

# TRANSFORMED



## MENTAL HEALTH “Change Your Life BY Changing Your Mind ”

Romans 12:1-2  
September 21, 2014

### WHY I MUST MANAGE MY MIND

#### BECAUSE \_\_\_\_\_

“Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts.” Proverbs 4:23 (TEV)

#### BECAUSE \_\_\_\_\_

“I love to do God’s will so far as my new nature is concerned; but there’s something else deep within me that is at war with my mind and wins the fight and makes me a slave to the sin within me. In my mind I want to be God’s servant, but instead I find myself still enslaved to sin.” Romans 7:22-23 (LB)

#### BECAUSE \_\_\_\_\_

“If your sinful nature controls your mind, there is death. But if the Holy Spirit controls your mind, there is life and peace.” Romans 8:6 (NLT)

### 3 DAILY CHOICES FOR A HEALTHY MIND

#### 1. I MUST \_\_\_\_\_

“People need more than bread for their life; they must feed on every WORD OF GOD.” Matthew 4:4 (NLT)

#### WHEN? \_\_\_\_\_

“I rise early. . . to cry out for help and to put my hope in your words.” Psalm 119:147 (NLT) “Lord, how I love your Word. I think about it all day long.” Psalm 119:97 (NLT) “Even in the darkest of night, your teachings fill my mind.” Psalm 16:7 (CEV)

#### 2. I MUST \_\_\_\_\_

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

“Though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. [Our weapons] have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish any argument and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we TAKE CAPTIVE EVERY THOUGHT to make it OBEDIENT to Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

### HOW TEMPTATION WORKS

“Temptation comes from the lure of OUR OWN evil desires. These evil desires lead to evil actions, and then the evil actions lead to death.” James 1:14-15 (NLT)

Step 1: Desire

Step 2: Doubt – “Did God really say...?”

Step 3: Deception – Believing a lie of Satan

Step 4: Disobedience & Defeat

“I have made up my mind to obey your laws forever, no matter what.” Psalm 119:112 (CEV)

#### 3. I MUST \_\_\_\_\_

✓

“Keep your mind on Jesus Christ...” 2 Timothy 2:8 (CEV)

“Think about Jesus’ example. He held on while wicked people were doing evil things to him. So do not get tired and stop trying.” Hebrews 12:3 (NCV)

✓

“Don’t just think about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and in what they are doing.” Phil. 2:4 (LB)

“Let us think about each other and help each other to show love and do good deeds.” Hebrews 10:24 (NCV)

✓

“Let heaven fill your thoughts. Do not think only about things down here on earth.” Colossians 3:2 (NLT)

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.” 1 Corinthians 2:9 (NLT)

# TRANSFORMED

## Mental Health

### “Change Your Life By Changing Your Mind”

*Romans 12:1-2 NLT*

September 21, 2014 AM Worship

**The Bulk of this Message is from Rick Warren however I edited and added other elements and my own personal illustrations as well as other extras.**

Our theme for 50 Days of Transformation is Romans 12:2. This week I want us to look at it in the New Living Translation. It says this: *“Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.”*

We’ve memorized it by “the renewing of your mind.” “The renewing of your mind” is the way the NIV puts it. The New Living Translation says *“by changing the way you think.”*

Let me sum up what I want to say today in one sentence: **God is far more interested in changing your mind than in changing your circumstances.** We want God to change our circumstances. We want him to take away all of the problems, all of the pain, all the sorrow, all the suffering, all the sickness, all the sadness. And God says, yeah, I know that’s important but really more important than that is what’s happening in you. I’m far more interested in changing your mind before we change your circumstance. Because nothing happens in your life until you get to the renewing of your mind. No transformation takes place, no change takes place in your mind or in your life until your thoughts begin to change.

### Why I must manage my mind?

Why is it so important that I learn how to manage my mind? We looked at physical health, we’ve looked at spiritual health. This week I want us to look at mental health. How do I have a healthy mind? And why is it important that I manage my thought life. Let me give you three reasons. You might write these down.

#### o Because my thoughts control my life

My thoughts control my life. Every single action always begins as a thought. If you don’t think it, you don’t do it. That’s both good and

bad. If you don't think it, you don't do it. If it's a good thought then you're going to do good. If it's a bad thought you're going to do bad. But my thoughts control my life.

Proverbs 4:23 in Today's English Version says, "*Be careful how you think; your life is shaped [circle that word "shaped"... your life is shaped...] by your thoughts.*" People say "I was just thinking it!" You don't realize how important a thought is. The Bible says the power of your mind, the power of your thoughts, has tremendous ability to shape your life for good or for bad. If you accept the thought that when growing up somebody said to you "You're worthless. You're no good. You don't matter. You're ugly. You're uncoordinated." If you accepted that fact whether it was right or wrong it shaped your life.

We're always interested in our feelings. We're going to look at feelings next week when we look at emotional health. But your feelings don't shape your life. Your beliefs do. And it doesn't even have to be true. If you believe it, it's going to shape your life.

A lot of you were taught things as a kid about you that just weren't true. Years later you're still acting on false information. Be transformed by changing the way you think. Because my thoughts control my life both good and bad.

o **Because the mind is the battleground for sin.**

It's where I win or lose the battle. In fact all temptation happens in the mind. We think temptation is something out *there*, something external, something that happens that we see out there and we say that's tempting to me. It wouldn't tempt you if there wasn't a corollary desire inside you. All temptation happens in your mind – between your ears. As a result sin happens in your mind. It happens between your ears.

When we talk about the sins of pride or lust or bitterness or hatred or anger or fear or resentment or envy or worry, where are those things? They're all in your mind. If you can learn how to manage your mind you've learned how to manage your life. This is where the battleground is.

Paul in Romans 7 is very articulate in explaining how we've all felt in this battle that pulls us many different directions in our mind. Paul says

this: Romans 7:22-23 *“I love to do God’s will so far as my new nature is concerned; but [There’s always a big but!] there’s something else deep within me that is at war with my mind and wins the fight and makes me a slave to the sin within me. In my mind I want to be God’s servant, but instead I find myself still enslaved to sin.”*

**We can all identify with that.** Circle some words in that passage – circle the word “war,” the word “fight,” the word “slave,” the word “enslaved.” What’s he saying? He’s saying **there’s a battle in your brain.** It’s one of the reasons why you get mentally fatigued because there’s a battle in your brain and it’s going on twenty four hours a day. Sometimes you’re conscious of that battle and sometimes you’re unconscious of that battle. But it’s going on in your life.

And the reason why that battle is in your brain is going on and it’s debilitating is because it’s so intense. And the reason why it’s so intense is because your brain, your mind, is your greatest asset. And Satan wants to control your mind. The world wants to control your mind. There’s a battle for the way you think.

**Why? Because whatever gets your attention gets you.**

*So I need to manage my mind because my thoughts control my life and because my mind is the battle ground for sin and temptation.*

o **Because it’s the key to peace and happiness.**

Because managing my mind is actually the key to peace and the key to happiness. If you learn what we’re going to talk about this weekend and you begin to apply it in your life your peace of mind will go up dramatically and so will your happiness and so will your understanding and enjoyment of life.

*An unmanaged mind leads to tension. A managed mind leads to tranquility.* The *unmanaged mind* leads to pressure. A *managed mind* leads to peace. An *unmanaged mind* leads to conflict. And chaos. A *managed mind* leads to confidence. An *unmanaged mind* leads to stress. You don’t manage your thoughts. You’re just letting them go all over the place. You don’t ever even try to control your mind and the way you direct your thoughts. You have an enormous amount of stress in your life. But a managed mind leads to

strength and leads to security and leads to serenity.

The Bible says it like this in [Romans 8:6](#) *“If your sinful nature controls your mind, there is death. [And by the way what is death? It’s the opposite of life. You’re not really living....] But if the Holy Spirit controls your mind, there is life and peace.”*

### 3 DAILY CHOICES FOR A HEALTHY MIND

I want us to look at three choices that you must make on a daily basis in order to have a healthy mind. A lot of people don’t realize that you can control your thoughts. “My thoughts are uncontrollable!” No. You think they’re uncontrollable but **you can control your thoughts**.

In fact, nobody else can. **Satan can’t control your thoughts**. He can suggest. He’d like to but he can’t control your thoughts. Only you can control your thoughts.

And **God isn’t going to control your thoughts**. You don’t need to pray if you’re having bad thoughts, if you’re having scary thoughts, you’re having guilty thoughts, you’re having lonely thoughts, you’re having depressed and discouraged thoughts, it doesn’t really help to say, God change my thoughts. God’s going to say, It’s your mind. You do it. All you have to do is flip the channel changer. You don’t have to be thinking about what you’re thinking about right now. Nobody’s holding a gun to your head. **You could do it. You could make that change. Your thoughts are highly controllable.**

So if I want to have a healthy mind, I want to break free from all those bad patterns of the way I’ve been thinking, **what I need to do is make some choices**. The Bible says there are three choices for a healthy mind. I have to feed my mind, I have to free my mind and I have to focus my mind.

Let’s look at these three things. They’re all choices and you have to choose them, not just once in your lifetime but on a moment by moment basis.

[If I want to have a healthy mind ...](#)

#### 1. I must feed my mind with truth

I must feed my mind with the truth. **We all know the importance of nutrition**. Good food and good calories cause you to be better, to be stronger, to be healthier, to have more energy. Bad calories, bad junk

food, things that don't do good, harm your body. The same is true in your thought life. I must feed my mind not with junk, not with poison, but with truth.

In your LifeGroup you looked at the different kind of things you can put in your mind. But Jesus said it like this *"You will know the truth and the truth will set you free."*

You and I need the best information to live the best life that God wants you to live. That information is right here in the Word of God. It's called the Truth. The Bible says in [Matthew 4:4](#) *"People need more than bread for their life; they must feed on every Word of God."* The Bible is our soul food. It's our owner's manual for life.

**When should I feed my mind truth? The answer is all the time.**

Throughout the day. Morning, noon and night.

**They tell us that the best way to eat is eat just a little every couple hours** rather than to eat big meals then go long hours without eating. But to eat constantly. Just kind of nibble your way through the day eating the right foods to keep your blood sugar level and things like that.

**The same is true with truth.** If you're constantly thinking about truth, it's going to renew your mind. It's going to change your mind.

I'll give you some examples of this: David, three verses from David.

[Psalm 119:147](#) *"I rise early to cry out for help [That's prayer] and to put my hope in your Words [That's Bible study.]"* Circle the word "hope". He says I start every morning talking to you, I cry out in prayer, and listening to you. I read your Word. He says I look for the hope in your Word.

**There are over seven thousand promises in this book.** Seven thousand of them. If you want to have your mind renewed become a promise person. **Begin to learn, memorize, think on these.** If you feel pretty hopeless about your situation, you're not spending enough time in the promises of God. Because they're there. He says I start my day with hope. **Are you starting your day with hope or with despair? He says I start it there.**

The next verse he says *"Lord, how I love your Word. I think about it all day long."* Circle that. [Psalm 16:7](#) he says *"Even in the darkest of night your teachings fill my mind."*

So he's saying early in the morning, all through the day and even late at

night I'm thinking about God's truth. **That's why David is called a man after God's own heart.**

**Let me give you one example of how serious David was about filling his mind with the truth of God's Word.**

I told you last week that he spent a large part of his life running for his life because the king that he was going to replace in Israel wanted to kill him. Saul wanted him dead. So David actually had to run and be a fugitive for many, many years living in caves and moving from place to place and never knowing, Am I going to wake up and be killed the next day? There were people who were actually trying to kill him. I doubt if that has ever happened to you. *Psalm 119:95 he says "When wicked people hide to ambush and kill me, I quietly keep my mind on your decrees."*

Wow! I quietly keep my mind on your decrees! If somebody was trying to kill you would you be thinking about the Word of God? I kind of doubt it. You'd probably be calling the police, you'd be running, you'd be bolting the door. David says I don't care what's going on in my life, morning, noon, night, even people trying to kill me, I have one thing I do: **I keep my mind on the truth.**

Do you do that in a crisis? That's called managing your mind. I feed my mind daily on truth.

## **2. I MUST FREE MY MIND FROM DESTRUCTIVE THOUGHTS**

That's the second thing I need to do – free my mind from destructive thoughts. Your mind needs to be liberated. Your mind needs to be delivered. **Your mind needs to be released. Because you are a prisoner of your own thoughts.** And you're a prisoner of things that people have told you that simply weren't true.

*As I said earlier, it doesn't matter if it's true or not if you believed it it's affected your life.* If you have been told you were clumsy, maybe you weren't clumsy at all. But if you believed it – you're clumsy. And you see yourself that way because you always act in accordance with the way you see yourself.

I've got to free my mind from destructive thoughts. That isn't easy. **The reason it's not easy is because you have three enemies.** Those three enemies are trying to team tackle you and keep you from having your mind

liberated. These are the things that keep you from fulfilling all your good intentions. You know all those good intentions about things you'd like to change in your life? I'm going to change this... and I'm going to change that.... And it never, ever happens. Why? Because you have three enemies in your mind that are battling in your brain to keep you from doing all the things your best intentions would like to do, all your good resolutions and things like that. They're not going to give up ground easily. You're going to have to fight to free your mind.

### What are the enemies?

#### 1. The first enemy is my old nature.

My old nature. I want to show you a verse, [Romans 7:23](#). Paul talks about how his old nature keeps him in mental bondage. He says this: *"I see in my body a principle at war [there's that battle for your brain] with the law of my mind, taking me captive to the law of sin that dwells inside of me."* He's using war language here.

Let me put it this way: **Do you ever find yourself doing things that you don't really want to do?** That's the battle.

Let me say it this way. You don't have to raise your hands on this one. **But have you ever knowingly engaged in self defeating behavior?** "I know this isn't good for me but...." What's going on there? The battle in your brain.

You have all of the best intentions in your new nature. I want to do the right thing but the battle in your brain, the first battle is with your old sin nature. **Your old nature is not your friend.** It is the source of all your bad habits. [Romans 8:5](#) says this *"Those who are dominated by their sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit."*

**Notice it's all about your brain. It's about how you think.**

So I may have a good intention for changing something in my life but my old nature is going to battle me on it.

#### 2. The second thing that's going to fight this, the second enemy is Satan. He wants to control your mind.

**He can't** but he wants to control your mind. *So he sends these ideas, these thoughts into your mind.*

Let me be real clear. **Satan cannot force you to do anything.** If



you're a Christian, you have the Holy Spirit in you, Satan cannot force you to do anything. Because "*Greater is he that is in me than he who is in the world.*"

**But he can make suggestions.** And those suggestions are very, very powerful. He is constantly, continually planting negative thoughts in your mind. He'll use other people or he'll use the television or he'll just throw a thought in your mind. (Where in the world did that come from?)

Have you ever been praying and you're praying real hard and all of a sudden the weirdest thought comes into your mind while you're praying? Where did that one come from? I'll tell you where it came from! **The devil just dropped a little bomb on your brain.**

**Martin Luther said you can't keep the birds from flying over your head, but Rick Warren says you can keep them from pooppin' in your hair!** You can duck. And you can move.

You don't have to expect a thought. **One of the most important things is don't believe everything you think.** That's one of the most liberating thoughts you'll ever get. I don't have to believe everything I think. **We automatically think if we think it, it must be true. Are you kidding me?** You think a lot of stuff that's not true. In fact, maybe a majority of the stuff you think isn't true. You have all these ideas and you think, I thought it; it must be true. Of course it's not true. So just because you get a thought in your mind, it may come from your old sin nature, it may come from the devil. It doesn't really matter. If it's not true, it's not true. You don't have to believe everything you think. *I don't have to believe everything I think.*

**If you will listen to that one truth right there, you're on the road to mental health. Because not everything you think is true.** Stuff you think about yourself, stuff you think about God, stuff you think about your husband or your wife or life or the community or the government. It's just not all true just because you thought it.

Satan puts these thoughts. **The moment you wake up, the moment you wake up, he starts dropping little seeds.** "You're not going to have a good day today. Life is going to really be bad! Nobody's

going to like you. In fact you're flat out ugly. If I were as ugly as you I wouldn't even show my face."

**You start getting all this talk going on in your brain.** "Why in the world am I even trying? It's not going to be any different." He starts giving you all these reasons to give up – and you haven't even started the day yet.

**If you get up in the morning and you don't meet the devil face on, it just means you're going in the same direction.** Follow that one! He's going to drop these little thoughts on you. Then sometimes he'll say, "Go ahead, you deserve it. Really? Go ahead, get angry, get even. How dare they say that to you."

He's just constantly dropping thoughts. When the devil gives a **thought we call it temptation; When God gives a thought we call it inspiration.** But both of them are putting thoughts in your mind. ***Then you're coming up with your own thoughts – we call that stupidity!***

These thoughts are going on in your mind but you've got this enemy called Satan. **Second Corinthians 2:11** Paul talks about a man in the church who caused a lot of problems. *"I've forgiven that man so Satan won't outsmart us."*

What's he saying there? When I am unforgiving I'm caught in Satan's trap. I've forgiven that man so that Satan won't outsmart us. We're very familiar with his schemes. Satan wants to keep you in bitterness. Satan wants to keep you in bondage. He wants to keep you in resentment. If you have not forgiven anybody you have fallen into Satan's trap. Paul goes, We're wise to this guy. He's been using the same traps for so long. He's tries to get you hurt and then he tries to get you bitter. Then he builds on that bitterness. He gets a foothold in your life and on and on. Anytime you refuse to forgive anybody you've fallen for Satan's trap.

### **3. The third enemy is the world's value system**

That is culture around you. *The world, the flesh and the devil.*

The world is not helping you be a more disciplined person, are they? Does anything in our society encourage self-discipline? No. Not at all. **In fact every advertisement says, "You deserve a break today.**

Have it your way. We do it all for you. We do it all for you.”  
Mountain Dew my favorite commercial says “Obey your thirst.” In other words be an animal and do whatever you feel like doing. Obey your thirst.

**The world has their value system.** It’s promoted by advertisers and it’s promoted by movies and it’s promoted by television, it’s promoted in songs and it’s certainly promoted by celebrities. So nobody around you is actually encouraging you to live a responsible mentally healthy life.

1 John 2:16 says this *“All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life [In other words that’s passion, possession and position; the lust of the flesh, that’s sex; the lust of the eyes, that’s your salary; pride of life, success and status. This is what everybody is going for. Money, sex and power – all these things.] It’s not of the Father but it’s of this world.”*

**So how do you fight this battle?** You have all these best intentions for changing but then you’ve got this triple threat of your own old nature – nature within you, the devil against you and the world around you. No wonder you keep struggling with discouragement and despair and failure and things like that.

Look at the next verse, 2 Corinthians 10 *“Though we live in the world we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world [He’s talking about the mental battle we go through] our weapons have divine power to demolish strongholds. [Circle “strongholds.” We’ll come back to that word in just a minute.] our weapons have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish any argument and every pretention [that’s arguments in your own mind, the pretentions in your own mind] that sets itself up against the knowledge of God and [here’s the important part] we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”*

Notice this is warfare language. He’s talking about this battle going on in your mind, this mental battle. He says we demolish strongholds. **What is a stronghold?** A stronghold is a lie that I believe. That’s a stronghold. A spiritual stronghold in my life is a lie that I believe.

**So the lie might** be God really doesn't love me. That's a lie.  
**The lie might be** I know *better than God what will make me happy*.  
That's a lie. **The lie might be** *I should do what I want to do not what  
God wants me to do and that will make me happier*. That's a lie.  
That's a stronghold. **Anything that I believe that's a lie is called a  
spiritual stronghold in my life.**

A **stronghold** could be a *false value system like in the world*. It  
could be a *philosophical system like hedonism* that says the only  
thing that matters is pleasure. In other words the whole goal of life is  
just to have fun. That's a lie. It's not true.

Or *materialism is a philosophical world view* that says the only thing  
that matters is making money. That's a lie. That's not true.

**So secularism, hedonism, materialism, all that matters is money  
or sex or power. Those are all lies.** And if I believe them then I get  
a stronghold in my life. It could be a world view.

*Or it could be a personal attitude.* A stronghold could be an attitude  
like I'm never going to forgive that person. That's a stronghold.

*I can never forgive myself.* That's a stronghold.

*I will never amount to anything.* That's a stronghold.

*If something bad is going to happen it's going to happen to me.*

That's a stronghold. It's a lie that you are believing.

He says if you're going to learn to be mentally healthy you've got to  
learn how to demolish strongholds in your life.

**Behind every sin is some lie that you're believing.** The Bible calls  
Satan the father of lies. *Jesus says "I am the truth and the truth sets  
you free."* Satan is a liar and he's going to enslave you.

**So the stronghold needs to be destroyed.** How do we fight this  
mental battle?

**Notice two phrases.** First he says *"We take captive."* Circle that  
phrase. We take captive. The word in *Greek is akmaloo teedzo* and it  
*literally means to conquer*. It means to bring under control. It means  
to capture. We take captive. We conquer like a country. We *akmaloo  
teedzo* a country.

Then the other phrase I want you to circle is *"We make it obedient"*.  
We take every thought captive and make it obedient. Make every

thought obey Christ. That *word hupa koay* literally means to *bring into submission*.

How do you do that? What's he talking about here? He's talking about how do you make your mind *mind*? **How do you make your mind *mind* you?** *We bring it into submission. We take it captive. We make it obedient.*

**Let's have a little confession here.** My thoughts often disobey me. They often rebel. My mind often has a mind of its own. It wants to go in another direction.

**When I was studying for this message.** My mind didn't want to study. It wanted to go do something else, check Facebook, work on something else. It wanted to sit down with a big mountain dew and oreo cookies - I'm making you all hungry. See what I'm doing? *I'm messing with your mind.* You're already salivating on that kind of stuff right there.

If you've got add or adhd your mind often goes off in a whole different direction. You get ready to pray and you go what do I say? I don't know. You got anything you want to say, Lord? I don't have anything to say.

**Is anyone identifying with this?** I'm supposed to pray. What do I pray? Hello God! Amen!

**My mind often rebels.** When I need to ponder my mind wants to wander. It doesn't always obey me. When I need to pray my mind drifts away. He says we take captive. We make it obedient.

What's he saying here? **You have a choice.** Your mind has to listen to you. God didn't give you just a mind. **He gave you a will and emotions.** We'll talk about emotions next week. Part of your will is to bring your mind into order.

The reason why most people are ineffective in life and actually fail at life and actually don't enjoy life is because they've never learned how to fight the battle of the mind.

**This is so important.** I just want to explain to you one simple thing. **How temptation works.** Paul says we're not supposed to be ignorant of how Satan works. You need to know how he works so you're not caught off guard.

## HOW TEMPTATION WORKS

So let me explain to you how temptation works. Because it always uses the same pattern. James 1:14-15 tells us the pattern. *“Temptation comes from the lure of our own evil desires. These evil desires lead to evil actions. Then the evil actions lead to death.”*

**Notice temptation is a process. It’s not an isolated event.** A lot of people talk about like *“It just caught me off guard. It was just a one night stand.”* No it wasn’t. There were a lot of things you gave into before you got to lowering that barrier. Temptation is a process and the Bible describes exactly how it works.

**There’s four phases.**

**(1) Phase number one is temptation starts with desire.**

If you don’t have any desire for something it’s not a temptation.

*I have never ever in my life been tempted to smoke a cigarette. Why?*

*There’s no desire in me.* I think they stink. Somebody asked me the other day will smoking send me to hell? I said, No! it’ll make you smell like you’ve been there but it’s not going to send you to hell.

I’ve never been tempted because it just didn’t smell good to me. There’s a lot of stuff that I’ve been tempted in you haven’t been tempted in. But it always starts with an internal desire.

**He says the lure of our desire begins inside of you. Temptation doesn’t start *out there*.** It doesn’t start on tv. It doesn’t start on the street corner. It starts inside your mind. It often begins with a natural desire. Not even an evil desire. It can begin with a natural desire.

*You have a natural desire for sleep. You have a natural desire for water.*

*You have a natural desire for food. You have a natural desire for sex.*

*You have a natural desire to succeed in life. These are all God given*

*drives.* The drive to achieve, the drive for sex, the drive to breed, those are normal drives. There’s nothing wrong with them.

**Temptation turns a routine desire into a runaway desire.** That’s what makes it bad. **It becomes more important than anything else.** It’s all you can think about. *Any desire out of control is destructive.* Fire in a fireplace can warm. Fire on a cooking stove can cook great food. But fire uncontrolled can burn your house down. All of God’s gifts misused and abused will burn your house down. Any of them will. Sex, sleep, eating.

Any of those things. They are good desires, good drives but misused and abused they mess you up.

**Often temptation is an attempt to fulfill a legitimate desire in your life.**

Like, “I just want to be loved (There’s nothing wrong with that) in the wrong way.”

**The point is it’s like steel in a magnet.** If there was no desire in me there would be no temptation. That make sense? So temptation doesn’t start out there. It starts in here, in my mind – the desire.

**(2) Step two in temptation it always happens this way. Doubt.**

What you do in doubt is you begin to doubt two things. **You doubt that God loves you and you doubt that God knows best.** **Because when you start to get tempted – Did God really say...** don’t have sex outside of marriage? Did God really say....forgive the person instead of get even with them? Did God really say... It’s more blessed to give than to receive? And you start doubting God’s Word.

**We see this with the very first temptation. Adam and Eve.** They’re in a perfect environment. It’s paradise, they have no clothes and no kids.

*Hello!* How do you mess up that? Really! Satan comes and says, “See that tree over there? Did God really say you can’t eat of that tree?”

What’s he doing? He’s getting you to doubt God’s word. Then he says, “God knows if you eat of that tree you’ll be as smart as he is.” What’s he doing? He’s getting you to doubt that God loves you. That God’s rules are for your benefit.

**Every time you give into temptation you are believing a lie.** You think you know better. You think God doesn’t know best. You think that you know what will make you happy more than he does.

So there’s always the desire and then there’s the doubt. “Did God really say? Does God really love me? Isn’t God being a little prudish about this? Is it really true...” and on and on and on.

**(3) Then step three is deception.**

The third thing that Satan does is **he replaces God’s truths with his lie.** And he says, “You won’t die if you eat this!” God had already said, “If you eat this fruit you’re going to die.” God said you can eat anything in the whole park, Yellowstone Park called Eden. You can eat of anything in the park except this one tree. What does man do? He goes immediately

for the one tree. It's the minimum amount of temptation possible. But it allows a choice.

**Satan changes it all.** He says, "God says you can't eat a bunch of stuff. And the reason is he doesn't want you to get as smart as he is." He is giving you a lie. He is deceiving you.

Notice it says in that verse. I am lured. *"Temptation comes from the lure of our own evil desires."* **Circle the word "lure." That's a fishing term. Enticed. I'm using bait.**

**Any of you fishermen? Some of you are.** The secret of good fishing is real simple. You've got to use the right bait. Salmon eat a certain kind of bait. Trout eat another kind of bait. Fish will even change what they're eating, feeding on, at different times of the day.

**How many fish are you going to catch with a bare hook? None. Zero. So obviously you've got to put some bait on there.** You've got to have a lure.

**Question: What kind of bait does Satan use on you?** Do you even know? Do you know the one he always uses on you? And he keeps coming back to it because it gets you every time. It hooks you every single time. It may be something from a long time ago that a parent said to you. But when that comes out you are so hooked you immediately get depressed or you immediately get angry, or you immediately get worried. Satan goes, Got her hooked! I put the right bait on that hook. **Satan knows your weaknesses and he hides the hook.**

**I call this phase deception because often we know there's a hook there but we still keep nibbling.** We know there's a hook! But we still keep nibbling! It's like people who flirt in the office. How stupid is that? You know there's a hook there. You know there's only one way it could go – bad! But you still keep nibbling. You say, I'm an adult. I won't get hurt. I'll be careful. You're being deceived. And there's a lure.

**Anybody who has done fishing knows that lures can be pretty flashy.** The flashier the lure the fish goes, What was that? I'm going to swim over there. It's flashy. It's shiny. That looks like Las Vegas! You know what Las Vegas is? One giant lure in the desert. It's shiny and it's bright and they've got all you can get buffets for nothing. And somebody's paying for that! But you're going to get hurt. **The poor suckers in Las**



**Vegas... it should be called *lost wages*.** The next time you get tempted to go to Las Vegas just give me your money. Give it to me. You save the time, you save the effort, and we'll use it for good. **Temptation always looks better than it is.**

**Step four is disobedience and defeat.**

Disobedience and defeat. Now we move from desire – **it's something I want; to doubt – doubt God's Word and God's love; to deception – I'm believing the lie that Satan's telling me – it's going to be okay, you can get away with it, just this once, it's not that bad.**

Then you go to disobedience and defeat and now it's sin. What began in the mind gets translated into action and it goes like this: **My attention becomes an attitude and my attitude becomes an action.** We could really spend a lot of time on this but this is how it works in the battle for your mind.

**Someone says, What's the danger of a harmless fantasy? *Are you kidding me?*** It's not harmless. **Write this down: What I flirt with I'll fall for.** Whatever I flirt with... it may be a cupcake – I'll fall for. Whatever I flirt with I'll fall for. **I need to refocus my attention.** **The Bible says that *"After desire has conceived it gives birth to sin and the end result is death."*** What's death? The exact opposite of living.

**You're free to choose anything you want in life.** You're free to make your choices. ***But you are not free from the consequences of those choices.*** The moment you make that choice **you are no longer free.** Because there are consequences that come to every choice. Often unintended consequences. What you sow you will reap and you cannot choose the behavior and not choose the consequence.

What am I saying? **The best time to win the battle with temptation is before it begins.** **Psalm 119:112 *"I have made up my mind to obey your laws forever no matter what."*** Until you come to that point you're just going to keep stumbling and stumbling and stumbling. *I have made up my mind.* That's a choice. I have made up my mind to obey your laws forever no matter what.

**Three things. I said you've got to make these choices every day. First I have to feed my mind constantly on truth, not garbage. Then I have**

**to free my mind from destructive thoughts.** We talked about how that happens. The third is...

### **3. I must focus my mind on the right things.**

For mental health I must focus my mind on the right things. Three things that will make the most difference in your mental state.

#### **1. Think about Jesus.**

You've heard about the old cliché you become what you think about most. If you think about Jesus guess what you're going to become like. Like Jesus.

Keep your mind on Jesus Christ. *Hebrews 12:3 "Think about Jesus' example. He held on [Are you having a hard time holding on?] he held on while wicked people were doing evil things to him. So do not get tired and stop trying."* So don't do that. When you start feeling like you're ready to give up think about what Jesus went through. Think about Jesus.

#### **2. Think about others.**

*Philippians 2:4 says "Don't just think about your own affairs but be interested in others too and what they are doing."*

**Do you realize how counter cultural that is?** Everything from the world teaches you to think about yourself and nobody else. How many times have you heard this phrase: I've got to do what's best for me. Looking out for number one. I could go on with a whole list of these phrases but **basically it's saying it's all about me, it's all about me.**

That is the most counter culture statement you can make in our world today. It's not about you. It's like a slap in the face. It's not about you. It's not about you. It's not about you. It's all about God. And it's only in giving your life away, that you'll understand what it means to live. So think about others.

*Hebrews 10:24 "Let us think about each other and help each other to show love and do good deeds."* The best place to practice that is in your LifeGroup. Practice that verse in your small group this week.

Let's think about each other. Let's help each other to show love and do good deeds. In your small group, that's the laboratory for love. It's the place to learn unselfishness.

### 3. Think about eternity.

It'll make the biggest difference in your mental state. **Think about eternity, that there's more to life than just here and now.** The problem we do today is we have short term thinking. We only think about what's happening right now. *Colossians 3:2 "Let heaven fill your thoughts. Do not think only about things down here on earth."* King James Version says, *"Set your minds on things above, not on things on the earth. Let heaven fill your thoughts."*

**Have you heard this old canard "He's so heavenly minded he's no earthly good."** That's a bunch of baloney! You know what I've found. **Only the people who are heavenly minded actually do any good.** And those who are most heavenly minded throughout history are those who have done the most good on earth. Bar none! It's not the earthly minded people who get the most done on earth. It is the most heavenly minded people who get the most done on earth for good! **The problem is the opposite: We're so earthly minded we're no heavenly good.** All we think about is budget and baseball and bills and stuff like that.

*1 Corinthians 2:9 "No eye has seen no ear has heard and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him."*

Think about that. And when you start thinking about that all of the problems, the little nitpicky problems are going to seem so inferior compared to the glory, the joy, the pleasure, the enjoyment, the things we have to look forward to in eternity.

I need to feed my mind on truth every day. I need to free my mind from those destructive thoughts. I can choose not to think them by changing the way I think. Then I can focus my mind on the right thing. When I'm focused on the right thing I don't have time to pay attention to the wrong thing. When I'm watching tv and I don't like what I see I just flip the channel. Change your attention. I'm no longer tempted. It's real simple.

**Prayer:**

Father, you gave us our minds. We are made in your image. This is the greatest gift you've ever given us – the gift of intellect. We realize it's our greatest asset and it's the greatest battleground. We realize that the world, the flesh and the devil all team up to thwart our best intentions.

Now you pray. Just say a simple prayer: God, help me to put into practice what I've just learned. Just say, God, help me to put into practice what I've just learned. Help me to make these choices on a daily basis. I want to feed my mind with truth all the time. And I want to free my mind from destructive thoughts by taking every thought captive, to make it obedient to Christ. To not just let my mind run wild. Help me to be wise to temptation and realize when desires turn to doubt to deception to disobedience. God, today, I'm going to make up my mind to obey your Word forever no matter what. Help me to think about Jesus. Help me to think about others. Help me to think about eternity that my life may be truly transformed. In your name I pray. Amen.