

“Battle For Your Mind”

Keeping Hope in Mind Sermon Series | Week Four | Newbreak Church

May 22nd, 2022

Newbreak’s Sermon Study Guide is an in-house resource that serves sermon-based Life Groups and/or individuals who want to reflect further on how the message contributes to our spiritual formation.

In this week’s study, we talk about how to win that ongoing war in your mind. We all face what could be referred to as “mental trash,” and instead of letting it pile up and ruin us, we want to make a regular practice of taking out the trash!

Icebreakers for Life Groups

- Did you like trash trucks growing up? Why or why not?
- How has your thought life been, today? Overall, positive or negative?

Going Deeper Into the Message

I cannot have a positive life and a negative mind.

So, how do I deal with the “mental trash” that makes a mess of my mind?

We will answer this using the acronym “T.H.I.N.K.” to help you think about *what* you think about.

Point 1 – Test my thoughts.

Read Psalm 139:23–24

David’s Psalm reminds us that we can make it a practice to invite God into our thought life. There are things in our minds that don’t belong. We might call it “mental garbage” but David refers to it as “anxious thoughts” or “anything that offends you” with the goal that, when tested and corrected, our thoughts can redirect us “along the path of everlasting life.” Because our thoughts don’t just bounce around our minds like a trapped prisoner, they end up directing our lives.

Think about what it means to “test” something. You naturally ask questions. In this case, you become inquisitive about your mind. You have to separate yourself from your thoughts—you aren’t your thoughts even though you have thoughts.

→ Do the thoughts you have accurately portray reality or are they a facade?

→ You might even want to label them and notice patterns: *Oh, there is that old narrative trying to tell me that I am not good enough....*

If we don’t test our thoughts, they might be trashing our minds without us even noticing! It would be like letting something rot in your fridge for months. Everything else would stink because of it! The same is true with our thoughts in our minds. They ought to be tested to see if they are accurate and to see if they belong. Otherwise, they need to be taken out like the rest of the trash.

Point 2 – Hold on to God’s truth.

Read 2 Corinthians 10:4–5

The Greek word for “strongholds” refers to an edifice that could be up to 20 feet beneath the surface. It was either where generals or prisoners of war were kept during a siege.

However, we bet you imagined a towering edifice, like a skyscraper, but that's quite the opposite! Something like a tall castle would serve a different purpose than the kind of stronghold Paul is referring to. Paul uses this metaphor to describe false ideas as being something deeply rooted beneath the ground, something strongly lodged in their place. This not only makes them hard to detect (due to their concealed and secretive nature) but also makes them hard to remove since they are buried in the solid earth.

So, when it comes to our thought life, there are some things that might be "strongholds" buried deep and fortified in your mind, secretly holding hostage the whole and healthy you that is waiting to be set free from captivity!

How do we do this? Two key phases.

→ **1) Identify the strongholds in your mind.** To make it simple, start with one. Don't get lost in all the "mental trash" that might be clouding your mind. Locate that one stronghold that seems to be doing its worst lately. Remember, strongholds can be hard to detect so we must *define them* before we *defeat them*. If you are comfortable, it may be good to journal your thoughts or prayers so you can re-read your entries and see if it becomes more clear. Also, you can try talking to a confidant who could possibly identify it for you. After all, it's hard to read the label when you are standing inside the bottle.

→ **2) Name the truth that demolishes that stronghold.** Strongholds might be deeply lodged in place, but they are not invincible. And depending on what the stronghold is, it

might be a journey and a multifaceted process to remove it, but the process of removing it will definitely include naming a truth that God has given us to demolish it. Scripture will be your aid in providing a declaration that has more weight and authority than even a deeply ingrained "stronghold" in your mind!

(For more practical content on this verse and this point see this week's blog post: www.newbreak.church/uprooting-strongholds).

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- If you were to sit alone with your thoughts for an hour, would it be a pleasant experience or a daunting one? Answering this will serve to help you see the health of your thought life.
- Take a moment to think about what you have been thinking about today. Test those thoughts. Are your thoughts that portray reality or a facade? Are they fostering hope or despair?
- Testing our thoughts is where we get to be honest with ourselves. But we also need to move to uprooting "strongholds" in our minds. What is a stronghold in your mind you can identify right now? What biblical truth can demolish it? (If you don't know what biblical truth can help, lean into your community! They may know!)
- How does the insight into 2 Corinthians 10, about strongholds being something "beneath the surface" shed light on the passage?

Point 3 – Imagine God's truth working in your life.

Read Psalm 27:11–14

This passage is great for a few reasons:

- The whole Psalm talks about being in great distress, acknowledging it, not ignoring it...
- But he has unwavering confidence in God—but not just in some future hope beyond life (it's easy for us to default to hope being purely about what God will do for us beyond death), but David is talking about what God will do for him *in the here and now*, or how he says it: "while I am here in the land of the living."

Keeping hope in mind (literally in our mind!) includes seeing hope as something for the present tense, not just the future.

Our past may explain why we're suffering but we must not use it as an excuse to stay in bondage. David could have stayed stuck in despair, but he made a transition, choice, toward hope—hope grounded in “the Lord’s goodness.”

Passages in Psalms are great at showing the mental struggle. Any emotion you are feeling, there is a Psalm for that! Challenge: Read through the Psalms and find this “battle for your mind” throughout them!

It’s amazing how the phrase “what if?” could mean two entirely different things. *What if* could mean “what can go wrong?” *What if* could also mean “what can go right?” Imagining great thoughts is about seeing things through the eyes of faith—seeing things through the lens of possibilities grounded in the promises of God. A famous person once said: “The most pathetic person in the world is someone who has sight, but has no vision.” It’s even more amazing when you know that is a quote from Hellen Keller, a woman who had no sight (blind), but wow—she had vision!

Point 4 – Nourish a godly mind.

Read Philippians 4:8

This verse shows the connection between having steady peace with the practical action on our part of fixing our thoughts on God. What we fixate on will fuel us. One of the greatest revelations of life is: **We can choose our thoughts and think things on purpose. We don’t have to fixate on whatever falls into our minds.**

Here is a practical challenge for us all: Stop beginning and ending your day on social media! And watch how that helps you win the war in your mind.

Point 5 – Keep growing through all you’re going through.

Read Colossians 2:7 & 2 Peter 3:18

Much of my “mental trash” has more to do with my own incomplete view of myself and God, at times. So we must “grow” so that we don’t get stuck in a mindset that is both not true but also not beneficial. As we become more familiar with who God is, He shows us who we are in Him.

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- When you were made in the image of God, He gave you the pleasure of imagination. How can you start thinking about what God **can** do in your life more? If this is new to you, keep practicing and it will become more enjoyable.
- What you feed, grows. Feed good thoughts. How can you start and end your day with thankfulness? What does this look like?
- How can you grow this week in having a clearer picture of who God says you are? What does He say about you?

—FINAL CHALLENGE QUESTIONS—

How are you going to think or live differently in light of what you have read, heard, and discussed this week?

How does this week's message shape or nurture your relationship with God?

BONUS: For those of you with kids or around kids: What is one truth from this message that you can share with your kids in a way that they would relate to or understand?