

Runaway Thoughts

Anybody else have to deal with these besides me:

Runaway thoughts? Irrational worries? Events that trigger fear and anxiety?

As you move into adulthood the fear of the monster under your bed changes into worries about graduating from school, getting a job, marriage, house, kids, bills, taxes, and other thoughts that can keep you up at night.

It's easy to worry and become full of anxiety, stress, and fear.

And the problem is that we have already learned in this series...

Our Thoughts Will Determine Our Actions Which Will Direct Our Lives.

Carefully guard your thoughts because they are the source of true life. Proverbs 4:23 (CEV)

Change Your Thinking, Change Your Life

Within the wonderful complex mind that God has created us with, we all have this little almond shaped portion of our mind called the **Amygdala**.

- **Amygdala** This is the part of the brain that drives our "fight or flight" responses. It's often associated with our body's fear and stress responses. This is the God given part of our brain that's wired for survival. If I turned around and saw a rattlesnake coming up behind me, my amygdala would kick in sending a strong dose of adrenalin and you would probably see me jump higher than I have ever jumped before, do a little dance, scream, and run!

ILL: Wendy Bagwell's Rattlesnake story.

The Amygdala is not objective. It's hard wired to protect. Therefore, the Amygdala needs some help from the **Prefrontal Cortex** of our brain. This is the logical part of the brain.

- **Prefrontal Cortex:** This is the logical part of the brain. It reasons, plans, and helps us control the sudden fear and stress caused by the Amygdala.

ILL: My cats on the back porch, when hungry they push and paw on my backdoor and it sounds like someone is coming in. They will scare you! But my Prefrontal Cortex says, "Wait, you are not going to die, it's just the cats." *ILL:* Jesus in the Student Building Foyer. / Car crosses center line, etc.

Without the Prefrontal Cortex, the Amygdala takes over in response to preprogramming. For many of us here today we have been preprogrammed by past experiences and, if left unchecked, our amygdala responds to triggers that quickly take us to an unhealthy place in our mind, leaving us in a state of worry and stress.

I say it takes us to unhealthy places because Jesus did not say, "**Let your hearts be troubled!**" He said...

Do Not Let Your Hearts be Troubled

John 14:1 Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me.

Don't go there, Jesus said, Believe in me. Trust God, trust me the Prince of Peace.

- This Christmas we won't be celebrating that Angels appeared to the Sheppard's and said, "Glory God in highest! Stress and anxiety on earth." No, *peace* on the earth.

Don't Be Anxious

Jesus didn't say let your heart be troubled and Paul didn't say. "***Be anxious about everything!***" No, but from prison he writes "**6 Do not be anxious about anything,** As quickly as Paul tells us not to be

anxious about ANYTHING, he just as quickly tells us that instead of being anxious we should be praying about EVERYTHING.

...but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. Why? What's the result? 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

Every situation, every thought, every feeling, no matter how big or small, should be discussed with your best friend, Jesus! Communicate with Jesus and talk to Jesus about everything.

EX: You have a big test tomorrow, pray. You have an important job interview, pray. Concerning your future spouse, financial burdens, battle with addiction, marriage challenges, pray, pray, pray!

Prayer is the Pathway to God's Supernatural Peace.

The problem is prayer is often our last resort. Have you ever heard someone say, "Well I guess all we can do now is pray?" Can you imagine God in heaven saying, "Finally!" "They are going to pray!" Prayer is never a last resort. Prayer should always be your default. Your first line of offense!

Here's some good news, not only does prayer move the heart of God, but prayer changes us for the better. In our wonderful God designed brains, prayer actually changes the chemistry in your brain.

A few decades ago—Neurologists believed brains didn't change after adolescence. Science now knows what God's Word has been telling us all along. We can renew our mind.

Neuroplasticity— the brain's ability to change, modify, and adapt throughout life.

Neurotheology—Also known as Spiritual Neuroscience which studies the relationship between one's brain and one's belief in God. What happens to a human brain when we pray? Prayer changes our brain!

"It has been found that 12 minutes of daily focused prayer over an 8-week period can change the brain to such an extent that it can be measured on a brain scan."

Dr. Caroline Leaf, author of Switch On Your Brain!

Just as toxic negative thoughts hurt your brain and programs you for pain, prayer heals and renews your brain and transforms our minds.

Why do we get so anxious and worried, sometimes waking up with our minds racing and worrying? Why do some people have panic attacks?

- Neuroscience tells us that we are experiencing an Amygdala Hijack! It's taking over!
- Paul would say it this way, "The problem is that our mind is dominated by sinful thinking."
- **What is worry? Worry is the sin of distrusting the promises and power of God.**

It's like saying, "God, I don't believe you are good enough to cover this. God, I can't trust you with this, it's too big for you."

What God is teaching us is that instead of letting our sinful nature control our mind, we need to choose to let the Holy Spirit direct our thinking.

- I'm going to let the logical part of my brain choose to believe what God's word says.
- I'm going to choose to let the Spirit of God control my thoughts and mind.

Romans 8:5-6 (NLT) Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit.

6 So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death.

But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.

That's why we take every thought captive! If there is a thought that's inconsistent with God's Word, we take that thought captive and make it obedient to God's word.

Tell your Prefrontal Cortex to grab that Amygdala and get it under control. Give your burdens to God! Trust Him! Take it to the Lord in prayer.

ILL Big Worry Box / Small God box. The problem is our worries are too big and our God is too small. We need to change that way of thinking and flip the boxes. God is the Big Box. Worries are the small.

Bold Next Step: Get a literal God box and when you worry, put it in the God box, trust God, and move on in life.

If you wake up in the middle of the night worrying, you will have to get out of bed, get it out of the box and say, "God, I don't trust you with this."

1 Peter 5:7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

CAST ALL YOUR CARES, don't just give a little to God here and there. And don't keep worrying and giving it to God over and over. No, we take our whole life and give it to God, and we become hidden with God in Christ Jesus. We give all to him.

Irresponsible you say? No, we are not living in denial. We are just choosing what to do with our worries and stress in life. Here is Pastor Craig Groeschel's theory.

- **Do what I can do.**
- **Give God what I can't do.**
- **Trust God no matter what.**

Why? So that **the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:7**

Peace is Possible. And it's also a Choice!

A choice of where you let your mind go. Remember, **Our Thoughts Will Determine Our Actions Which Will Direct Our Lives.** So, do you like the direction your thoughts are taking you?

If you don't control what you think, you will never control what you do. So, what are you going to do?

- 1. Identify the number one stronghold that is holding you back.**
- 2. Name the truth that demolishes that stronghold.**

We change our thinking away from the lies of the enemy and we reprogram them with the truth of God.

The Battlefield of Our Mind

It is a battle between God's truth about you and Satan's lies to you.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does.

4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Remember, you can't control what happens to you; you can control how you frame it.

Train Your Brain by Setting Your Mind on Things Above.

Colossians 3:2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

And Always Allow Christ Jesus to Guard Your Mind Through Prayer.

Philippians 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.