

Change Your Life by Changing Your Mind

50 Days of Transformation, 10-29-17

It's great being with you all this evening for part 3 of our 50 Days of Transformation Series!

Now, **if you've been around over the past 3 weeks**, you know that our theme verse for these 50 Days of Transformation is **Romans 12:2**.

- In the NIV, it says, *"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."*
- But if you're using the New Living Translation, **as I am**, you'll notice that it reads just a little differently:
- 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."***

In other words, according to Paul, **one of the main keys to transformation** has to do with changing the way we think,

- Which is interesting because, more often than not, **when we think about experiencing greater transformation** in our lives,
- What we often ***think we need*** is for God to change our circumstances.

But God is far more interested in changing the way we think than changing your circumstances.

- **And why?** Because we'll never experience real transformation in our lives until our thoughts begin to change.
- And **there are 3 reasons for that** that I'd like to share with you.

1. Because my thoughts control my life

You see, everything we do... every single action, always begins as a thought. If you don't think it, you don't do it.

- It's why Solomon writes in **Proverbs 4:23** to ***"Be careful how you think; for your life is shaped by your thoughts."***
- You might say, *"Come on, it was just a thought! How's my life going to be shaped by my thoughts?"*

But all that we do, both good and bad, starts with those thoughts.

Have you found yourself thinking about someone at work?

- From those “simple thoughts,” **perhaps you’re now flirting** with that person...
- And now **those flirtations have turned to lust**, which **turned to fantasy**. Bottom-line, it starts with a thought.

Now, a lot of the thoughts we have stirring inside us come from things people have said to us... things, which, at times, just weren’t true.

- Maybe someone expressed to you, for example, that you’re somehow worthless; That you’re no good;
- That you don’t matter... that you’re dumb or unattractive.

Even if there isn’t a shred of truth in what they said, if you accept it, then it will shape your life.

- Whether those words came from those in authority or from the kids in the playground,
- You’ve probably figured out that **“*Sticks and stones will break my bones but words will never hurt me*”**
- is as far from the truth as you can get because **they shape your thoughts**, which can **shape your life**.

In fact, even now, years later, you may still be living out of that false information.

- Proverbs 23:7 says **“*As a man thinks... so he is.*”**
- While everyone else, for example, may see their mistakes as opportunities to grow,
- For you, even the smallest criticism **adds weight to the lie that you’re stupid**... that you’re useless.

And so, for you, perhaps that lie manifests as perfectionism... not because you need everything to be perfect...

- but because you’re **terrified of looking like you’re anything other than** competent & intelligent.
- All that, because of a thought... because of a lie that was planted deep inside of you.
- The **second reason why** it’s so important to “renew our minds” or “change the way we think” is...

2. Because the mind is the battleground for sin

The mind & our thoughts are **where we either win or lose the battle**. And why? Because all temptation happens in the mind.

- You see, we think temptation starts “out there,” that it’s **something external that intrudes into our space**.
- But, those things wouldn’t tempt you **if there wasn’t a corollary thought or desire** inside your mind.

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 do all those things happen?** They happen in your mind.
- And so, if you can learn how to manage your mind you’ve learned how to manage your life because **this is where the battleground is**.
- But managing our minds isn’t always an easy thing, is it?

Paul says this in **Romans 7:22-23**. He says, ***“I truly delight in God’s commands; 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. Just look at the language Paul uses here— words like war, fight, slave, and enslaved.
- What’s he talking about? He’s **talking about that battle that’s waging** in your thoughts.

Sometimes you’re conscious of that battle and sometimes you’re not... but **either way, it’s happening**... and it’s **intense**.

- And, the reason it’s so intense is **because your mind & thoughts are your greatest asset**,
- Which is why satan wants to remain in control of your mind & thoughts rather than have you in control of them.

And so, to do that, Satan makes every effort to implant in our minds a lie that has the power to redefine us...

- Lies & strongholds that **work their way into our relationship with God**, with others, and with ourselves.

- And then, seeing these lies as breaches in our defenses, **he begins tempting us** in those areas.

In fact, when it comes to temptation, satan typically uses the same pattern... a pattern described for us in **James 1:14-15**:

- ***“Temptation comes from the lure of our own evil desires. These evil desires then lead to evil actions. Then the evil actions lead to death.”***
- Do you see the process here? You see, **temptation isn’t an isolated event.**
- A lot of people talk about like *“It just caught me off guard. It just happened.”*

Well, it didn’t “just happen.” There were a lot of things you **gave into in your thinking** before you actually surrendered to the behavior.

- Why? Because temptation is a process **and it’s this four-phase process** that James is describing for us here.
- So, let’s look at them real quick. Phase number one is that **temptation starts with desire.** *“How Temptation Works”*

Step Number One is 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 cigarettes.

- Why? Because, **there’s no desire in me.** I’m not putting myself above you if that’s something you struggle with.
- I’ve never been tempted because it just didn’t smell good to me.
- I think about my first overseas flights in the 80s... being stuck on a flight with so many people smoking. I’d never want to smoke!

But, of course, there are other things that tempt me... and those things always start with an inner desire.

- Again, temptation **doesn’t start “out there.”** It **doesn’t start with all the foods** you like to binge on in your kitchen.
- It doesn’t start **after an attractive person** catches your attention. It **starts inside your mind.**

And, oftentimes, like with food, it **starts with a natural desire.** You have a natural desire for sleep.

- You have a natural desire for water. You have a natural desire to think about the future.
- You have a natural desire for sex. You have a natural desire to succeed in life. These are **all God given drives**.

But temptation **turns a routine desire into a runaway desire**. That's what makes it bad.

- You see, a runaway desire will always be destructive. Fire in a fireplace can warm you...
- Fire on a stove can cook great food. But a **fire that's uncontrolled can burn your house down**.

If misused & abused, **even those God-given desires** (like food, sleep, serving others, the desire to love and be loved);

- Has the potential to burn your house down, which, as James writes, can lead to death.
- So, **temptation doesn't start "out there."** It starts in here, in my mind, in my thoughts & desires.
- But then, **after the desire, comes the doubt.**

Step two is Doubt

In fact, after "desire," there are 2 things you'll begin to doubt. First, you doubt that God loves you; And, secondly, you doubt that God knows best.

- We see this with the very first temptation with the first married couple, Adam & Eve.
- They're all alone in paradise... no kids to distract them and they have no clothes on!

I mean, come on... How can you mess that one up?! Well, **what happened was that satan comes and says,**

- *"See the fruit on all these trees here? Did God really say you can't eat the fruit of these trees?"*
- What's satan doing here? He's getting you to doubt **whether God has your best** in mind; **Whether God is really good or not.**
- He's getting you to question God's love & character. He's getting you to question what you know to be true.

Just think about **what's going on in the mind** of someone who's considering an affair.

- "He makes me feel alive... how can something that feels so right be so wrong?"
- "God wants me to be happy... and this makes me happy. How can it be wrong?"
- "My marriage wasn't God's best... this person is my true soul mate"
- "Those friends who told me to run away from this are just judgmental. Christians are always so judgmental."

Every time you give into temptation **you are believing a lie... a lie that causes you doubt God...**

- That makes you think that **you know better** than God; That you can **take care of yourself better** than God can take care of you;
- That 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**. But **then, comes the deception:**

Then Step Three is Deception

The third thing that Satan does is he replaces God's truths with his lie. You see, **God told Adam & Eve that they can eat of any tree** in the Garden except one.

- But if you eat of the one, God says, "Surely you will die."
- But what does satan say to them? He deceives them... telling them that they "*surely won't die if you eat this!*"

In fact, not only did satan lie by telling them that God's prohibition against eating from the one tree applied to all the trees,

- But, **satan tells them that the reason God doesn't want them to eat the fruit** is because...
- God was holding back on them... that he didn't want them to know what He knows.
- It's one deception after another. **And the aim of this deception is to lure you away from God.**

James 1:14 puts it like this. He says that **“Temptation comes from the lure of our own evil desires.”** Notice this word “to lure.”

- Now, let me ask you... how many of you are fishermen? If you are **than you know that the secret of good fishing** is simple...
- You've got to use the right bait! Now, I'm no fisherman, so I don't know what kind of bait you need to use to catch trout as opposed to salmon,
- But I do know that **you can't just use a bare hook...** you've got to have a lure.

So, here's my question to you: What kind of bait does Satan use on you? What bait does he put on the hook that almost always causes you to bite?

- It may be **something from a long time ago** that a parent said to you that can still trigger you.
- It could be a **particular person who you've been flirting with** at work.
- It could be **a lie about your appearance** or the **memory of a past hurt.**

In the right context, that lure is gonna have you hooked. And once it does, you'll begin to act out.

- It'll happen, because **Satan knows how to conceal the hook with just the right bait...**
- Because he knows your desire and has caused you to doubt what you know to be true.

But the crazy thing is that even after we've been hooked a few times by the same bait... even when we know there's a hook underneath, we might still take the bait.

- It's like people who flirt in the office. How stupid is that? You know there's a hook there.
- You know how bad it can go... but you still keep nibbling.
- You say, *“I'm an adult, it'll be fine. I won't get hurt. I'll be careful.”* Well, if you're buying into that, than know that **you're being deceived!**

Step Four is Disobedience and Defeat

So, **we move from desire**– it’s something I want; **to doubt**– where I question God’s Word and God’s love;

- **to deception**– I’m believing the lie that Satan’s telling me... that it’s going to be okay; that I can get away with it just this once; that it’s not that bad.
- But then the process takes you to disobedience & defeat **where the sin in your mind evolves to sin in your actions**.

You might say, “*What’s the danger of a harmless fantasy?*” Are you kidding me? It’s not harmless.

- Guys, listen to this... “**What I flirt with I’ll fall for.**” Whatever I flirt with... it may be a cupcake – I’ll fall for.
- Listen, you’re **ultimately free to make your own choices**. But **you’re not free from the consequences** of those choices.
- Because there are unintended consequences that come with every choice. What you sow you will reap.

And so, this battle over the way you think rages on... because whatever gets your attention, whatever gets in your head, 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.
- And then the **third reason I need to manage or control my mind** is...

3. Because it’s the key to peace and happiness

The Bible says it like this in **Romans 8:6** “*If your sinful nature controls your mind, **there is death** but if the Holy Spirit controls your mind, there is life and peace.*”

- What Paul is saying is that **we’ll never really live the life God has for us** as long as our thinking is controlled by our sinful nature.
- But, if in the power of the Holy Spirit, we choose to manage or control our thinking, then there is both life & peace!

Now, maybe you’re wondering if it’s even possible to manage or control your thoughts.

- “*My thoughts just enter my mind, how can I control that?*”

- Of course, you might have a thought pop into your mind, but **what you do with that thought** is entirely up to you.

If you're changing the channel on TV and something inappropriate is in front of you, you can change the channel.

- If you're online and something inappropriate is in front of you, you can get off that page.
- **If a thought comes to your mind** that is rooted in a lie... **If an inappropriate thought just gets into your head...**
- You **absolutely** can choose to do something about it! You don't have to be thinking about what you're thinking about right now.

So, where's the starting place to break free from all those bad patterns of thinking? Well, 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 focus my mind, and I have to free my mind.
- Let's look at these three things. They're all choices you'll need to make in your everyday life. So, first...

A. I Must Feed My Mind with the Truth

We all know the importance of nutrition. **Good, healthy food** cause you to feel better, to be stronger, to be healthier, to have more energy.

- While unhealthy food, **food made in Dupont Laboratories** rather than the farm, will likely harm your body.
- Well, the **same is true in your thought life**. I need to feed my mind not with Twinkies and snicker bars, but with truth.

In Matthew 4:4, we're told this... ***"People need more than bread for their life; they must feed on every Word of God."***

- You see, the Bible is our soul food. It's our owner's manual, **which we're meant to feed from** each and every day.
- In Psalm 119:147, David says, ***"I rise before dawn and cry for help; I put my hope in Your words. Lord, how I love Your Word. I think about it all day long."***
- In Psalm 16:7 he says ***"Even in the darkest of night your teachings fill my mind."***

- From before dawn and through the day into the darkness of night, David is taking in/interacting with God's Word.

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

- David spent much of his early years running for his life because the king, who felt threatened by him, wanted him dead.
- As a fugitive living in caves and moving from place to place, David never knew if that day would be his last.

And yet, in Psalm 119:95, he says *“When wicked people hide to ambush and kill me, I choose to keep my mind on your decrees.”*

- Wow! You see, David's saying, “I don't care what's going on in my life, morning, noon, night.
- Even when people are trying to kill me, **I keep my mind on God's truth**. That's called managing your mind.
- I feed my mind daily on truth. Secondly...

2. I must Focus My Mind on the Right Things

In order to break free from negative patterns of thinking, we also need to focus our minds on the right things.

- And, in **Philippians 4:8**, Paul gives us an idea of what those “right things” are.
- He says, *“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.”*

What Paul's inviting us here in Philippians 4:8 is to **not only feed our minds** with the truth, but to **reflect & think on those things** that are true...

- Those things that are noble and right and pure and lovely and admirable...
- And there is nothing more admirable and pure than Jesus, which is why we need to focus on Him and make Him the center of our everyday lives.

3. I Must Free My Mind from Destructive Thoughts

I need to free my mind from destructive thoughts that can keep me imprisoned.

- Your mind may need to be released from the weight of shame that says that you're broken.
- Your mind may need to be set free from the lies people have told you that just aren't true.

As I said earlier, it doesn't matter if it's true or not. **If you believed it than it's affected your life.**

- Even if you're perfectly coordinated, if you've been told that you were clumsy and you embraced that as true...
- Then you'll likely act more clumsily because **we often act in accordance with the way we see ourselves.**

But, of course, freeing your mind from destructive thoughts isn't always that easy.

- And the reason is because you **have three enemies who are trying to team tackle you** in order to bring you down through these destructive thoughts:

1. The first enemy is my old nature

In **Romans 7:22-23**, Paul talks about how his old sinful nature keeps him in mental bondage.

- He says this: *"I love God's law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me captive to the sin at work within me."*
- You see, **even though you're a new creation** in Christ, that old nature is still at work trying to make you a slave to sin.

Listen to what Paul says in **Romans 8:5**. He says, ***"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."***

- Again, notice how it's all about your brain... 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 enemy is Satan

Beyond our old nature, as I said before, Satan also wants to control your thinking.

- He doesn't have the power to do that on his own, so he does all he can to **get you to surrender the authority you have to say no.**
- So, he tries to deposit various thoughts into your mind: *"You can't resist this, just go ahead and do it. God wants you to be happy."*

Now, again, if you're a follower of Jesus than you have the Holy Spirit in you... and, 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 sure make suggestions... and those suggestions... and all **those negative thoughts** can be very powerful.

Have you ever been praying and, out of nowhere, the weirdest thought comes into your mind?

- Where did that come from? I'll tell you where it came from! **The devil just dropped a little bomb** in your brain.
- But here's the thing... You can disarm that bomb before it detonates.

And one of the ways you can do that is to recognize that you don't have to believe everything you think.

- When that thought enters your mind: *"Your best days are behind you;" "You're a hopeless hypocrite, you can't serve Jesus that way;" "You can't ever really trust that God will take care of you."*
- When thoughts like that enter your mind, just know that it may have come either from your old nature or from the devil.

Just don't let yourself forget that 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 church.
- 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... why you should be hurt & stay hurt...
- Why you should put yourself or others down;

In fact, satan tries to get you hurt and then he tries to get you bitter... and then make you resentful.

- Then he builds on that so you'd want to get even. And, before you know it, he has a solid foot hold in your life.
- So, you've got two enemies... your **old, sinful nature**... and the **devil**. And the third enemy is...

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

It's no secret that the world isn't exactly helping you be a godlier, more disciplined person, is it?

- Does anything in our society encourage self-discipline or purity or a Jesus-centered life?
- No. Not at all. In fact, every advertisement says, "You deserve a break today. Have it YOUR way."
- A commercial for Mountain Dew tell you to "*Obey your thirst.*"
- In other words, be an animal and do whatever you feel like doing. Obey your thirst.

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 comes not from the Father but from the world.***"

- That's what the world has to offer... passion, possession and position; the **lust of the flesh**, that's misused sex;
- the **lust of the eyes**, that's your salary & stuff; and, **pride of life**, which is success and status.
- But the misuse & abuse of these things: money, sex and power, John says, "*comes not from the Father but from the world.*"

So, how do you fight this battle of the mind with the **old nature within you**, the **devil against you** and **the world around you**?

- In 2 Corinthians 10, Paul says this, ***→"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. On the contrary, our weapons have divine power to demolish strongholds.*
- ***→We demolish any argument and every pretention that sets itself up against the knowledge of God*** and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

Again, notice the warfare language. He's talking about this battle going on in your mind, this mental battle over what we're going to think... over whose "truth" we're going to believe.

- He says we **demolish strongholds**. What is a stronghold? A stronghold is any lie that I believe...
- Those thoughts and ideas and perspectives that **set themselves up against the knowledge of God.**

You do something wrong at work and you start whispering under your breath... "*what an idiot I am!*"

- And after repeating that over time, you start believing that... and little by little, your identity starts to shift.
- The lie might be "**God really doesn't love me.**"
- The lie might be that "**I know better than God what will make me happy.**"
- That's a stronghold because **out of that lie will flow an endless stream of bad decisions** unless it's dealt with.

No matter how much you've accomplished; **No matter how much success you've achieved**, the lies won't just disappear on their own.

- But what Paul reminds us is that **we've been given weapons not of this world...** to fight against the lies we've been told.
- And that these weapons have divine power *not to lessen the impact* of these lies... *but to demolish* them!
- To demolish whatever strongholds may have been planted in your life that are based on lies rather than the truth of God's Word.

But not only can those weapons fight against those lies & strongholds, but we're told that they can demolish every argument or mindset...

- These mindsets can come from just about anywhere... such as your belief system before you began walking with Jesus
- Like, "*If it feels good, do it! I mean, the whole goal of life is just to have fun, right?*" Well, that's not true.

You could have a mindset of materialism that says that "*The only thing that really matters is status and making money.*" That's a lie.

- A stronghold **could come from an attitude you've embraced** like, "*I can never forgive myself;*"
- Or, "*I will never amount to anything.*" Their all strongholds.

- These strongholds can come from **deep rejection or traumatic experiences** that effect how you view the world around you.
- Things that affect your ability to understand and receive God's love in your life... **or the love of another person.**

So, what is it for you? What stronghold or mindset might you have in your life that keep you from receiving God's best for you?

- Insecurity (God won't care for me)? Rejection (God can't love me)?
- Condemnation (I'm never good enough)? Performance (He can't love me b/c I'm not spiritual enough)
- He knows the **mindsets** that can serve as **mind fields** in your life.
- He will never play fair and will never feel sorry for the hurt he inflicts.

So, how do we defeat this? How do we stand against the lies Satan whispers into our minds & the strongholds established in our lives?

- Notice two phrases. First, Paul says "***We take these thoughts captive,***" which literally means to conquer... to bring under control.
- And then he says that "***We make it obedient.***" We take every thought captive and make it obedient,
- Which **means that we bring every thought under submission to Jesus...** where every lie is replaced by truth.

What's he saying here? You have a choice. You can bring those thoughts under submission to Christ.

- If a particularly attractive person walks by you and you're tempted to entertain inappropriate thoughts,
- You don't have to be held captive by those thoughts. In fact, we can make those thoughts obedient to Christ.

If you're feeling lonely and the thought comes to you to start eating... or to go on an inappropriate website,

- When you're starting to think about the future and you're beginning to feel more and more anxiety,
- where you're now questioning whether God is really going to take care of you...

You can interrupt those lies and affirm what you know in your spirit to be true...

- That Jesus, who stands at the Throne of God uncontested as the King of kings and Lord of Lords,
- That Jesus not only loves you with an everlasting love but that He holds ALL authority in Heaven and on Earth to bring your life toward His perfect end.

In those moments, you can quote the words of **Job 42:2** where Job says, *“I know that you can do anything, and no one can stop you.”*

- You can proclaim **Psalm 118:6**, *“The Lord is with me, I will not be afraid.”*
- You see, one of the reasons why so many believers aren’t living the abundant life that Jesus offered us is because...
- **they’ve never learned how to fight the battle of the mind.**

They don’t participate with the Holy Spirit’s transforming work of changing the way we think.

- By proclaiming what is true; By exposing the lies and embracing truth,
- You are bringing the **lies of the old nature**, the **lies of satan**, and the **lies of the world** under submission to Christ.

So, when the thought comes... take that thought captive! And declare, *“that is NOT who I am.”*

- It may have been who I was, but in Christ, it is NOT who I am now. I am not broken, I am not useless,
- I am not an object to be used, I am not weak, I am not incapable, my best days are NOT behind me.
- I am NOT defined by my struggles, I’m not who I think I am but who He thinks I am...
- And who HE thinks I am is a son and daughter of the Living God.

Ministry:

No matter where you’re at this morning... take time this week and ask God to show you if there are any lies or mindsets...

- That you may have bought into that are contrary to the truth of God's Word. Just pray...
- "God, show me the lie I've believed in my life... the lie that's robbed me of joy and connection and intimacy and peace."
- You see, as you expose the lie and embrace the truth is His Word, you'll begin to experience more and more freedom.

Psalm 119:112 *"I have made up my mind to obey your laws forever no matter what."*

Jesus has given us every divine weapon we need to demolish all the lies and mindsets and all the patterns of behavior and responses they produce in our lives.

- Jesus has come as our Rescuer... in order to set us free from the bill of goods satan has sold us...
- And to lead us into the intimate, abundant life that comes from walking in deep friendship and fellowship with the Father.