

## Talk It Over

## MASTERMIND (Week 4) The Peace of God

### SMALL TALK

1. What's something that triggers an instant fear response from you? Any funny stories?
2. Describe a moment of true peace. What happened? Where were you? What were you thinking about?

### VIEWPOINT

3. **READ Romans 8:5-6.** How is this Scripture similar to the way your brain naturally works? How is it different?
4. **READ Philippians 4:6-9.** Describe a recent circumstance that really stressed you out. How does what we learn from Paul's letter here change the way you'll respond next time?

### GETTING PERSONAL

5. What are some of the root causes for worry and stress in your life?
6. What are some specific habits you want to form in order to replace worry with trust in God and His truth?

### MAKING PROGRESS

7. One of our core statements is: "Everyone has a next step." Start a good habit.
  - Every single time you catch yourself worrying or stressing about something, you might literally write it out and put it in a "God box" with a prayer.
  - If you haven't yet, identify the truth your mind needs most. Then write it, think it, and confess it until you believe it!

September 22, 2019

**Series: MASTERMIND**

(Change Your Thinking, Change Your Life)

**Week 4 -The Peace Of God**

As a small boy, I was often troubled by fears at night. I had horrific nightmares. They seemed very real, and maybe they were, very dark powers were lurking about the widows wanting to hurt me.

My dad was a missionary in dark places. Very little from the light of Jesus Christ was shining in those places. In a way, my firsthand experience with faith and the power of God came from my darkest fears. I did not keep these fears to myself, which was a good thing. And my parents did not minimize these fears which is also a good thing. What they did was pray with me at night and the peace of God would help me. I came to see a vital connection between my parent's prayers and the peace of God. The wicked darkness receded when they prayed.

I also noticed that when they forgot to pray for me, I often had a very troubling frightening dream. I would remind my parents to pray for me at night, I was that motivated by the power of prayer. These were but the beginning stages of God shaping me.

I had many, many, more lessons to learn as I struggled with fears and worries. In fact just this week, it dawned on me to add to my prayer list an item that was causing me a lot of worry, stress, and frustration. It is easy as an adult to assume we just have to gut it out. There's more to it than that.

Here is a story I resonated with as an adult. Maybe you will too. It reminds me a little bit of my interactions with my dad at night before praying.

## **The Lion Story**

From Ted Dekker, *The Forgotten Way*, page 54f.

A spiritual teacher is walking with a small boy in the savannah one sunny afternoon. He uses a walking stick because his bones aren't as strong as they once were. The child holds the old man's free hand because in the boy's eyes, the teacher is a giant and can save him from any danger.

Today's lesson is on God the Father. The teacher has brought the boy to a field frequented by lions. Seeing a pride under a tree, the teacher stops and points to a lion who stands alone, watching them. He turns to the boy.

"Imagine that God is a strong lion, and the accuser, representing all of evil, is a hyena," he says. "Tell me, can the hyena hurt the lion?"

"Yes," the boy says. "He can chase him and, with many others, take him down."

"Well then, let's make the lion bigger, because God is infinite. Let's make him as big as the field. The hyena, being finite, does not grow bigger. It is still the same size. Now can the hyena hurt the lion?"

The boy thinks for a moment. "Yes, he could bite the lion's foot," he says.

"Then let's make the lion bigger. As big as the whole savannah. Can the hyena now hurt the lion?"

The boy thinks hard for a long moment, "Well...maybe..."

"Let's make the lion as big as the whole world and the hyena now only a tiny speck on the field. In fact, let's make the lion as big as all the worlds. As big as the whole universe. Now..." He turns to face the boy, staff planted in the dirt before him, his gaze steady. "Can the hyena on that field, who is still the same size, much smaller than a single atom on the surface of a billion suns, hurt the lion?"

"No," the boy says, eyes wide with wonder.

"Can the hyena threaten the lion?"

The boy shakes his head. “No.”

The teacher looks off to the horizon and draws a deep breath through his nostrils. “Can the hyena even *bother* the lion?”

The answer is plain to the boy. “No,” he says.

The teacher looks down and offers an approving nod. “Always remember, this is how big and powerful your Father is. The only things bigger are His wisdom and His love for you, because God *is* love and you are His son. The hyena can only bother those who do not know who they are.”

***Philippians 4:6-9 (NIV)*** *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. <sup>9</sup> Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.*

#### REFLECT

Your life will always move in the direction of your strongest thoughts.

***Philippians 4:7 (NIV)*** *And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

*“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*

## I. What is worry?

Not all stress is bad. Without some stress we don't become high functioning people. We don't grow.

### Rubber band Illustration

Put it this way, we are like rubber bands. If we aren't stretched, we serve no purpose. For this rubber band to hold these pencils together, it must be stretched to serve its purpose, otherwise all the pieces we are to hold together actually fall through our completely stress free life.

### ***REFLECT***

Not all stress is bad, but worry can take stress to a harmful stage.

A little stress is good. But stress can be stretched to some breaking points where stress is destructive.

#### **A. *Worry is a mental FIXATION that DOMINATES your thinking***

Now worry dominates your thinking. It is a stronghold pattern. Something that needs to be addressed. Why? It is dominating you. You are held captive by the worry and it is not doing you any favors as you are in the dangerous zones of stress. Worry can do more than merely dominate your thinking, it can mess up your thinking, and your life. How?

#### **B. *DISTRUSTING the promise and power of God***

### **C. When worry controls your mind it is a SIN**

Why? Because God has become smaller in your thinking than worry!

***Romans 8:5-6 (NLT2) {5} 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.***

## **II. What To DO**

### **Box Illustration**

Here we have a box full of worries. I know all about this. Oh, I got this coming and that coming. So, in a moment of faith, you take whatever's worrying you, and you say God, I give this to you! Take it, Lord! Take it! God, if you haven't done anything with it, I'm taking it back!

Does anybody know what I'm talking about? Why do we do this? Why, in the middle of the night-- God, I don't think you can handle it. The problem is, your God is too small. Your worries are too big. It's time to get a bigger God... And some smaller worries.

Some of you, I would literally encourage you, to get a box. And symbolically, and every time you've got a worry, a burden, a concern, your mind races, write down what that worry is.

Whatever it is, write it down, and put it symbolically, in your God box, and say, God, I'm trusting you with this person. I'm trusting you with this situation. If you want to worry about it at two in the morning, what you have to do is get out of bed, go to the God box, and take that thing out, and symbolically say,

God, I don't trust you with this, I'm taking it back. What are we told to do?

We're told to cast all of our cares on him, because he cares for us. We don't just take our worries and put them with God. We take our life, and we become hidden with God in Christ Jesus. We give it all to him.

Now, I know what some of you are thinking. You're thinking, *"Well that's irresponsible. I mean, let's just live in denial. Don't do anything about your problems. Just give it to God, see how that works for you when your bills come due."*

Okay, I'm not talking about living in denial. If there is something I can do, I'm going to do what I can do.

**A. Do what I CAN do.**

**B. Give God what I CAN'T do.**

**C. Trust God no matter WHAT.**

**Health worries?** I do what I can (pray, diet, exercise, see a doctor?), Give God what I Can't, and trust God no matter what!

**BIG TEST and worried?** I do what I can (study, study, study), Give God what I Can't, and trust God no matter what!

**FINANCIAL worries?** I do what I can (budget, live within my means, honor God first with what he gives), Give God what I Can't, and trust God no matter what!

**Worries about Children?**

**If you battle worries like I do:** Imagine having a heart of peace, that words cannot describe.

**You can experience this.** It's a choice of where you let your mind go.

REFLECT

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

When I look at my thoughts, sometimes I realize I don't like the direction they are taking me. *Life is hard. This is so difficult. I can't get it all done. Nobody understands. Nobody cares. I can't keep it going. How long can I do this?* **No! I'm not going to let my thoughts take me away from God's will! If you don't control what you think, you can never control what you do.**

**III. How To TRAIN**

*2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (NIV) For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. <sup>4</sup> The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 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.*

- A. Identify the TRUTH that sets FREE**
- B. WRITE it, THINK it**
- C. CONFESS it until you BELIEVE it**

We write it, think it, confess it, until we believe it.

There will always be a battle in your mind. Let Jesus win the battle. Take the thoughts captive, and let Jesus replace them with truth, because when you know the truth, the truth will set you free.



Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank you for loving us so much you sent your Son. My dear Lord Jesus, you are the “Lion of Judah”! You are bigger than any of our fears and yet you are my “Good Shepherd”! You have All power, dominion, and authority. You protect and guide us even when we can’t see clearly that you have been doing that all along. Thank you for filling us with your Spirit. Strengthen us and guide us. Teach us to seek You in prayer for the peace you give. Amen!