

## Harnessing The Power Of My Brain

On Sunday, we continued our sermon series called “Mastering Your Mind” by looking at three practical ways we can rewire our brains to be more positive.

1. Before we dig in, first a warm up question: Our brains tend to be reactive – easily set off. If somebody wants to get under your skin, what’s the quickest way?
2. Managing our minds is perhaps the hardest, yet most important, thing we’ll ever do. “As a woman thinks in her heart, so shall she be. As a man thinks in his heart, so shall he be.” Proverbs 23:7. For this reason, the Bible teaches that living a transformational life requires “renewing our minds,” i.e., changing the way we think. Romans 12:2. The biggest mistake we make is waiting until the heat of the moment to try to change the way we think. Everything we know about the physiology of our brain suggests that if we wait until the heat of the moment, we’re too late. All of this led Jeff to the following big conclusion:

**“Mastering Our Minds has little to do with impulse control,  
And almost everything to do with training and conditioning.**

- a. To test this theory, have someone in the group roll up a piece of paper and throw it at someone else at random, while everyone else tries not to flinch if the paper is thrown at them. Give it a try and see what happens.
  - b. Why is it so hard not to flinch when something is thrown at you?
  - c. What would it take for someone to get good at not flinching when a piece of paper is thrown at them?
  - d. What can we learn from this exercise about how we can change the way we think?
  - e. John Ortberg says, “Habits eat will power for breakfast.” What do you think he means?
3. On Sunday, we looked at three practical ways we can pro-actively train and condition our brains function at a transformational level. **Step 1: Create a spiritual nutrient rich environment for your soul through consistent spiritual practices – also known as the “abiding concept.”**
    - a. Read John 15:1-5. What’s the primary point Jesus is trying to make here?
    - b. Throughout the ages, Christians have used certain common spiritual practices to nurture and grow their connection to Jesus. The list includes: worship; daily quiet time for prayer, study, and meditation; spiritual service; financial giving; connecting with each other in spiritual small groups, and making and renewing

our discipleship decision. For you personally, what spiritual practices make you feel most connected to Christ? Why?

- c. Scientific studies show that spiritual practices “light up” the frontal lobe – the part of the brain that supports and controls our higher emotions (like compassion, patience, kindness). Studies also show that the more we engaged these spiritual practices, the more they “light up” our frontal lobe. In other words, the impact on the frontal lobe grows with regularity of practice. Consider a simple example: attending weekly worship. Think of a time in your life when you’ve been absent from regular worship and compare it to now. What differences, if any, can you feel in you? Why do you think that is?
  - d. The goal is to build a rhythm of spiritual practices in our life that creates a “warm bubble bath,” or a warm spiritual nutrient rich environment, for the soul. As you move into 2015, is there any particular spiritual practice you want to add or alter to create a “warmer bath” for your soul?
4. Creating a warm bath for the soul is a good first step, but more is required if we’re going to destroy “negative strongholds of the mind.” **Step 2 is: Carpet bomb your negative stronghold with the opposite truth statement in the form of a breath prayer.**
- a. Read Luke 4:1-13. What strategy does Jesus use to destroy each negative thought the devil tries to sow in his mind? Why do you think this strategy was so effective for Jesus?
  - b. Joyce Meyer tells how she overcame her “negative stronghold” of smoking by repeatedly saying aloud to herself, “I hate how cigarettes taste, I hate them,” until that became the new reality for her. What do you think of this kind of approach? Have you ever tried something similar? How did it go?
  - c. Last week most of us identified one of our greatest “negative strongholds.” Take a moment to write down a short sentence that might become the “breath prayer” you could use to attack your negative stronghold, then let’s share.
5. **Step 3: Practice acting the way you hope, even if you don’t feel like it.** Dr. Andrew Newberg says, ““The more you do [something], the more you do it. . . . With ongoing practice, you can do [positive things] more easily and you want to do them more. You become ‘wired’ for it.”
- a. Read Matthew 6:19-21. What do Jesus’s words in verse 21 mean?
  - b. What would it look like to act in a way that contradicts your negative stronghold? How would that feel to you? Are you ready to start practicing?

*If you’ve not yet completed your Soul Care Plan, go online to <http://SoulCare.cc>.*