

“Decluttering our Minds”

Scripture: Mark 12:28-34; Philippians 4:4-9; Colossians 3:2; 2 Corinthians 10:3-6

Graphics: clutter, piles, heart, soul, mind, body

Big Truth: In order to be disciples in the ways that God calls us, we are commanded to love God with our all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Sometimes our hearts, souls, minds, and bodies get cluttered and it blocks our ability to see and hear God and to serve God in our areas of giftedness. When we spend time decluttering our lives, at the beginning of the new year, we open the way for us to love God and our neighbors more, as Jesus said.

Focus Phrase: Clearing out the informational clutter in my mind allows me to think godly thoughts.

1. Introduction

- A. When I say, “www.” what do you think of? The worldwide web, right?
- B. You might also have thought about the Buffalo Bills record over the past three games, but even though that’s true, that’s not what we’re going to talk about. Go Bills!
- C. Those three letters (www) have become THE most iconic three letters in the past 2-3 generations. Over the past 40 years, the world wide web - the internet - has completely changed the ways we see the world, interact with others, and how we get information about the world near and far.
- D. We have, basically, an infinite amount of information, and access to it, at our fingertips, with just a few swipes and clicks on our devices or computers.
- E. I’m not here today to give us commentary on the plusses and minuses of this easy access to information. In fact, there is SO much good that we can do and ARE doing with this world wide connection of people, churches, communities, groups, and more.
- F. All that information, good and bad, comes with a price to our lives. In one regard, our lives are more connected and we know more about the world than ever before. On the other hand, the worldwide web gives us an overload of information. So much so that our minds can only process a VERY small portion of it.
- G. The information we DO process and retain can teach us things that we would never have dreamed of learning. BUT (and here’s the caution) all that information has the very real potential to become **informational clutter** that fills our minds with an incredible PILE of stuff - much of which is absolutely, 100%, and unequivocally USELESS to our lives as followers of Jesus.
- H. Now, I can already hear the objections, and you may be right. But we also know that there is SO much information coming at us that we often feel overwhelmed, exhausted, and overloaded. We stop being able to spend time in the here and now, with others...and, more importantly, with God.
- I. This sermon series has helped us, so far, identify the clutter in our lives - physical clutter, yes - but more importantly to God, emotional clutter in our hearts, and devotional clutter in our souls.

- J. Yet, God wants to DEclutter our lives - our hearts, our souls, our minds, and our bodies.
- K. To emotionally declutter our hearts, we prayed Psalm 51:10, “Create in me a clean heart of God!”
- L. To devotionally declutter our souls, we pray with Psalm 42:11, “Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.”
- M. This morning, God is inviting us to declutter our minds from the informational clutter that prevents us from thinking about, dreaming of, and envisioning God’s work in our lives, in the church, and in the world. Our minds are bogged down with things that may or may not be godly thoughts and dreams. We have a lot of information up here (head), but how much of it is focused on God? How much of our thought life is godly?
- N. Before we pray and hear from God’s word, here’s where we’re heading today: **Clearing out the informational clutter in my mind allows me to think godly thoughts.**
- O. **Let’s PRAY! (Jesus, You are Lord...)**
- P. Turn with me in your bibles to Philippians 4, starting in verse 4.

2. Scripture

- A. **READ Philippians 4:4-9**
- B. We have some really great encouragement from the Apostle Paul throughout his letters to the churches he helped plant:
 - i. In Colossians 3:2-3, he wrote, “Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”
 - ii. In Romans 12:2, we read, “Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.”
- C. In the first century Jewish culture, the concept of the **mind** (the most common Hebrew word is lebab) is very closely tied to the heart. It’s the center of ones being. As we learned in Decluttering Your Heart, though, the heart is the seat of emotion. The mind is related, but is the place where one is **consciously aware of God**. It’s the root of purpose and intention towards God and the world.
- D. When Paul wrote his letters to the Colossians and Romans, and in our text today from Philippians, He used the Greek word nous (nooce νοῦς) which means comprehension or understanding. It’s the seat of reason and intellect.
- E. See, we can feel emotions related to and regarding God and others, but we also have been given incredible brains that are intricately wired to be able to

comprehend many things about God and about the world around us. We can use reason and intellect in our theology.

- F. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement of which we're a part, included **reason** as one the four things that help us interpret scripture and comprehend God's will for our lives, among other things. The other three things Wesley lifted said we use are scripture itself (primarily), and then experience and tradition.
- G. Wesley said this, "By reason we learn what is that new birth, without which we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven; and what that holiness is without which no man shall see the Lord."
- H. So, when Paul said, in Philippians 4:7, "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus..." this idea of the mind was more than the brains of the Philippians. It was that the peace of God would put a barrier of protection around their thoughts and understanding of who Jesus is and their reasoning regarding the work of the Holy Spirit, for instance.
- I. Then, Paul went on to write a laundry list of thoughts that they should think (that reminds me of Dr. Seuss, who said, "Oh, the thinks you can think...").
 - i. Let's rehearse these (ON SCREEN) - read with me Philippians 4:8, "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."
 - ii. That phrase, "...think about..." can also be translated as, "...take account of..." these things. Be mindful of these things.
 - iii. Really, what Paul is asking the Philippians to do is to keep in their conscious thoughts on things that are true to God, honorable to God, just to God, pure to God, pleasing to God, commendable to God, excellent to God, worthy of praise to God... **THOSE** are the thinks they should think.
 - iv. And those thoughts - the ones that are focus on godly things - will then compel the church to do what Paul said in verse 9: "Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you."
 - v. When you think about godly things, then your life will reflect the things of God. What Paul and Jesus and the Holy Spirit have said and taught and modeled are the godly things. Paul said those thoughts will come when their minds are decluttered from the information of the world...when minds are filled with the thoughts of God, in Christ Jesus, through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.
- J. Paul was saying, "Clearing out the informational clutter in your mind allows you to think godly thoughts, church." And when godly thoughts fill your

minds, and not worldly clutter, then PEACE comes, as opposed to all the static and anxiety and depression and anger.

3. Application

- A. A decluttered **heart** makes way for us to experience the JOY of God's salvation.
- B. A decluttered **soul** makes way for us to experience the LOVE of God and to connect with God's heart in passionate WORSHIP.
- C. And a decluttered **mind** makes way for us to experience the PEACE of God which is beyond what we think is possible.
- D. Sounds great, right?
- E. But then we come full circle back to the reality that our minds are bombarded every minute with an infinite amount of data that threatens to clutter every corner of our minds.
- F. Add to that this trend of turning everything over to Artificial Intelligence (AI) and you have anxiety growing, a sense of it all being out of control, and our minds tend to shut down.
- G. In response, we seek after peace in a hundred unhealthy ways, through media, drugs, alcohol, and just about everything else that can distract us for the moment. Yet, God is greater than ANY artificial intelligence and more powerful than the flow of information into your life!
- H. And, God has an invitation for you: **change what you think about**. I know, I said that word, change. There've been enough changes around here and in our lives lately to last a lifetime. Yet, the only thing that doesn't ever change in this world is God himself. Everything else is in a constant state of change. We age. We grow. We're born. We die. We work. We retire. We live. We move. We laugh. We cry.
- I. Why not change the things you consider or ponder - what you think about - in order for peace to come into your life from God?
- J. The good news is that you and I don't and can't do that on our own. You have a Savior whose power over your mind is sufficient to change even the most stubborn thoughts you have. You have direct access to the Holy Spirit in you and there are no bandwidth restrictions.
- K. But...BUT...you must let Jesus by way of His Holy Spirit open and change your mind.
- L. So, how do we start?
- M. The first step in decluttering your mind of information is to **Let Jesus open your mind** by the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - i. Luke 24:44-49, "Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.' Then he opened

their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised, so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.’”

- ii. Jesus has the power to open your mind to ideas that you would otherwise be unable to understand. Multiple times in the gospels, Jesus makes the statement that this person or that group (like the scribes and Pharisees) cannot understand what He is saying because their minds were not opened.
 - iii. But your mind is being opened as you follow Jesus. Allowing Jesus to keep opening your mind is a matter of spending time listening in prayer to His voice. Be willing to hear new thoughts and godly ideas.
 - iv. Get out there and experience new things, always looking for where God is at work and training your mind to interpret those places as God-at-work.
 - v. You will have your mind opened when you follow God’s lead into places where you wouldn’t normally go. To serve those whom you would not normally serve. To obediently follow Jesus in His mission.
 - vi. Having Jesus open your mind, gives your mind room for more of what God is trying to show you through scripture.
 - vii. Yet, even when you and I are willing to allow Jesus to open our minds, we are still bombarded by thoughts and sights and information.
- N. That’s why the second invitation is to **Take every thought captive in Christ Jesus.**
- i. There’s a battle for our mind going on and Satan wants to win it - to distract you, confuse you, and increase the noise in your mind.
 - ii. The great news is that He who is YOU is greater than He who is in the world. And if that’s true, then Jesus is the one who has the power to take every thought you have captive.
 - iii. 2 Corinthians 10:3-6 says this, “Indeed, we live as humans but do not wage war according to human standards, for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ. We are ready to punish every disobedience when your obedience is complete.”
 - iv. We are not slaves to our cluttered minds and we are not mindless slaves to the torrent of information that comes like a fire hose into our homes, our minds, our phones and computers, our TVs or any other medium.
 - v. We are slaves to righteousness...to obey Christ and His commands! Praise God for His Word and the presence of the Holy Spirit!

- vi. So, every thought that comes into your mind, and every piece of information and media that threatens to clutter things up like this pile, **take that thought captive**, consciously putting it in jail until the judge, Jesus, has gives you the sentence for that thought. Is it godly? Then let it be part of your mind. If not, then it's gone...taken out with the trash.
- vii. Take every thought captive in Christ Jesus.
- O. Finally, and probably most practically today, **Reduce the information that comes into your mind and Increase your scripture reading and prayer.**
 - i. This is a simple matter of garbage in - garbage out.
 - ii. You have a choice to build a habit of doom-scrolling through social media or listening to a song that praises Jesus.
 - iii. You have the power to read your bible or read that novel you found that has scenes and themes that fill your mind with images that are not ones Jesus would choose for you.
 - iv. You have the ability to turn OFF the TV, the radio, the media feed, and anything else that is driving you crazy with endless solutions that are not godly and have nothing to do with Him. That's why they make ON/OFF switches. I'm not sure what happens when the AI decides it doesn't want to be shutdown for the night, but that's a sermon for another day.
 - v. But don't just shut it off. Pick up your bible. Pick up your devotional. Read a book about Jesus or people who are following Jesus. Put yourself in the story and don't let Satan pull you out of it.
 - vi. Your phone can tell you how much time you spent in any given app. Pay attention to that and spend as much time this week in your Bible app or a paper bible even, as you do on everything else.
- P. Clearing out the information clutter in my mind allows me to think godly thoughts.

4. Conclusion

- A. Our closing hymn today is all about assurance. Assurance is a positive declaration intended to give confidence; a promise. That's mind stuff.
- B. We know that we know that we know that Jesus is Lord.
- C. Clear out the informational clutter in your mind, and fill it with the blessed assurance that Jesus is yours...your King...your Lord...your salvation...your PEACE! **Let's Pray... PRAY!**