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**Part 2**

**5 Ways You Must Guard Your Mind**

**2 Corinthians 10:3-5**

**2 Corinthians 10:3-5, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh; for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty in God for the tearing down of strongholds, throwing down imaginations and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”**

Today we’re continuing the *Mind Games* series. Take a minute to think about these questions:

* Do you find yourself focusing on the problems around you?
* Do you lack peace and joy?
* Are you conflicted?
* Do you have trouble seeing the good things in your life?
* Do you feel despair or depression, despite all the blessings around you?
* Do you blame everyone and everything else for the hurt and pain in your life?

If you answered yes to one or most of these questions, you may be playing *mind games*. Mind games are those negative thoughts we all battle that feed our insecurities, worries, and fears; the thoughts that lead us to irrational anger or undefined depression.

But I have good news for you: with Jesus’ help, mind games can be won! And it isn’t just up to you or me to win these games on our own. Jesus wants us to partner with Him to overcome the negative mind invaders. That means He’s asking us to take an active role in recognizing, rejecting, and replacing negative thoughts. And to retrain our minds to keep them from returning.

It’s impossible to live a positive life with a negative mind.

Before moving to the DFW Metroplex, Kim and I lived in the San Francisco, Bay Area. One of things we loved about the Bay Area was *BART* – Bay Area Rapid Transit. We’d take the train all over the area to various cities. When we first started taking the train, we always had to ask for help with directions. We were unfamiliar with the rail system and were always concerned we’d miss our stop or end up in the wrong city.

Have you ever taken a train? If so, you know you don’t get on one without knowing where it’s going. After all, that’s the whole point; you’re on board to get somewhere. Thoughts are like trains (trains of thought)—they take you somewhere. But so often we jump on these trains without knowing our destination!

Many people end up in places they don’t want to be and then wonder how they got there. But it only makes sense that they boarded a train of thought to Self-Pity City, Anger Town, or Depressionville without even realizing it.

Many times they assume God put them there. I’ve heard Christians say, “God put me in this season or situation.” That usually isn’t the case! More often than not, God’s saying, “I didn’t put you there. You boarded the wrong train of thought.”

The wrong train carries:

* Thinking that causes anxiety.
* Thinking that creates guilt and shame.
* Thinking that causes you to feel insecure and question yourself.
* Thinking that brings sadness.
* Thinking that causes suspicion of others’ motives.
* Thinking that brings doubt of God and His Word.
* Thinking that causes inaccurate assumptions.

Ben posted a blog this week at BenDailey.com called *13 Kinds of Wrong Thinking*. It’s wrong thinking that’s carrying us to wrong places. The past couple of years Ben and I have taken time to get away for a few days to deal with wrong thinking. Believe it or not, even pastors have wrong thinking! Our minds have to be renewed too. We play mind games. Wrong thinking takes a toll on every area of our lives and we don’t want to stay on the wrong train of thought. We’ve got good places to go and see. So, here’s our list of 13 kinds of wrong thinking we’re confronting this year. Let’s see if you can relate to any of these.

* Catastrophizing. Predicting the worst outcome. If something goes wrong it will be a disaster. Every twinge is a sign of serious illness, every frown a sign of rejection.
* Overgeneralizing. Assuming that because something happened once, this means it will happen again.
* Exaggerating. Giving negative events more importance than they really deserve, and positive events less importance.
* Discounting the Positive. Rejecting good things as if they did not count (or using a negative filter).
* Mind Reading. Believing that you know what others are thinking.
* Predicting the Future or Fortune Telling. “Everything is bound to go wrong.” “I’ll never be able to do that sort of thing.”
* Black and White Thinking. Switching from one extreme to another. “If I can’t get this right, I might as well give up altogether.”
* Taking Things Personally. “They didn’t ask me because they don’t like me.”
* Taking The Blame. Taking responsibility when it is not ours. “It’s all my fault.
* Emotional Reasoning. Mistaking feelings for facts. “I’m so worried, I know something is going to go wrong.”
* Name Calling. “I’m an idiot.” “You’re completely heartless.”
* Scare Mongering. “Maybe she’s really ill.” “What if the car breaks down?”
* Wishful Thinking. Supposing things would be better if they were different. “If only I were…younger…thinner…smarter…not the way I am.”

It’s time to get off the wrong train of thought and board a new one!

Every day you’re going to be engaged in mind games – all kinds of wrong thinking. These games come to steal your joy, take away your confidence, mess up your relationships, tempt you to doubt God’s Word, keep you focused on your flaws and shortcomings, and create chaos and havoc. There’s no condemnation in the fact you’re engaged in mind games – everyone of us are. But you have a choice: Will you continue boarding the wrong trains of thought? Will you allow negative thoughts to stay, affecting who you are and God’s plan for your life, or will you conquer them?

Last week we looked at how we conquer negative thoughts according to our theme passage, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5:

* Direct our mind.
* Protect our mind.
* Connect our mind.

If you missed it, please check it out at CalvaryChurch.cc or the Calvary App. This week we’re looking at five things that we (as Calvary Church) must guard our mind against.

Remember, a violent battle is raging around you 24/7. It’s an invisible war. It’s the battle for your mind, and that battle is vicious. It’s intense. It’s unrelenting, and it’s unfair because the enemy never plays fair. And the reason why it’s so intense is that your greatest asset is your mind.

Your mind is a special gift from God. Think about this. Your mind can potentially store 100 trillion thoughts, yet the average person only uses 3½ million thoughts a year. In other words, we only use about 10% of our brain capacity. Your brain is a tool that God wants to use in your life to fulfill his purposes.

Yet there are a lot of people fighting for access to that mind of yours. There’s a book called *Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind.* It talks about how people are constantly fighting for your attention. The fact is, people are intentionally planning, 24/7, to get your attention. They want to control your mind!

That's why you have to be choosy. You have to control what - or who - you allow into your mind. What's true of computers is true with humans - garbage in, garbage out. Whatever gets your mind, gets you. So, one of the most important things you need to learn is how to guard your mind, because the battle always starts in the mind.

Let’s look at our theme passage. The apostle Paul says that your job in this battle is “the tearing down of strongholds.” You know what a stronghold is? It’s a mental block. Paul’s talking about imaginations, contradictions, arguments set up against the knowledge of God or what God knows to be true concerning you. Believe it or not, Jesus is God’s mind made up about you. This isn’t a military battle. It’s a mental battle. And Paul says, “Tear down strongholds.” What is a stronghold? It can be one of two things:

* A stronghold can be a worldview, such as materialism, hedonism, secularism, relativism, sexualism, atheism. All of the different -isms are mental strongholds that people set up against the knowledge of God. Believer, did you know that there are also major strongholds that can paralyze you along the path toward authentic life-transformation or spiritual growth? Churches are filled with these -isms: *Projectionism* – The tendency in you to project onto God your own feelings about what He might be like and how you think He must view you, especially in your worst moments. *Perfectionism* – The saint-or-sinner syndrome. The all-or-nothing mentality. Through obsessive feelings of failure, self-deprecation, anxiety, fear and other symptoms, perfectionism strangles you from resting in the reality that God’s grace truly is enough. *Moralism* – When your personal responsibility to a moral code replaces your personal response to God’s love. *Legalism (the stepchild of moralism)* – The attitude or belief that your merit can produce, prove or preserve for yourself acceptable standing before God. These are all strongholds that must be tore down!
* A stronghold can also be a personal attitude. Worry can be a stronghold. Seeking the approval of other people can be a stronghold. Anything that you make an idol in your life can be a stronghold — fear, guilt, shame, resentment, insecurity. All of these things can be strongholds in your mind. And the Bible says that you’re to tear them down.

The good news about grace is that – when understood, believed and embraced – it’s able to confront and dismantle these cancerous strongholds to spiritual vitality and authentic joy of living. And here’s where we find grace in this passage.

Look at the very last phrase: “bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” Let’s break this down. “Bringing every thought *captive*.” The Greek word means “to control, to conquer, to bring into submission.” We control it. We conquer it. We make it submit. To what? “The obedience of Christ.” Here’s a powerful key: Whose obedience are we to focus on? Christ’s obedience and not our own obedience! But what is “the obedience of Christ”? It’s His obedience at the cross, where, “by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:19). Jesus shed His blood for us at the cross. This means that when negative mind invaders condemn us, we’re to control them, conquer them, and make them submit. How? By focusing our thoughts on Jesus’ obedience at the cross.

The devil can only make inroads into our mind when he gets us to focus on our obedience instead of Christ’s obedience. His strategy is to point us to our obedience or the lack of it to determine our standing before God. But just as our position as sinners isn’t based on what we do, but what the first Adam did, in the same way, we’re forever righteous today not because of what we do, but because of what Christ, the last Adam, did on the cross.

Again, “bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” I can hear it now. But how do I do that? How do I make my mind mind? I’ve noticed that my mind doesn’t always mind. It’s often disobedient. It’s often very rebellious. It wants to go in a different direction.

* When I want to think a certain way, it wants to go another way.
* When I need to ponder, it wants to wander.
* When I need to pray, my thoughts want to float away.

So how do we make our mind mind? Three practical steps I wasn’t able to get to last week:

Step 1: Re-focus our mind.

**Colossians 3:2, “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”**

**Romans 8:6, “The mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.”**

Step 2: Refill our mind.

Step 3: Renew our mind.

**Ephesians 4:23, “Be renewed in the Spirit of your mind.”**

1-We’re to guard our mind against false teaching.

2-We’re to guard our mind against temptation.

3-We are to guard our minds against counterfeit spiritual experiences.

### 4-We’re to guard our minds against pride.

### 5-We’re to guard against an overworked and restless mind.