A close up of a sign

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**Part 3**

Today we’re continuing a series called *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 the negative thoughts in our minds. And He’s asking us to take an active role in retraining our minds to keep them from returning.

Growing up in Chicago I learned very early how to travel on the CTA (Chicago Transit Authority). I had the joy of watching visitors and tourist get lost as they travelled on our famous “L” trains. The look of confusion on their faces and the anxiety of knowing that they were lost in one of the largest cities in America amazed me as a little kid. I also noticed that there was a difference between being lost downtown or on the northside than being lost on the southside. Downtown and the Northside are the safer areas where the risk was lower and the rerouting process was leisure, but the Southside was the dangerous and risky part of the city. The look of being lost on the Southside was beyond anxiety and confusion, it was a look of horror, the look of “I may not make it out of this.”

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—they take you somewhere. Because so often we jump on these trains of thought without knowing our destination! The purpose of this series is to help keep you from boarding the wrong trains of thought.

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 people say, “God put me in this …” 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:

* Thoughts of worry
* Thoughts that create guilt and shame
* Thoughts that cause you to feel insecure and question yourself
* Thoughts that bring sadness
* Thoughts that cause suspicion of others’ motives
* Thoughts that bring doubt of God and His Word
* Thoughts of inaccurate assumptions

Every day you’re going to be bombarded with mind games trying 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 that mind games are being played in your life—everyone has them. But you have a choice: Will you allow them to defeat you, affecting who you are and God’s plan for your life, or will you conquer them? How do you conquer them?

Faith conquers!

What do you think of when you hear the word faith. You may think of all the negative comments you’ve heard, including, claims that people of faith are sadly mistaken, naïve, and uneducated. But the fact is, knowledge, understanding, and wisdom are compatible with a life of faith.

Some people would say faith is just another word for religion. Others might look at faith as a mystical power or belief, like some sort of incantation or spell that magically makes everything better. And then there are those who boil faith down to nothing more than a power-of-positive-thinking message—“If you’ll just have faith in the positive, everything will turn out all right.”

None of these assumptions are correct. They’re misleading labels that have little or nothing to do with a biblical interpretation of faith. We find a simple definition in the Book of **Hebrews 11:1**, which tells us, “**The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living. It's our handle on what we can't see.”**

Faith is trust in God, a belief that He knows what He’s doing, regardless of the external circumstances. I want you to think of faith as the cheat code of mind games. People who possess a strong presence of faith automatically have fewer problems with mind games than those who don’t. They’re more likely to succeed in life because they have less interference from negative invaders of the mind.

The Bible is packed with stories of people who relied on their faith in God to overcome and win mind games. Two examples. One in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament.

For starters we have Moses, who was rescued as a baby by the pharaoh’s daughter. He was an Israelite who was raised as an Egyptian. Later he had to flee from his Egyptian family and rejoin the Israelites. Now an outsider in his own country Moses settled down to become a shepherd and raise a family. That’s when God found him.

You probably know the high points. Moses finds the burning bush, where God tells him he’s going to be the one to release the Israelites from their bondage to the Egyptian. But do you know Moses’s first reaction? He said, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

A mind game stepped right between Moses and God’s plan for his life. Moses’s background in the world of Egyptian royalty made him the perfect person to go speak to Pharaoh. Yet Moses questioned God’s choice of him. Talk about negativity!

Eventually Moses saw God’s hand at work, and with God’s reassurance and the help of his brother Aaron, Moses was able to do exactly what God told him to do, which was to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and put them on the road to the Promised Land.

One more example. Let’s fast-forward to a guy named Saul. Talk about dealing with mind games. Saul was a hard-line Jew who was doing his best to arrest and kill as many Christians as he could. And then one day he met Jesus in a blinding flash while walking down the road.

The light was so bright it knocked him to the ground, and then came a voice that said, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

Saul recognized the voice as being holy in nature, so he replied, “Who are you, Lord?” Everything he thought he knew about faith was being flipped upside down!

The voice replied “I am Jesus, the one whom you are persecuting.” Put yourself in Saul’s shoes. You think you’ve been doing the right thing, then suddenly, in a literal flash, you discover that not only have you been doing the wrong thing, but you’ve also been actively working against the right one! What sort of mind game do you think leaped into action in Saul’s brain just then? Probably doubt, insecurity and pride just to name a few. And to make matters worse, he was now blind and had to be led by hand into the city, where he waited for three days for the next word from Jesus. It came through a Christian named Ananias, who at the request of Jesus went and prayed for him. And God immediately restored is sight. From that moment on, Saul lived a dynamic life of faith, eventually changing his name to Paul and writing two-thirds of the New Testament.

This guy had some serious faith in Jesus because he endured a lot to preach the message of the gospel of grace. Beatings, incarceration, shipwrecks, nights without food - you name it, he did it. But he was able to carry on because of his faith in God’s ability to see him through and to defeat whatever mind games that came his way. Faith defeats mind games every time!

**When your faith becomes big, mind games become small.** It’s impossible to continue to be controlled by negativity when you have an ongoing awareness of faith in your life! This realization anchors you in the understanding of something very powerful:

**Faith defeats mind games!**

An acronym for faith that will help you become more and more aware of His presence and power in your life is:

**F.A.I.T.H.**

Let’s take a closer look at each of the phrases that make up the F.A.I.T.H. acronym.

1. **FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE**
2. **AFFIRM YOURSELF**

**Philippians 1:4-6, “I always prayed with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the 1st day until now being confident of this that He who has began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”**

1. **IMAGINE GOD DOING SOMETHING GOOD IN YOUR SITUATION**

**Jeremiah 29:11 were God says “I know the plans I have for you… plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.**

**Isaiah 55:8-9 “for my thoughts are not your thoughts neither are your ways my ways. As the heavens are higher than the earth so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.**”

**He then goes on to say “my word that goes out from my mouth… will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”**

1. **TRUST GOD IN ALL THINGS**

**Isaiah 26: 3 says “you will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trust in you.”**  **Matthew 28:20 “surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.”**

1. **HOPE FOR THE BEST**

**Philippians 4:19** **“my God will meet all your needs.”** **John 10:10 “I have come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly.”** **Genesis 17:4-6. God says to him “you will be the father of many nations, no longer would you be called Abram your name will be call Abraham for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful, I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.”**