

Peace of Mind: Intentional Thinking

Session 2

Introduction:

1. Some anxiety is normal and healthy—fight/flight/freeze response; apprehension about a test, etc.
2. Anxiety and Depression always arise from chemical changes in the brain. These changes may be caused by a variety of things:
 - a. Physical injury
 - b. Hormone imbalance
 - c. External factors such as medication, cell phone addiction
 - d. Stress buildup—creates over-production of cortisol.
 - e. Unbiblical mental processing—plays a part in all anxiety (cause or contributor)
3. Last session we discovered that our thoughts produce our emotions and our emotions drive our behaviors. THEREFORE, we must become the guardians of our thoughts.
 - a. Capture thoughts and examine them—think about your thinking!
 - b. Refuse thoughts that take God out of the equation.
 - c. Reframe thoughts that are unbiblical.

In session 2 we will present criteria for Biblical thinking—standards by which we can analyze our thoughts in order to avoid unbiblical thinking.

Breaking it down from the Bible...

- I. The Foundation of Intentional Thinking (Phil. 4:5-6)
 - A. Understand the importance of self-control (5).
 1. “Moderation” = “self-control.”—In other words, Scripture commands you to be in control of yourself, including your thoughts.
 2. Self-control begins in the mind. Therefore, it is my responsibility alone.
 3. Anxious care (worry, anxiety) reveals a lack of mental self-control.
 4. Only you can exercise self-control. That’s why it’s called self-control!
 - B. Notice the instruction against anxious care (6).
 1. “Careful” = “full of care, anxious, worried, focused on cares”
 2. Normally “care” is good; we should care!
 3. Sometimes “care” gets out of balance and takes over. Anxiety is the inability of the mind to shut down. It’s when the mind goes into an unending loop of thinking.
 - a. Care that dominates thinking is unhealthy/unbiblical.
 - b. Care that interferes with joy is unhealthy/unbiblical.
 - c. Care that is ultimately unproductive is unhealthy/unbiblical.

- II. The Paradigms of Appropriate Care—Criteria for Analyzing Your Thoughts
 - A. **The Control Paradigm**—Matthew 6: 27—“Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?”—Jesus
 - 1. **Things over which you have NO control**—Learn to dismiss these from your thoughts completely. This can include anything from the weather to the reactions and behaviors of other people.
 - 2. **Things over which you have COMPLETE control**—These things include our thoughts, eating habits, goals, opinions, responses, etc. Focus your thoughts on things over which you have complete control.
 - 3. **Things over which you have SOME control**
 - a. Focus thinking on YOUR part of the equation. Do your best at the part for which you are responsible.
 - b. Do not focus on outcomes that are beyond your control. Remember, you control some things; you may not be able to control outcomes.
 - c. Be satisfied when you have done your personal best and leave the rest to God.
 - B. **The Time Paradigm**—Phil. 3:13—“...forgetting those things which are behind...”—Paul; Matt. 6:34—“take therefore no thought for the morrow...”—Jesus
 - 1. **Do not think about the negative PAST.**
 - a. You have no control over the past; it cannot be changed.
 - b. Knowing the “why” of something doesn’t change what happened, doesn’t bring closure, and usually isn’t possible anyway. The question “why” is not a good question. It produces an endless mental loop without any answers.
 - c. Keep the negative past in the past by refusing to think about it in the present. The past must not bleed through into the present, staining the beauty of this moment.
 - d. Note, refusing to think about something is different from forgetting. Some things will never be forgotten; but we do not need to ruminate on them.
 - e. Do not let regret/guilt dominate your thinking. Example: “If only I had...”
 - 2. **Do not think about the uncertainties of the FUTURE.**
 - a. Matthew 6:34—“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”
 - b. The future is NOT within the realm of your control. Do not obsess over it. Simply refuse to worry about the future and what it holds for you. If you do so, you spoil today over something that likely won’t happen anyway.
 - c. God alone knows the future, and He loves you. He is in control, and that is enough.

3. **Focus thoughts on the PRESENT moment.**

- a. Learn to embrace the present situation. Embrace the things you cannot change. Accept the circumstances without wasting emotional energy pushing against them.
- b. Avoid “decoupled cognition”—filling the present with thoughts unrelated to the present (such as thoughts of the past or future). Be present in the MOMENT. Be present where your feet are!

III. The Imperative “Casting” prayer (Phil. 4:6)

- A. The Christian response to things over which we have partial or no control is prayer! Remember the CONTROL PARADIGM.
- B. The Christian response to the past, present, and future is prayer! Remember the TIME PARADIGM.
- C. The Secret of “Casting” Prayer
 1. “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved” (Psalm 55:22). Stop carrying your burdens by transferring them to the Lord!
 2. “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (I Pet. 5:7). Give your cares to God!
- D. The Steps in Casting Prayer
 1. Pray specifically about your anxious care, worry, burden. Make the current mental anguish the focus of this prayer.
 2. Include thanksgiving in your prayer. In the midst of any anxiety/depression, there are many things for which we can be thankful.
 3. Name your specific requests regarding the anxiety to God. What would you like God to do?
 4. Ask God to reveal anything within your power that you can do to alleviate the concern. Then wait for the voice of the Holy Spirit. If He reveals something to you, do it. If not, proceed to the next step.
 5. Cast your burden, concern, care, worry on the Lord! Tell the Lord you are casting your burden and leaving it with Him, just like the Bible says!
 6. Close your prayer and walk away from the burden. It’s safe in God’s hands. Do NOT pick it up again. It now belongs to God alone!

IV. The Intervention of Heavenly Peace (Phil. 4:7)

- A. Notice that God’s peace comes in response to your obedience! God is not a heavenly Xanax! To know God’s peace, you must obey Him. God has given us the prescription for His peace in the Bible. We are responsible to take it!
- B. God’s peace is beyond human understanding! When we do what God says, we experience peace that others cannot comprehend.
- C. God’s peace keeps (literally, “guards”) our hearts (emotions) and mind (thoughts). In other words, obedience to what God says begins a cycle of mental peace that will be a guardian to our joy.

