



Winning the War in Your Mind

Learning to Talk to God

BELONG

Start the group with an opportunity for community. We want this to be a place where the body of Christ can **belong** by sharing their lives with one another in genuine fellowship!

Question 1 – Our thought life is about who we talk to and who we listen to. Who are people in your life who provide a Godly influence? What are things in your life you listen to that are taking away your peace?

Question 2 – Many see the Christian church as joyless, and as a result unattractive. Do you think the church lives outwardly with the joy God provides? How can the church be more mentally resilient?

Question 3 – Mental health in our country is a topic of serious concern. According to data, rates of depression have increased by 63% between 2009 and 2017.¹ Why do you think that is?

¹ <https://www.banyanmentalhealth.com/2021/07/01/rise-in-mental-illness/>

BELIEVE

Move into the relevant Bible passages and read aloud together. This where the body of Christ can learn together to **believe** in Jesus more and love Him better!

The single most determinative factor in the direction of your life is the way you *think*. This is because, in many ways, we *are* what we think. Just *think* about it!

- No decision or course of action occurs without originating in your mind first
- Every mental state, affection, and desire has its origins in the mind
- Our self-destructive inclinations, sinful tendencies, and crippling anxieties begin in the mind

Within modernity, even within the modern church, a general lack of mental stability exists because many simply don't know how to think *properly*. As we saw with the statistic above, mental health is a timely discussion for the body of Christ to consider. As usual, God has answers!

Philippians 4:4-7²

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

The Christian Life: Thought Determines Action

1. Christians are called to live with joy. "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice."

The discussion about Christian thinking is preceded by a command about Christian conduct. How you live is determined by how you think. Paul says to take active joy in life despite the circumstances of life. Christians are in fact commanded to be *happy people* although we will still experience sadness and difficulty.

How can such happiness be achieved? "In the Lord." We can have joy in spite of our circumstances because it is dependent on God's goodness and grace to us, not our situation. Think about Paul when he wrote this passage.

- Paul was in prison for doing nothing wrong
- Paul faced execution and death
- Paul had already been dealing with harsh persecution

² The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016)

Yet he had unsurpassable joy! Our happiness is more attributable to our attitude and how we choose to view the ins and outs of our lives. We are so consumed with the darkness in our world that we fail to allow our relationship with God to determine our outlook.

2. Christians are called to be people who live graciously. “Let your reasonableness be known to everyone.”

The word ‘reasonable’ conveys a reasonable person, not harsh or overbearing, but gracious and selfless. That it should be known means it has in mind both our personal *and* public interactions. We are to live graciously, and there is *no* exception here! Our natural personality doesn’t determine our chosen attitude.

The Christian Mind: Give God Your Mind

1. We must refuse to worry. “Do not be anxious.”

How do we overcome a mindset whose natural inclination is to worry? We learn by talking to God. Paul says, “in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God.”

- “...in everything...” – We talk to God about everything, calling us to a truly expansive relationship with God by letting him in on every part of our lives.
- “...by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving...” – This is the nature of our talking to God. We talk as needy people. We talk gratefully for what God has done.
- “...let your request be made known to God.” – We are to make requests *specifically*. We don’t speak in generalities. We bring Him our specific needs.

It is beautiful that we can approach God with no shame. Our prayers can be big or small, spectacular or miniscule. There is *nothing* in your life God doesn’t desire to hear about.

2. God gives us his peace. “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding...”

When we give our mind to God, we experience a new type of peace and protection in our inner being. This is specifically related to our *thoughts*.

- “...the peace of God...” – This comes from Jesus Christ. It comes from knowing God is in control and will take care of His children.
- “...surpasses all understanding...” – It surpasses understanding because it surpasses rationality. We can face the worst possible scenario and still have peace.
- “...guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” – This peace guards our mind. It’s actually military language Paul uses. Peace, once achieved, is like a guard standing at post against our worst thoughts.

If we want to think rightly, learn to talk to God. As we talk with God, He begins to protect our minds by providing peace.

BECOME

Wrap up the discussion by asking some closing questions. We can **become** more like the people God is calling us to be by reflecting on what we've learned and applying it.

Question 1 – Has your thought life been given completely over to God? What are some thoughts that are troubling you and taking away your joy?

Question 2 – Does anyone live with any kind of anxiety or depression or constant worry? How could giving over those things to God improve your life?

Question 3 – What do you think Jesus is trying to teach you today about how to think? Why do you think it is difficult to give our thoughts over to God?