

October 29, 2023

## Missing PEACE

### Part 5—Silence Your Negative Thoughts

Today is part 5 in our series, Missing PEACE, as we have been looking to strengthen our mental health. Today's topic is about how to deal with our thought processes when they become increasingly negative and problematic. At the end of today's message I'll tell you about a video based 5 day devotional plan. It begins with this introduction, that serves us well to introduce our topic for today.

VIDEO— Fighting Negative Thoughts (INTRO)

Negative thoughts are most problematic when they become habitual, and negative thoughts have a way of doing that.

Neuroscientific research has shown that the brain processes negative information differently from positive information. The amygdala, which is involved in emotional processing, responds more strongly to negative stimuli. This heightened neural response can contribute to the faster formation of negative habits.

According to extensive psychological research, the tendency of the human mind is to give more weight to negative information and experiences than to positive ones. This tendency is called NEGATIVE BIAS.

I think we get that even from personal experience.

- If you hear 10 compliments and one criticism, which one sticks with you? Also,
- If the news has one sensational bad news story, and one extraordinary good news story, which one sticks with you?

#### I. Your **THOUGHTS** have astonishing **POWER** over you

*Proverbs 4:23 (GNT) Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts.*

Thoughts are not small things that make little difference. Too many of us view thoughts a little like **BUTTERFLIES THAT FLUTTER BY**. Good thoughts are nice, and so we seek feel-good entertainment, social media connections to meet those needs.

But what we don't often recognize is that **BUTTERFLIES** are not the only things that **FLUTTER BY**. There are a lot of **BATS** that **FLUTTER BY**.

Butterflies fly about in the light. Bats fly about in the darkness. What kind of thought was that? Butterflies are helpful pollinators that connect our own thoughts

helpfully! Bats come to roost in your attic. Left to themselves, your attic becomes a dark cave filled with bats and bat guano, and it stinks.

This Proverb tells us that not only does it stink, it shapes your LIFE!

“Sow a thought, reap a deed. Sow a deed, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny.”

Have you ever been caught in a negativity spiral? It takes you down fast! And negativity is very hard on relationships!

**Where did that negativity spiral come from anyway?**

“A body filled with junk food struggles to move well. A mind filled with junk thoughts struggles to think well.”

James Clear (email “3-2-1 Thursday” August 5, 2021)

Paul uses aggressive battle language to describe fighting BAD thoughts which lays out a battle plan for dealing with these!

**2 Corinthians 10:4-5 (NIV)** *The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.*

**2 Corinthians 10:5** *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.*

His phrases should shock us a bit. He describes BAD THOUGHTS as fortresses built to oppose God in our minds. These bad thoughts can be “strongholds” or “fortresses” that serve as “arguments” ... “*that sets itself up against the knowledge of God.*” Paul says these must be torn down!!

**EXAMPLE:** Last week we talked about “worry”. This is just one example of bad thought can be “arguments” ... “*that sets itself up against the knowledge of God.*”

But there are many such bad thoughts that “*we must take captive*” to make these thoughts become “*obedient to Christ*” conforming the the “*knowledge of God*” rather than “*strongholds*” opposing the “*knowledge of God*”.

**Another EXAMPLE:** Have you ever thought, “*I’m a worthless loser*”!

Do you see how this *sets itself up against the knowledge of God*? It does!

God designed us with eternal worth! Our worth to him is so weighty, he sent his Son to suffer and die to set us free from our sinful losing patterns!

Or how about this bad thought: **“They are such idiots!”** Do you see how that thought stands opposed to the knowledge of God! God created them in his image also... and that thought stands opposed to everything Jesus taught us!

We must learn to SILENCE THESE BAD THOUGHTS! **They hold us captive and create barriers between us and God!**

- I. Your THOUGHTS have astonishing POWER over you
- II. But you can take POWER over your THOUGHTS

*2 Corinthians 10:5 (NIV) . . . . take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

**STEP 1: THINK**

**Think about what you think about.** What do you think about too much? What dominates your thoughts that you wish did not dominate your thoughts? Do any thoughts hold you hostage? Think about what you think about.

**STEP 2: CAPTURE**

**Capture that thought.** Is that thought a beautiful pollinator or an ugly Bat (thoughts of darkness)? Capture it so that you can examine it.

**ART LESSONS:** I’ve been tutoring my grandkids in art. Learning the color wheel, and how to mix colors for a color match is a foundational skill. It’s a skill for the eye, as well as understanding the color wheel, and what color to mix with another. **What looks right, may not be right, and you don’t know it until you check it against your reference.**

Capture that thought, then

**STEP 3: TEST**

Our world has lost the ability to test “thoughts” against a standard. We need a standard, we need some reference to measure it by. **It’s hard to paint a beautiful life if you don’t have a reference.**

**What will that standard or reference be for you?**

**Philippians 4:8 is a great reference!**

*Philippians 4:8 (NIV) 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.*

Does the color of the thought match the reference, for the painting the picture of the life you want? **If you want your life to look more like Jesus, use his thoughts as your reference.**

#### **STEP 4: CHOOSE**

**Decide what to do with the thought.** If it is true, keep it! If it is a lie, throw it out!

- **Treat negative thoughts as intruders!**
- **Arrest those thoughts!**
- **God's truths are the handcuffs we use.** God's truth has authority. God's truth makes bad thoughts of darkness submit and surrender stopping them from harming you further!
- **Truth evicts the lie.**

**God built the human mind with a WONDERFUL LIMITATION.** We can only truly focus on one thought at a time.

(You multitaskers might want to say otherwise, but I'm not talking about multi tasking. That's doing one thing on autopilot while thinking about something else.

push back on this, but this is different than doing something on autopilot while thinking about something else.)

Why is this limitation good? Because the best way to not think bad thoughts is to purposely think good thoughts. You may go back and forth, but you can't think them simultaneously.

**This wonderful limitation is actually a powerful TOOL for displacing bad thoughts!**

When dark bats roost in the dark spaces of your mind, tell your soul what to do!

ARREST AND EVICT THAT BAT before a whole host of bats (bad thoughts) roost there with him!

**KEEPING AND TREASURING good thoughts** is the practice of "renewing of your mind," (see Romans 12:2). It's how to find "the missing peace" which is what this series is all about!

I. Your THOUGHTS have astonishing POWER over you

II. But you can take POWER over your THOUGHTS

III. **When you turn to the LORD as your HELPER**

*Hebrews 13:6 (NIV) . . . "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. . . "*

Ask **the Lord your helper** to **help** you make it your practice to...

- CAPTURE your thoughts

- TEST your thoughts, and
- CHOOSE to think more like JESUS! He's our reference, the way, the truth, and the Life!

**NEXT STEPS:** 5 day support to get you started making this a PRACTICE... 5 day reading plan in YouVersion Bible App called "Fighting Negative Thoughts"

Thank you for coming today. I hope you have been encouraged.

## Talk It Over

### MISSING PEACE

Part 5

Silence Your Negative Thoughts

### SMALL TALK

1. Share a time when you've faced persistent negative thoughts or self-doubt. How did you manage these?

### VIEWPOINT

2. **Read Proverbs 4:23.** What advice is given and why? Does this say anything about guarding ourselves from "negativity" that creeps in from many sources (comparing translations here may help)?
3. **Read 2 Corinthians 10:4-5.** What does this teach us about managing thought life? What is a "stronghold"?
4. **Read Psalm 103:1 and Psalm 27.** Why does David tell his own Soul (mind, will, and emotions) what to do? Does he do this because he doesn't feel like it? Do you see any hints of this kind of thing in Psalm 27?

### GETTING PERSONAL

5. Are there specific areas in your life where you find it challenging to "guard your heart" and keep negative influences at bay? How can you work on addressing those challenges?
6. How might David's strategy and approach help you to cope with negative thoughts and emotions in the future?

## **MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)**

1. Has anyone found the YouVersion 5 day video devotional and reading plan "Fighting Negative Thoughts" to be helpful? If so, how?