

A Word on Wednesday from Pastor Tonia

"How to Change Your Mind" 7/27/22

Take every thought captive (II Cor 10:5)

"Grab that thought, stop it, snatch it, do something about the thoughts which divert my attention," – I tell myself, - before they enter my heart and become a part of me. Before they take up a permanent place in my mind, like a magnate drawing my attention at odd times of the day or night to places and events on which I do not need to dwell. They sideline me from thinking of God and of others, of my job, my family, the next thing on my to do list those "this is not where my mind should be right now" thoughts. Stop, give them to God, sweep them out your ear – and don't pick 'em up when they fall. Tsk Tsk Tsk. Leave it.

More than likely it'll come back, they are sneaky. At least now we recognize it, we've figured out what we must do. I quote Shakespeare's great line to myself. Then grab the broom, again, sweep it out, let it fall, leave it lie. Easier this time. We hope it can't figure out its way back into our thought process – but it will. But now we'll be ready. In. Sweep. Fall. Repeat.

It will take a few times, several times, but as we start to fill our minds with the things of God, eventually it won't be such a battle. Honest, it may not seem like it, but you are winning. Take the thought captive, give it to God. Soon it'll get the idea and you will be free. Soon you will have taken the space in which it was squatting and filled it with good and pleasing things, thoughts which uplift, which honors and glorify God, and which encourage you.

But we want to wallow in our anger. Run through our words to that person with whom we disagree - until it's perfect. We long to escape to our fantasy wanting it to be real, because it is exactly where we wish we were or hope to be. We daydream. We can't think of anything but that chocolate cake, the person who did get the job, that resort on the south seas, how unfair it was, what you should have said. We worry it, tethering it to our self until we are bound to it. Our minds wonder from safe thoughts into the great unknown, the wilderness, the darkness. How can we be free of these thoughts which eat at us? Which rob us of peace. Which break our hearts.

Recognize it, stop it, close your eyes, breathe – maybe hold it a count. Give it to God. Open your eyes to a new thought. It's an exercise. Simple, but not easy. Prayer and repetition are the only way to win.

With what do we replace these thoughts? Paul addresses this very issue, telling the Philippians, "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." (Phil 4:8)

Capture those thoughts, send them into the unknow. Put them where they belong - out of your mind, before you're out of your mind. Because that's where you're headed. Don't dwell in those places.

Fill your mind with the things of God, on what is real, principled, fair, chaste, satisfying, admirable. On things worthy of praise. Here is real peace, real security, real acceptance, real love.

This is an exercise. Those exiled thoughts return, they get captured and expelled again. And again. And again. We just need to be faithful, be strong, and continue capturing these thoughts until they cease. No judgment, no shame, just continuous hard work. Hard, yes, but it gets easier. One day you will realize - that thought hasn't been around for a long time. And it no longer hurts.

Please pray with me. Lord of life, fill my mind as well as my heart with thoughts of You. Help me to turn wayward thoughts which threaten to disrupt the day, steal time, rearrange the future, and think on those things which are honoring of and to You, things which uplift and encourage, thoughts of hope and love. **Amen.**

As you take those thoughts captive, as you fill you mind with the things of God, I bid you peace.