envy and harm others to selfishly obtain what you crave—that's why you quarrel and fight. And all the time you don't obtain what you want because you won't ask God for it!

Because you haven't prayed. You thought up a plan you thought was good.

Listen church His ways are not our ways.

Prayer is always powerful. Not only does prayer move the heart of God, but prayer also changes the chemistry in your brain.

Think about that for decades neurologists believed that your brain didn't change after adolescence.

I don't know about you, but I thank the God in heaven that my brain didn't freeze when I was 15 years old.

Our brain continues to evolve and it continues to change and it continues to rewire itself.

We talked about the neural pathways. When you think a thought, it's easier to think that thought again, and our brains are continually changing.

In fact, the term is called neuroplasticity, and that means that it's constantly evolving and rewiring itself.

I love this there is also something called neurotheology.

It's the study of the mind and of God. It's also known as spiritual neuroscience.

What neurotheology does, is it studies the relationship between the brain and a belief in God.

Here's what research shows. Research shows that prayer actually changes your brain.

In fact, in the book "Switch On Your Brain" by Dr. Caroline Leaf. She said something powerful about the brain and prayer.

She said that, "it's been found that 12 minutes of daily focused prayer over an eight week period can change the brain to such an extent that it can be measured on a brain scan."

That's incredible.

Not only does prayer touch the heart of God, but prayer changes the brain. It changes our thought process. No wonder Scripture tells us we have the mind of Christ.

Just as toxic and negative thoughts harm your brain, prayer heals your brain, it transforms your brain, it literally renews your mind.

So why do we worry? Why do we find ourselves so anxious?

If we're followers of Jesus and if we should completely trust in God, which by the way we should, why is it that our minds often race in an irrational way?

Well, science would tell us that in many cases, we're experiencing an amygdala hijack.

Our little amygdala, that's wired to protect, says, "You're in trouble. You better take control. You better work harder. You better stay up at two in the morning and worry about this because if you don't, it's only going to get worse."

So science would say we're experiencing an amygdala hijack.

Scripture would say that our mind is dominated by wrong or sinful thinking.

In fact, one definition of worry is that worry is the sin of distrusting the promises and the power of God.

Listen church and this is going to be hard to hear but worry is essentially saying, "God, I don't trust you. I don't believe you can help in this situation. I don't believe you care about what I care about. I don't believe you're going to come through for me. So, I have to worry about this because I'm just not sure I can trust you with this."

And so instead of letting all those things control my mind, which is what can so easily happen, what I want to do instead as a follower of Jesus is I want to choose to let the Spirit of God direct my thinking.

Instead of letting all the negative, and depressing stuff run my mind which ultimately produces fear, regret, and worry. I'm going to choose to let the Holy Spirit, which dwells within me, direct my thinking.

I'm going to let the logical part of my brain choose that which is spiritual.

I'm going to take my prefrontal cortex and say, "You think on what's true. You think on what's excellent. You think on what's praiseworthy. I'm putting my trust completely in you."

In fact, here's how scripture says it in Romans chapter 8. . .

Roman's 8:5-6 (NIV) - Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit

desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.

When your mind is dominated by fleshly, worldly thoughts it tends to drift towards things that are dishonoring to God. At the very least there are leaving God out of the picture.

But those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit.

And that's why we need to take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ.

From a scientific standpoint, we're going to let our prefrontal cortex grab the amygdala by the tail and say, "You quit being irrational. We're choosing a different way to think about this. We're giving this to God."

I'm choosing, God, by faith, I'm going to trust in you, to believe in you, to give you my burdens. Even when my irrational fears start to run wild, I stop, I grab that thought, I take it captive, I make it obedient.

I'm not going to let sin, flesh, fear, or worry run my mind in the wrong direction. I'm choosing intentionally to let the Holy Spirit direct my thoughts.

Let me illustrate what tends to happen with many of us.

Most if not all of us, at some point, in some way, have or have had something that we worried about. Is there anybody here or watching online that can say that they have never worried about anything?

Hands anybody you've never worried about anything.

Here's some good news if you have every found yourself worried about something. You're not on our own.

We have a good, good Father. He is faithful, even when we are faithless.

But what do you typically do if you're a lover of Jesus and you're worried about something?

Hopefully you take your worry, your concern, your burden, and you give it to God. You say, "God, I've prayed about this and I'm giving this to you, I thank you and I trust you with my worry," and you give it to God.

But more often then we care to admit what tends to happen is you wait, and in the waiting you get freaked out, it's been five minutes, and nothing's happened, so you take it back from God and you say, "God, I don't really trust you with that. I have an idea."

Symbolically, whenever we worry, that's essentially what we're doing. We're saying, "God, I'm going to pray about this, but because I don't see what I want to see, when I want to see it, and because I'm still worried," we're essentially taking back the very thing that we gave to God.

Why do we do that?

The reason is and this may be hard to hear, but the reason is that your God is too small and your worries are too big.

Listen church, my God is bigger than my problems. And even if I don't see it He's working.

We need a bigger God and a smaller worry.

And what you're going to do at that point is you're going to take whatever it is that's weighing on you, and whatever it is that's dominating your mind, and scripture says we cast our cares upon God. With prayer and petition, we take everything and we give it to God.

What I would encourage you to do is to get your own God box.

It could be a shoebox, an Amazon box I know we all have one of those. And if you want to decorate it put the word God on it. Whatever you want to do.

But, what I want you to do is any time you find your mind racing and any time you find yourself worried about something, I want you just to take it to God and then write down that worry on a piece of paper.

It might be your children, you're worried about your children, it might be your marriage, it might be your future, it might be your health, it might be your job, whatever worry you have, and you're going to cast your cares upon God because he cares for you.

And then you give it to God and you trust him with it.

Then what I want you to do is go on with your life, trusting God. And any time you want to choose to worry about it, what you have to do is walk over to your God box and take that which you've already given to God out of your God box to symbolically remind you that you're choosing at this moment not to put your trust in God.

If you ask me, "What is it that worries me," I've got all sorts of different worries that weigh on my heart.

When Joy doesn't get home as soon as I thought she would my mind can go in the most ridiculous direction to what if she was a car wreck, or something worse.

Some irrational thought comes over my mind. What if?

And what I need to do in those moments is I have to choose to say, "God, you love them even more than I do. I'm trusting them with you."

Another thing that weighs on me is the responsibility of leading this church. Listen we may not be large in number, but I realize that I'm representing God and there are times I worry. I don't want to let God or you down. I don't want to ever hurt the name of Jesus?

You hear all too often a pastor resigning because of some moral failure or some other issue.

Those are a couple of my worries.

What do I need to do?

Three thoughts. First of all is this. I want to do what I can do.

In other words, if you've got an exam coming up, you're not just trusting God for your exam. You're studying. If you want to get in better shape, you're not just praying about your health. You're going to do what you can do. Eat right, exercise do what you can. I'm partnering with God and do what I can so that. . .and that leads me to the second thing which is this. . .

We're going to give God what we can't do.

If I can't do something, I'm going to trust it to God. I'm giving God what I can't do.

First, I'm going to do what I can do. Then I'm going to give God what I can't do, and finally, I'm going to trust God no matter what.

Because of who he is. Because of his character. Because of his nature. I'm going to partner with God and do what I can do. And then God, I'm gonna trust you, casting my cares upon you and give you what I can't do. And no matter what, because of your goodness, your promises, your faithfulness, I'm going to trust you no matter what. Because I know that all your promises are yes in Christ.

What I want you to do for a moment is I want you to imagine a heart of peace, a peace that passes all understanding. I want you to imagine a life filled with unending joy. I want you to imagine peace of mind trusting God, and I want to tell you, it's possible.

But It's a choice.

Are your thoughts dominated by the flesh or dominated by the Spirit.

If your life is moving in the direction of your strongest thoughts, do you like the direction your thoughts are taking you?

Because I didn't. For so long, my thoughts were dominated by negative, self-defeating thoughts. You're not good enough, you're never going to measure up, you don't have what it takes, church isn't growing like it should.

Well, if you don't control what you think, you'll never control what you do.

So what are we doing? We're identifying the stronghold. Whatever is the lie that we've been believing, the dominant lie where our spiritual enemy is talking us out of the truth of God, and when we identify that lie, we then replace it with a truth from what God has spoken or is speaking into your life.

And then what do we do with that truth? Well, We write it. We meditate on it. And we declare it until you believe it.

Again I'm not declaring something into existence. I'm simply agreeing with what God has already spoken.

Over and over again. We write it, we think it, we declare it until we believe it.

So what do I declare in my life? Where does my mind need to be renewed?

Let me tell you. I exist to serve and glorify Jesus. I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength. I am a new creation with a new heart that longs to please Papa. I have been blessed with every spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. His grace is sufficient for me. I am more than a conqueror. I am blessed beyond measure because the Holy Spirit dwells within me.

Declare what's true about you. Write it, think it, declare it until you believe it.

We're renewing our minds with truth. What is true about you? If you don't know what's true about you, let me declare it over you.

You are not hostage to your unhealthy thoughts because the weapons you fight with are not the weapons of this world. Your spiritual weapons have divine power to demolish strongholds.

And by the power and authority of God, you demolish every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God. Worry is not your master. Why, because you trust in God. His peace guards your heart, and guards your mind in Christ Jesus. You are not a slave to your habits. You are not a prisoner to your addiction. You're an overcomer by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of your testimony. You have been rescued from the power of darkness and brought into the kingdom of life. You are a new creation. Your old self has died. You have the mind of Christ and the Spirit of God living in you and through you.

So, Father, Renew our minds.

We also know that you can't control what happens to you but you can control how you frame it. You can look at life from a negative perspective and say, "This is bad, this is hard," or you can look at it from a different perspective and say, "God, no matter what you are good, you are faithful and you're true."

And what's so powerful as followers of Jesus is this. We're not interpreting God through our circumstances. God, where are you? God you must not be good because life is bad.

No, what we're doing is we're interpreting our circumstances through the goodness of God.

And then, as followers of Jesus, we cover everything we do in prayer, and we're not going to be anxious about anything, but in everything, with prayer and petition, we take our requests to God, and the peace of God, not the peace of this world.

The world can't give peace like Jesus can. Jesus said in this world you will have trouble but then he went on to say, but take heart I have overcome the world. And it's the peace of God,

which transcends all understanding that will guard your hearts and what else? And your minds in Christ Jesus.

So, as followers of Jesus, we're going let God empower us to win the war in our mind. And when you know the truth, the truth will set you free.

We are stepping out of the lies of our spiritual enemy and we're stepping into the truth of God. And it's the truth of God, which will set you free.

So Father, do it, we pray. Renew our thoughts. Help take captive every thought. I know there are people that are overwhelmed with runaway thoughts, with fears and anxiety.

God, help us to cast our cares upon you.

Papa there are people here or watching online that have had sleepless nights because of the circumstances they find themselves in. Help them to trust in you, for you are bigger than the circumstances.

We have believed the lies of the enemy for too long, help us to see the truth.

God, no matter what, help us trust in you with all of our hearts and lean not on our own understanding, but in all of our ways acknowledge you, believing that you will make our paths straight.

We release these burdens. We lay them before you. I'm trusting you right now in this moment.

In Jesus name.