

PERFECTING  
A STAYED MIND

*Devotional Series*

THOU WILT KEEP HIM IN PERFECT PEACE, WHOSE MIND  
IS STAYED ON THEE: BECAUSE HE TRUSTETH IN THEE.  
ISAIAH 26:3

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# INTRODUCTION



THOU WILT  
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IN THEE.  
ISAIAH 26:3

Think about *a stayed mind* for a minute. Do you know what that is? It's a mind that is fixed on something. Our theme verse for this series is Isaiah 26:3.

*Thou wilt keep him in perfect  
peace, whose mind is stayed on thee:  
because he trusteth in thee.*

Where we fix our thoughts and where we focus with our brain will determine the stability of our minds. In turn it will have an outcome on our mental health. Our mental state of mind all revolves around our thought process, and when that gets off kilter, then we suffer.

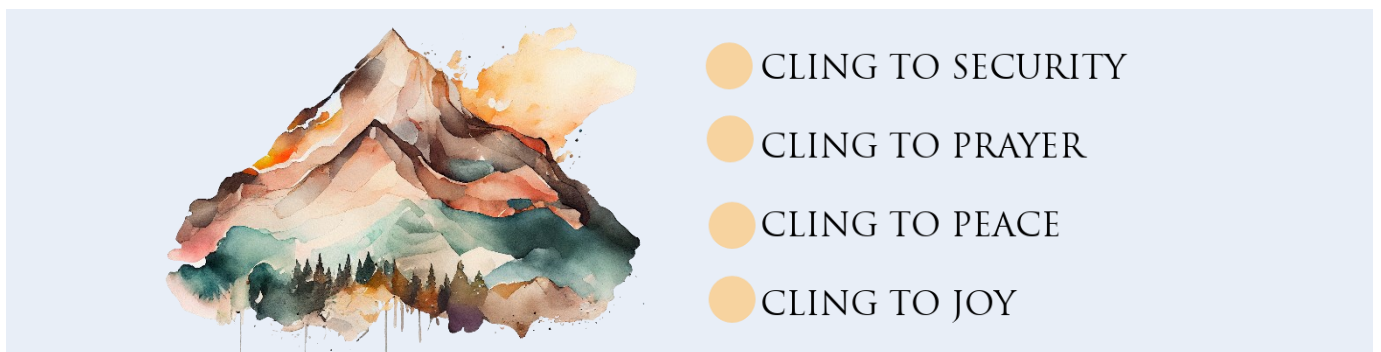
As Christians, we must fixate on the right things. We need to fixate on God's Word. We need to fixate on our purpose as a Christian. We need to fixate on the right Person (Jesus).

*Barnes Notes* on the Bible talks about the phrase, "whose mind is stayed" in this verse as not being just fixed on God, but that the Hebrew implies being "supported" by God. Wow! That's a great way to think about it. When our minds are

supported by God, just look where it takes us. It takes us to that peace and trust. We'll find ourselves in that "perfect peace".

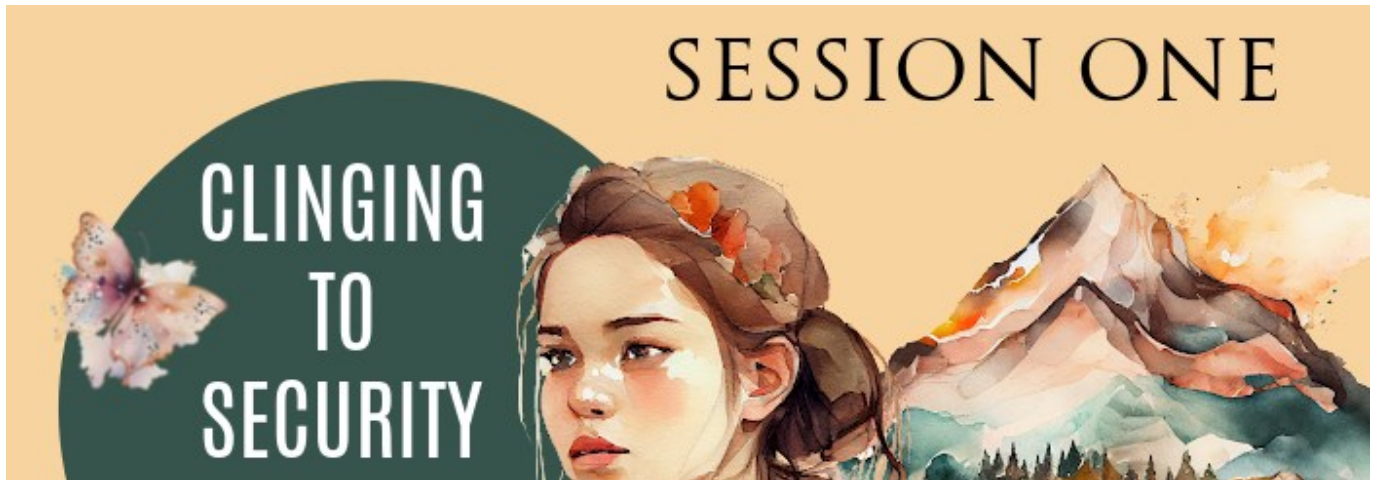
As I've mulled this over, four things stand out that makes me feel secure and supported in Christ. They are things that keep me fixed. They are things that I cling to, which in turn I think helps me and my thought processes. And as you know, our thoughts can go all over the place. Our thoughts make us do certain things. They make us say certain things. They make us feel certain emotions. They can make us behave in all sorts of ways — good, bad, and ugly.

So, here are the four things that help keep me fixed on the Lord. When I hold on and cling to these things, it helps me focus a little more clearly. Life can sometimes get tough, and it seems there can be a lot of chaos going on in our minds. On those days that I get that screaming in my own head and I feel out of sorts, I have to remember these things. They bring me back to reality, calm me, and soothe those kinks I can get in my thinking.



These may sound like simple things, but believe me, each one makes a difference in my life. They help guard my mind and my thoughts and keep me in check. And no, it's not easy. I have to work at it. Sometimes I do fail, and my mind gets off kilter. Keeping our minds *fixed* is just like anything else, it's a daily thing. Step by step.

I trust as we take a peek at each thing, that you too will be encouraged to use these to cling to as a lifeline if you don't already do so.



I think we all tend to cling to security, no matter what area it is in, whether it is online security, financial, home, national, educational, future, and many other types. Security is important to us. I was pondering how things can get out of whack with our mental state when there are questions and concerns about our security. Not knowing we are secure in something can make us feel unsafe, unloved, and even unwell.

Let's talk about just four areas of security that I think are pretty close to our hearts.

- SECURE IN YOUR JOB/OCCUPATION
- SECURE IN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS
- SECURE IN YOUR FINANCES
- SECURE IN YOUR SAFETY



## SECURE IN YOUR JOB/OCCUPATION

Jobs and our occupations are important to us. We spend a big percentage of our lives doing what we do at work or in our job. So therefore, it stands to reason that we all need and want job security. I think about people who lose their job and retaliate such as in workplace shootings. The loss of job security can send some people over the edge mentally.

You might not ever get that extreme about your job security, but it may cause you some worries. Your company may be downsizing. There might be some management shifts. The job you are in might not be secure for the future just because our world is changing. Look at the many brick and mortar stores that have gone out of business. Many people have lost their jobs just because the world has changed.

I think we have to cling to the fact that God has a plan for our lives, even if we become unemployed. Even if we have to change jobs. Even if our plans have to change.

When things like that happen, As Christians, we have the Holy Spirit to guide and lead us. Counselors, agencies, life coaches, and job finder websites may help us a little, but we have *Someone* more powerful to lead us with our occupational desires. The Holy Spirit is like that blanket of security that whatever happens, God will lead us through the dark places. We must depend on the Holy Spirit to guide us along.

I'm not sure about you, but when I think about the Holy Spirit leading and guiding me, it settles my mind. I feel like I have someone on my side when I think about the Holy Spirit and how He can lead and guide me. Things might not be rosy but it's wonderful to have *Someone* in my corner. And He is there to comfort me as well.

*But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. John 14:26*

## SECURE IN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

Look at all those relationships we have in life. Some of us have spouses. Some of us have children and grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and all those family members. And then there are our friends, co-workers, and bosses. There are our acquaintances. There are those people we meet when we are out running our daily errands. There are even those people at church. And don't forget about the pastor, his family, and all those ministry leaders.

That's a lot of people in our lives that we have contact with for sure! And my, how we like those relationships to stay on track. We like them to be secure relationships. If just one of them causes some waves in our lives it throws us off balance. And

when it's someone close to you, like a spouse or your children, it can cause some deep heartache.

Face it, relationships can play heavily on our emotions and how we feel. They can cause us worry and push our thoughts to some scary places. Some people commit suicide because of a heartbreak of a relationship. Or they become angry people because of a relationship. Or maybe they give up on love altogether. They allow that bad relationship to play with their mind.

One thing I am so glad of is my relationship with the Lord. No matter who on earth I may feel shaky and insecure with in my relationship with them, I know my relationship with the Lord can be solid. He is going to be there for me.

Jesus is that Friend that never leaves. He gave His life for us. He loves us. Jesus wants the best things for us.

*For God so loved the world... John 3:16*

Think about all those names of Christ. Whoohoo! If we are Christians, then we are in a relationship with *that Person*. That person with all those names that describe how wonderful He is. Wonderful, Counselor, Prince of Peace, and more. Christ embodies all those wonderful things, and He is our Friend! I'm not sure about you, but that sets my mind at ease and gives me peace. It makes me feel secure and loved.

## SECURE IN YOUR FINANCES

I mentioned jobs earlier, and they are of course part of our finances, but in general, financial security is a big part of feeling secure. Knowing we have financial security puts our mind at ease. I can remember when my husband and I first got married and he had lost his job and I was just doing a little bit of temporary secretarial work, and it was tough. We ate more canned soup and hot dogs than you can imagine. We couldn't afford much else.

Not knowing if you will get your rent paid or if you will keep the lights and heat on in your home, or even knowing if you will have enough gas money to get where you need to go is really tough. That whole thing of living paycheck to paycheck is tough. Or sometimes without any paycheck at all. It's really, really tough.

So, this is one of those areas of life that you of course have to work at on your own. You may have to start saving money more. You may have to adjust your priorities in what you purchase. You may have to make a budget or a financial plan and stick to it.

All in all, you have to be frugal and wise financially and all those things, but in the end, you really have to just give it over to the Lord when you have done all you can do. Worrying won't fix your financial problems.

I find when I worry about finances that I have to just step back a little and concentrate on those eternal treasures and those things that we lay up in Heaven. It helps my thinking. It makes me remember that there are souls out there dying without Jesus. It makes me grateful for eternity and that helps set my thinking process in order.

*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Matthew 6:19-21*

That's not going to pay your earthly bills of course, but I have found concentrating on eternity helps me focus in my mind on the here and now just a little better and helps push me past the anxiety of it all.

## SECURE IN YOUR SAFETY

Safety is a huge thing in life. On the practical side, look at how we lock our cars, lock our homes, and even lock our phones. We want things safe. We want to feel secure in our safety.

What happens when we don't feel safe? It kicks the mind. Right? I'm sure you have heard that a perceived threat in your brain can cause several physical reactions. Your heart starts pumping hard. Your blood starts that violent coursing through your veins. You even release cortisol. That's well and good if you need to get out of a dangerous situation, but if you are constantly living in fear because you perceive danger and fear for everyday situations because of anxieties, then you might need to learn to manage your emotions. You may even need to seek some professional



help.

What I want to do is just share how I feel secure in Christ. I have had and still have a battle with anxieties and fearfulness in certain situations. I know it's hard to get those anxieties under control. But I want to remind you of what Christ offers us and how that can sometimes calm me when I'm completely stressed out about something that a normal person without anxieties wouldn't even think twice about worrying over, but I'm over in a corner with my heart palpitating and my mind going all haywire.

Sometimes in situations like that I think of that old song, "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands". The Lord knows what's going on in the world and in our individual lives. It's no surprise to Him. He is the Alpha and the Omega. The Beginning and the End. What's going to happen will happen. I have to trust God no matter how bleak things get here on this earth or what anxious situation I am in at the moment. I have to remember that God's got this, and He's got me! He offers me safety and is holding on to me.

*And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. John 10:28*

Next, I have to remember that God gave me a safe place to learn and to be encouraged, and that's my Bible. I can just sit at the feet of Jesus and learn and soak up the Word, and it will calm my fears.

And then, another safe place the Lord offers me is prayer. I can tell my Lord what's going on at that very moment in time when I feel overly anxious and unsafe.

I have safety in my future too. It's like a great insurance plan! The Lord will prepare a place for me, and He will come again.

*In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. John 14:2,3*

## FINAL THOUGHTS



Security plays a key role in our mental health, whether it is something we think about purposely or not. There are women out there who don't have secure homes. Some who may be living with abusive husbands. Some who may have lost their jobs or aren't in a secure one. Some who may be living in unsafe neighborhoods. Some who have no financial security whatsoever. Some whose anxieties have played upon their mental capacity until fear is all they feel.

I'm just so glad I have the God of Security. He is the one I can rely on to keep me safe.

I can go running to that *Rock that is higher than I* (Psalm 61:2). God is that great home security company. He is that great home insurance plan. He's got me in His hands. He's got my back. And just think of the dividends!

Security in the Lord is offered to me and all I have to do is grab onto it.

When I think about keeping my eyes fixed on Christ and having that *stayed mind*, I can rest assured that the Lord will keep me secure, and I can safely rest all my anxieties in Him.

**So, are you clinging to your security?**



In this series, we are discussing Isaiah 26:3 in relation to our mental health. Let's go ahead and review that verse.

*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.*

Today we will be touching on something that as a Christian should be part of our daily lives. It's something that can definitely help us with our thinking and with our mental state. That wonderful thing is prayer. Prayer can do so much for us, especially where improving our thinking and where our minds are concerned.

We will be calling our attention to four things that prayer can do to help lift our spirits and lift our mental state.

- PRAYER GIVES US OUR OWN POWER
- PRAYER GIVES US AN ENERGY BOOST
- PRAYER GIVES US FOCUS
- PRAYER GIVES US A RELEASE FOR OUR EMOTIONS



## PRAYER GIVES US OUR OWN POWER

There are so many places on earth where we just don't have the power to do something.

Maybe it's at work and you don't have the rank or position to make the choices that you would like, and it's left up to someone else. Or maybe you want change to the world politically, but that's ultimately in the hands of the powers that be that govern us. You can work at it and voice your opinion, vote, and all those things, but in reality, it takes a lot of cogs in the wheel and a lot of people to make changes in government and laws. Maybe you wish you had the power to make other people do the right thing in certain situations. Or maybe you just may long for certain things in your life to be just a little bit different. Maybe you long for things to be just a tad bit easier on yourself. You know, you want those simple things that matter to just you and to you alone.

Sometimes you just feel powerless.

But look at prayer! It's where we have the power on our own to see that changes get made. We can go boldly to that *Throne of Grace*. Sometimes we get so caught up in our heads and think that we can't do anything or change anything. But in reality, we really have the power to control some things with prayer. We can ask for help from *Somebody* bigger than ourselves.

*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:16*

Of course, our prayers may not be answered in the way we would like, but God wants us to ask. God wants us to tell Him our needs, wants, and feelings.

Prayer is a connection with God and all you have to do is plug into it. Prayer is something each Christian can wield themselves. Prayer is just sitting there for us to pick up and use.

It's just like in life and you want power, you must grab onto it. You have to put yourself out there. You have to work at it. You have to forget about what happened in the past. You have to realize your own potential. And wow! When you realize the potential that prayer can have in your life, you can be empowered in a big way. Because look whose power is being utilized by prayer. It's not ours. It's God's power. God's power is what is tapped into with prayer.

That connection with God when we pray will help us maintain those *stayed* minds. So, when you aren't thinking straight, use your prayer power!

## PRAYER GIVES US AN ENERGY BOOST

Move over energy drinks, coffee, and adrenaline producing sports drinks! Prayer can give us a great boost in our mindset. One reason is because when we pray (if we come at it humbly), we can't help but start praising God. Praise is a big part of our prayer life as Christians, and praise does something for us.

If prayer was a product, then praise would be right at the top of the ingredient list. Just like we may read the amount of caffeine in something, rest assured that the more praise we have in our prayer the more it will do something to us. Our bodies will react to it. It will spur us on. It will give us a boost in our mental focus. And it's not harmful like caffeine either!

And next, prayer gives us that energy boost because when we leave prayer time, we leave our burdens there. Or at least we should. God will carry the load for us. When we leave prayer, we are lighter. What a relief when the weight of burdens falls off of our shoulders. They stop weighing our minds down and it helps us focus in the right way.

Another thing about prayer is *Who* we spend time with there. Prayer is that time that we commune with God. Just being in His presence in prayer can do so much for us in how we feel.

I'm sure you realize that when you spend time with someone who is negative that they can push those negative feelings off onto you. And when you spend time with positive people, you can feed off their positive energy. So, spending time with the God of the Universe, think how that can affect you in such a positive way!

There are times that I just feel weak mentally and physically, but somehow prayer can turn that around.

*He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.* Isaiah 40:29

*My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.* Psalm 73:26

## PRAYER GIVES US FOCUS

One of the best things about prayer is that it helps align our thoughts and helps us focus. You may already know that doing little quizzes and mind games will keep your mind sharp. There are even things that we can eat like blueberries, walnuts, and even fish that help us with our brainpower.

Prayer is like that. It gives us brainpower as it were. It helps us stay mentally active spiritually.

I think about visualization and how they say that helps your mind and brain. What's better than prayer to visualize? Right? Makes me think of that verse about faith.

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. It comes back to that asking in faith believing. Hebrews 11:1*

Prayer can help us visualize our faith and that keeps us active and sharp in our minds as Christians. It comes back to that asking and believing.

*And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. Matthew 21:22*

Any type of exercise can help your mental health as well as your physical health. That's pretty much common knowledge. Exercise can help you decrease your stress. It's basically a mood booster. But it also helps strengthen your memory and aids in learning in your brain. It can even help you with mental alertness.

When we exercise our brain and our body in general, it improves our mental health, and exercising our prayer life keeps us on point spiritually. It gives us focus.

And prayer not only helps us think a little more clearly and focus better mentally, but it also helps us focus on others and their needs as we bring them before the Lord. It helps us focus on God more because of the praise aspect of prayer. And it also helps us focus on the Holy Spirit's leading as we pray for guidance.

Prayer will do wonders for your brainpower!

## PRAYER GIVES US A RELEASE FOR OUR EMOTIONS

Taking care of our emotions is a big part of mental care. And what's better than expressing our emotions than through prayer. God wants us to share all of our emotions with Him. Whether we are feeling happy, feeling sad, feeling blessed, feeling depressed, feeling elated, feeling frustrated. The emotions we humans go through can range all through the highs and lows of life. The list of emotions is endless.

One thing that has helped me from time to time is to journal my feelings. I suggest you get a journal just for jotting down your feelings and emotions throughout the day. For me it helps to just write out what I'm feeling. There is something to the exercise of that whole thing. But also, I can use that during my prayer time and tell the Lord exactly how I've been feeling. All those highs and lows of my emotions are what I can take with me to my prayer time. I don't do this all the time but when I start feeling really anxious and I can feel myself slipping into that chaotic brain of mine, then journaling about my emotions helps me. Try it at least once. It might help you sort out your thoughts.

A special thing about prayer too is that it answers all of the following questions for us when we are afraid to share our emotions.

- Who do I talk to?
- Who will listen to me?
- Who will keep what I say in confidence?
- Who will care what I say?
- Who will care if I cry?
- Who will care if I go on and on about a subject?
- Who understands how I really feel?
- Who will hear my complaints and not dismiss them?
- Who knows all the other things going on around me in my life?
- Who knows how I am suffering?
- Who knows what makes me happy?
- Who will take my burdens and carry them for me?



I think about Hannah in the Bible when she prayed for a child. She laid everything out on the table. 1 Samuel says that she poured out her soul before the Lord.

*...I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD. 1 Samuel 1:15*

And then there is David. He knew who to turn to when he was overwhelmed.

*From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. Psalm 61:2*

That's one of the things that I love most about prayer. It's that God understands our emotions. Like Hannah, we can pour out our *souls* to Him. Like David, we can go running to the Lord when our minds and hearts are overwhelmed. I know for myself, when my emotions are running rapidly and stirring up my brain, prayer is a wonderful place to sit and relax for a while.

In prayer, we can tell the Lord all about our day and about all what is going on in our lives. When we do that, it helps us think clearer and will have an effect on us mentally and emotionally.

Think about all those emotions we go through on a daily basis. We experience happiness, sadness, fear, anger, disgust, hurt, grief, and many more. We all need to release those pent-up emotions, or they will build up till we burst.

Prayer is that safe place where we can leave those emotions.



## FINAL THOUGHTS



I know there are so many other things that prayer does for us, but I wanted to concentrate on these four because I think when it comes to our mental health, these four things crop to the surface.

We may feel powerless against the world and all it has to offer us. We may feel drained, depressed, and weary, so we need that energy boost from prayer. And then we may feel so out of focus and that we can't concentrate on anything or anybody when we are troubled in our mind. And if we never let go of our

emotions, they can be the source for anger, unrest, and even depression. We have to share all those things with God through prayer.

I hope discussing these things will help motivate you to grab hold of prayer like it's that lifeline that it is. It can do so much for us when we stick at it and use it daily. Think of prayer as a powerful tool in your toolbox or a powerful weapon in your arsenal. It's all about keeping our mind fixed on Christ, and prayer is a wonderful way to do that.

Prayer is a great and powerful resource for a Christian.

**So, are you clinging to prayer?**



We are to our third session as we continue discussing this whole idea of keeping our mind *stayed* as it refers to in Isaiah 26:3, which we are using for our theme verse for this series.

*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.*

I hope after this week that you will have memorized that verse. It's a good one to keep in ready reference in our hearts to call out when we need it.

Today we will be delving into how we can cling to peace. Our verse mentions peace, and not only peace, but it states, "perfect peace".

Unfortunately, sometimes our minds can be a landing pad for chaos. Have you ever felt like your mind was chaotic? It happens to all of us. There just seems to be that noise. We will be talking about three ways that can help us tone that down a little bit so we can have those *stayed* minds.

- DECLUTTER YOUR MIND
- FOCUS ON THE PRESENT
- GET RELAXED



## DECLUTTER YOUR MIND

I am of course not talking about decluttering things like clothing and material stuff, although that can sometimes help with inner peace too, but I'm talking about decluttering our minds.

Are you familiar with that verse in Ecclesiastes 3? *There is a time to cast away*, so let's make that time now when it comes to decluttering our minds.

*A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; Ecclesiastes 3:6*

Many things can pile up in our minds. Our minds can get like an unorganized drawer or filing cabinets that have been toppled over and spilling out on the floor. Or maybe you feel like yours is a huge storage shed that is stuffed, overflowing, and unorganized.

So many thoughts start swirling around in our heads. So many subjects rattling around in there. So many people to think about. So many needs that require attention. So many jobs to do. So many things to plan.

And what about those hurt feelings that land there? Thank the Lord for the happy ones that find their way into our minds as well. There can be those unsettling imaginations that stop and visit. So many random, crazy, and uninspiring tidbits of thoughts can decide to take up residence in the corners of our mind.

Then there are those harmful thoughts that enforce a low self-esteem. Way back in the recesses of our minds are those things we have forgotten that come racing to the top of our heads when our minds are already stuffed to capacity. Or maybe we recall all of those mean and hateful things that anyone has ever said to us. Our minds can be so full!

It just takes one little kink in your day to cause your mind to say, "Play" on a movie entitled "Woe is Me Moments from a Lifetime". It's like those moments are spliced together and playing in a loop in your head. And they will of course be playing in HD and full volume. More of that mind clutter!

What happens when we don't have peaceful minds? Our thinking gets a little disorganized, confused, and maybe even a little haywire. Right? In turn that makes our emotions surge in all sorts of ways. Then that affects our behavior. It will affect

our eating. It will affect our sleeping. We start living just on the emotion of it all and we aren't grounded anymore. From there it sometimes affects our whole body and our whole health is in jeopardy.

### **Let's check out some of the benefits of having a decluttered mind.**

- It will make you feel more in control of your thoughts.
- It will help you think about the things in life that are important.
- It will help you focus.
- It will help you be more relaxed.
- It will help you worry less.
- It will help you keep your emotions in check.
- It will free you up to dream bigger goals.
- It will soothe your conflict.

We have to keep our minds in check. Tidier spaces in life help us to be calmer, and it's true for our minds as well.

### **Here are some questions to ask.**

- Is anything bogging you down?
- Is anything getting you depressed?
- Is anything nagging you?
- Is anything keeping you from moving forward?
- Is anything or any person continuously unsettling your thoughts?
- Is anything causing all noise and chaos in your mind?

It's so hard to get all of these thoughts and all of that noise under control but we must work on it. There is a passage in Philippians that always helps me when I have a bustling mind. Remember how in Session Two, we talked about prayer being something we can cling to? Well, just look what these verses say about the link of prayer and peaceful minds.

*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7*

And then look at what we should be thinking about in the next verses.

*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever thing are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. Philippians 4:8-9*

Do you see how verse 9 ends? It says, "and the God of peace shall be with you". It's so amazing that we have the *God of Peace*. He isn't the God of Conflict. He isn't the God of Noise. He isn't the God of Unrest. He is the God of Peace. Can I get an amen and a hallelujah?

When we are concentrating on all those *lovely* things like it speaks about in Philippians 4, it can help clear up the clutter of things that hold us back from having that peaceful spirit. It will help *stay* our minds on the good things.

## GET INTO THE PRESENT

When we talk about living in the present, we mean that we are literally *present*. We are existing in the here and now. We aren't living in the past, nor are we living in the future.

Those are the two things that hold us up the most with living in the present. Our past and our future. Face it. We have to deal with our past and the hauntings of it and embrace the future without our dreams and plans of it overshadowing our here and now.

Let's look at our past a minute. There is a lot of stuff there. Isn't there? It's our past journey and each aspect can be important to the path we are on now in life. But the past isn't where we are living currently. We have to take the lessons we have learned from the past. We can take the memories we have made from the past. But hey. We can't live there.

There might be some practical things you have to do to move on from your past to help you have a peaceful mind. You may have to ask for forgiveness from God or from another person before you can move on from it. If you are harboring bitterness over something from the past, don't carry it into the here and now. It will just end up as noise in your mind.

We also can't lament over past decisions, especially those we made when we were young and dumb. It's done. It's over. We have to move on or that past will haunt our here and now and even our future.

And what about those *should haves* and *could haves* from the past? They will end up as noise in our minds as well if we don't realize that is in the past. Hindsight is so much easier than in the moment, but it doesn't undo past decisions. We must learn to give those *should haves* and *could haves* over to the Lord.

Now, let's talk about the future. It can be bright, cheery, and wonderful, but we can't live there either. And for some people, the future may seem daunting, scary, and formidable, and they worry in the here and now about living in that uncertain future. But no matter if it is bright or scary, none of us can live in the future at this moment, so we have to let it go.

There is nothing wrong with future plans and future goals, but we must be present in the here and now if we are ever going to calm that chaos in our heads. If we are going to have those *stayed* minds, we are going to have to enjoy each day and cling to that peace that only God can give.

Here are a few things to help you get in the present when your mind wants to wander to your failures of the past or to your uncertainty of the future.

- Notice your surroundings.
- Notice the people around you.
- Focus on what is happening at the moment.
- Try to be grateful every day.
- Try to look for daily blessings.
- Try to look for a way to bless someone else.
- Try to rein in your expectations.
- Try to make big tasks smaller and more manageable.
- Try new things.
- Try to reach for future goals a little at a time.



Is any of that easy to remember to do all the time? Well, not really. Life is hard and getting our minds at peace is a struggle at times. But if we don't work at experiencing life in a peaceful way, then that's not really living. Is it?

There genuinely is something special to just living one day at a time. It cuts down that noise in our minds and helps us attain that peace.

*This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Psalm 118:24*

## GET RELAXED

Relax! Have you ever had someone tell you that? It's easier said than done. Isn't it? I think so. I have to work at being relaxed. Seems like such a simple thing would come naturally, but I've never found it to be so. Well, maybe it just doesn't come naturally to me.

One of the things I think we have to do to become relaxed is to get rid of the pandemonium of all those interruptions and setbacks that come along in life.

Ever feel like your life journey was just moving along fine and then comes one setback after another. They seem to just be interrupting your life! Maybe your car will break down. Maybe one of your kids will get sick. Maybe you or your spouse lose your job. Maybe a big medical bill will come along. Maybe a tree falls on your roof. Maybe your car is broken into by a thief. Maybe your air conditioner breaks down in the middle of a heat wave. Maybe you end up caring for someone elderly in your family and it becomes a hardship. Maybe you need new tires for your car. Maybe you are a victim of a random act of violence. Maybe you lost your house or your place to live.

Yep! Those are the stuff of life. And it's really hard to relax when you feel like you are being preyed on by circumstances. It makes peace a struggle, so we have to learn to relax even through our circumstances.

I think about the Apostle Paul and how he gloried in those bad things in life. You really have to read that whole chapter of 2 Corinthians 12 to get the whole story, but here is a little peek.

*And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.* 1 Corinthians 12:7-10

I love studying all those things in the New Testament written by Paul. It always makes me laugh when I see children's flannelgraph and children's story books with pictures and illustrations of Paul. They usually make him out to be this little white-haired old man. In my mind, Paul is like Keven Sorbo in *Hercules* or something. I think of Paul as a big strong man. Wow! Were his words ever strong.

It's hard to glory in those infirmities, but Paul says he did, so I believe him and I believe the Bible. I was thinking about that because recently I went to the Starbucks in Target and treated myself to a piece of their pumpkin bread. They sell it all year round and I rarely get it, but hey, I had a Starbucks gift card.

Anyway, I took my beautiful slice of warmed pumpkin bread with me and as I swung my arm to get into the car, the slice of pumpkin bread just flew out of the little bag it was in and I saw it bounce and disappear under my car. Talk about not having any peace in my mind. I was deflated. So, when I was reading over this passage, I was reminded of that flying piece of pumpkin bread and how such a little thing played with my mind. Because of course when I got in my car, I sat there a minute and remembered all of the other things that had already gone wrong that morning. All that chaos started screaming in my head.

And here the Apostle Paul is over here glorying in his real-life infirmities. He's talking about getting buffeted by Satan. I couldn't help but get a little perspective from realizing that pumpkin bread shouldn't be up there messing with my mind. I know I need to relax!

I always feel like Paul must have had peace in what he was doing and how he was living just by the things he said. I don't see how you would say the things he did if he didn't have a calm head and peace in his heart. There are such deep things to ponder by Paul's words.



- *If God be for us, who can be against us?* (Romans 8:31)
- *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 3:14)
- *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* (Philippians 1:21)
- *In every thing give thanks:* (1 Thessalonians 5:18)
- *Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.* (Philippians 4:4)

I think in order to relax we need to learn to overlook the things that may annoy us but that just don't matter in the big scheme of life. And if we are going to cling to that peace, we are going to have to make some allowances that little and big interruptions and setbacks will be part of our daily living. We can't get overly stressed about it when it happens.

We have to relax and learn to settle into that peace that only the Lord can give.

## FINAL THOUGHTS



It's a noisy world out there and it is so easy to bring it all into our minds. I'm so glad that the Lord gives us that peace like no one or nothing else can ever do.

I love a good declutter in my house. It always sets me at ease and helps my inner peace. A good declutter of our mind can do that for our thinking. And then living in the present can help us attain that peace a little better too because we aren't always worrying about the past or the future. And then to be able to relax just cinches the deal where peace of mind is

concerned.

There is nothing like settling into the peace of God. It will swallow up all that noise and chaos that comes along with our daily living.

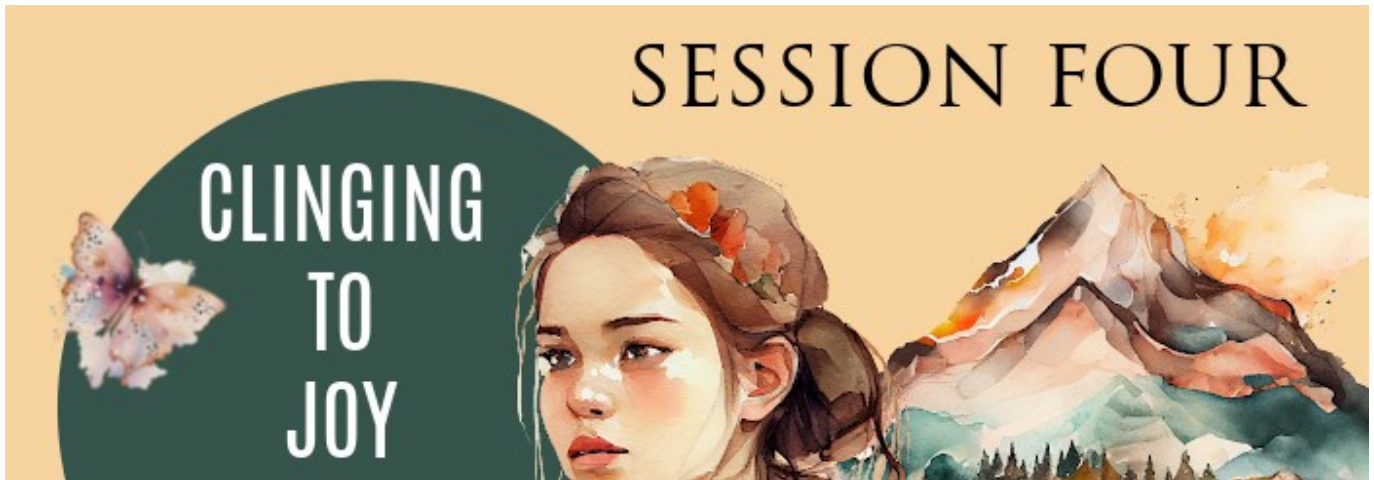
Chaos seems to want to reside right up there in our minds. That noise seems to cover every inch of our thinking sometimes. Unsettling random thoughts hit us like little arrows flying through the sky. We must get a respite from it. And one way to do that is to cling to that peace that God gives.

Look what the Bible says in relation to peace and God.

*For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace... 1 Corinthians 14:33*

That passage is referring to peace and harmony among believers in the early churches, but I don't think God is the author of confusion in any form. So, when it comes to our minds, they should be a place of peace and rest, and we have to *stay* our mind on Christ in order to allow that peace to grow.

**So, are you clinging to peace?**



We have arrived at our last thing to cling to when it comes to having a *stayed* mind in relation to our theme verse for this series.

*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.*  
Isaiah 26:3

Today we will be discussing how to cling to joy. Joy can be a wonderful thing, especially to our minds. It can elevate our spirits. It can help us overcome the ordinary. It can do wonders for our attitudes.

As Christians, we should be full of joy because just look at the God that we worship. He is that Wonderful, Counselor, Prince of Peace. That in itself should bring us joy. Look how much God loves us! Look how much He cares! And joy is even a fruit of the Holy Spirit. And yet, joy is a tricky thing when it comes to our minds. Our human perspectives can sometimes overwhelm us, and joy can escape our grasp.

I think though that if we want to have those *stayed* minds, that we need to work on clinging to that joy. I in no way think it is an easy thing to maintain though. We will need to put some effort into it.

Joy is something that brings us great pleasure and happiness. Some synonyms for joy are jubilation, bliss, rejoicing, exuberance, satisfaction, exaltation, triumph, gratification, enjoyment, glee, exhilaration. I like all those words. Don't you?

All those words are about feeling, and that's basically what joy is considered. It is considered a feeling. But we don't want joy as a fleeting feeling or a feeling in the

moment. We want to work on lasting joy, and I think these four things will help us.

- MAKE ROOM FOR JOY
- FEED YOUR JOY
- STRIVE FOR A HEALTHY JOY
- REMEMBER JOY IS A FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT



## MAKE ROOM FOR JOY

You can't welcome joy into your life if you are out of sorts physically, mentally, and spiritually, so we have to work on making ourselves a welcoming place for it to live.

I love that people say, "choose joy", but it doesn't just naturally come to us. Like anything else of value, we have to work to gain it. If we are depleted, feel rejected, depressed, and out of sorts mentally, then that joy isn't just going to happen magically. Even if we desire it and want to choose it, it just doesn't appear. I feel like if we are going to *choose joy*, then we are going to have to make room for it in our lives.

Let's think of joy as a houseguest. It's going to visit our minds and if we want it to visit our hearts as well, then we are going to have to invite it in and welcome it. And if we truly want it for a guest, we are going to have to make allowances for it. If you want joy for a permanent houseguest in your mind and in your heart, you are going to have to fix a guest room for it.

You can say, "I choose joy" until you are blue in the face, but if you never stop to make your heart and mind ready for it to visit, then those are just words.

We must ready our mind, body, and soul for it. Joy is one of those sensitive houseguests that you have to treat just right. You must treat joy like a special commodity. Because in the long run it is valuable. It is worth something. After all it is a fruit of the Spirit. We have to make a place for it to grow in our lives.

What do you do when you ready your own home for houseguests? First you probably clean your home or your guest room really good. Just like when we talked about decluttering our minds in Session Three in order to find peace, in order to gain joy, there may be some housecleaning to do.

Joy is hard to accept if you have a bunch of negative emotions hanging around. You will need to give them an eviction notice to leave the premises of your mind. You may have to boot out a few things from your life before joy will visit you.

What about bitterness that may be hanging around in your thoughts? You are going to have to say goodbye to it if you are going to welcome in joy. Joy doesn't hang around depressing thoughts either. Joy is pretty picky about who it hangs out with in your mind.

Next, when we have a houseguest, we normally set out those necessities our guests might need while they visit. Maybe clean towels, extra blankets, and all those things.

We need to prepare for joy by keeping our minds peaceful and decluttered, meditating on God's Word, connecting to God through prayer and all of those activities that keep our mind right spiritually.

What do you think joy needs in order to live comfortably in your mind and life?

There are so many things we can do to make joy more comfortable in our minds. We have to learn to pamper it. You can't upset joy with bad thoughts and emotions, or it will disappear. If you don't give your joy some attention, it will suffer.

We have to prepare our minds for that joy so that we can cling to it. In the end it is another thing that will help our mind be *stayed* on the Lord.

*Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. Romans 15:13*

## FEED YOUR JOY

If you want your joy to grow, you are going to have to feed it. As I mentioned, we are looking at joy like a houseguest, and you must take care of your houseguest with regular healthy meals. So, you will need to give your joy all the best in how you live.

## Feed Your Joy...

- By sharing Jesus. (Luke 2:10)
- By giving thanks. (Psalm 28:7)
- By taking refuge in God. (Psalm 5:11)
- By staying in God's Word. (Psalm 119:111; Jeremiah 15:16)
- By having unity with other believers. (Philippians 2:1-2)
- By praising God. (Psalm 71:23)
- By righteous living. (Ecclesiastes 2:26)
- By trusting in God. (Palm 33:21)
- By asking through prayer. (John 16:24)
- By resting in God's comforts. (Psalm 94:19)
- By placing your hope in God. (Proverbs 10:28)
- By encouraging others. (Proverbs 15:23)

Please! Take the time to look up all of these verses and read through them closely when you have time. You will find each are packed full of how our behavior as Christians relate to our joy and happiness. These verses are like little recipes to feed your joy!

Jesus wants our joy to be full and we can only do that when we are obeying Him and doing His commandments. Look what He says in John 15.

*If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. John 15:10-11*

## STRIVE FOR A HEALTHY JOY

I think we should have "healthy joy". We want a healthy weight. We want a healthy appetite. We want a healthy blood pressure. We want a healthy heart. Let's put joy right up there too as an important part of our overall health.

*Healthy joy* requires some work, just like our body requires work to keep it healthy in all areas. So, let's tend to joy. Let's check its levels. Let's check to see if it even registers in our body. Let's devise a healthy relationship with our joy because in the end it helps with a healthy mind.

What are the two questions that are on every health form at any type of doctor?

*Do you smoke?*

*Do you consume alcohol?*

When your doctor knows the answer to those, it can help him in whatever area he needs to diagnose. He will automatically know how those things affect you. We can't argue that those two habits are bad for your overall health. They specifically can cause lung cancer and liver problems.

So, what two habits are bad for our overall health and especially bad for our joy? I'm going to say, complaining and worrying. Those two bad habits can affect our overall health and drop our levels of joy dramatically.

### **So, for a self-diagnosis, ask yourself...**

*Do I complain?*

*Do I worry?*

If you don't feel joyful, ask those questions. It can help you figure out what's wrong. Knowing the answer to those questions can help you figure out if you need to adjust your habits!

### **Let's look at some practical things that can help our joy remain healthy.**

- Get good rest and sleep.
- Exercise.
- Connect with friends and family.
- Take time for yourself.
- Do some laughing.
- Don't vent, but problem-solve.
- Deal with negative emotions as they happen.
- Do some kind deeds.
- Share your blessings.
- Pray for someone else.
- Serve or volunteer.
- Reduce your stress.
- Enjoy the little things.
- Enjoy life one moment at a time.



I think we have to make our *healthy joy* a priority. It's one of those things we have to put time and effort into or there won't be any results. It's one of those areas of life that we have to put our heart into in order for it to thrive. We have to do it "heartily" as Colossians reminds us when we are doing anything.

*And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Colossians 3:23*

I feel like in general as Christians that we don't treat joy as a priority. We say things about it. We have Bible studies about it. We sing songs about it. We even have cute phrases we repeat about it. But in reality, I think we have missed the mark where joy is concerned. It has to be brought up to the next level.

We need joy in our lives to help our minds and bodies function better. We need it to cling to so that we can have those *stayed* minds.

## REMEMBER JOY IS A FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

As Christians, joy isn't optional. It's part of that fruit of the Holy Spirit that we should be bearing. If we are walking in the Spirit, joy is going to be something that we are growing in our lives, and it is something that will bloom and flower or bear fruit.

I think this is one of the number one things we should be teaching new Christians. When someone accepts Christ, they are going from living for the flesh to living in the Spirit. That's the big change in their lives. And that's what most of the New Testament letters and epistles are all about. They are about living in the Spirit instead of the flesh. It's how we grow as a Christian. It's how we produce fruit.

We have to start teaching how to bear that fruit, and joy is one of those important fruits of the Spirit. We need it for the daily function of our lives. We need it for our minds. Like I mentioned, It's not optional! We must learn to produce it as a Christian.

Let's look at all the fruits of the Spirit that are listed in Galatians 5.



*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-25*

Those are all beautiful things. Right? Joy is one of them and all those other things listed are associated with joy. They can survive harmoniously. They get along well. They are friends.

But look at that passage in Galatians above that. It's talking about the works fruit of the flesh.

*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Galatians 5:19-21*

As Christians it is so easy to say, "Well, those aren't me!". "I wouldn't do any of those things!". But in reality, it is just so easy to be caught up in the flesh. Think about just that *hatred* one for a minute. I know Christians who get caught up in hatred and try to justify it because of how someone may have wronged them. I'm not proud of it, but I've been hateful at times. I think we all have. Frankly, it's easy for hatred to grow if we don't get rid of those thoughts that begin first before the hatred even appears on the scene. Look how Jesus taught us to forgive. He taught us to love. He knew we were humans and we would have trouble with the flesh.

A few verses on up in that passage says this.

*This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. Galatians 5:16-17*

And check out what Romans 8 says about it.

*For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Romans 8:5-6*

We have to remember to walk in the Spirit daily because our minds count on our joy. Joy lifts us up. It puts depression at bay. It helps our mental state of mind.

We have to be so careful though because the flesh will send our fruits of the Spirit away. They will rot on the vine. And what about joy specifically? Joy can't survive with all those things of the flesh. Remember. Joy is picky who it hangs around with up there in our minds.



## FINAL THOUGHTS



Joy can be a wonderful thing and can improve our minds and lives immensely. That's why we want long lasting joy, not just that fleeting feeling.

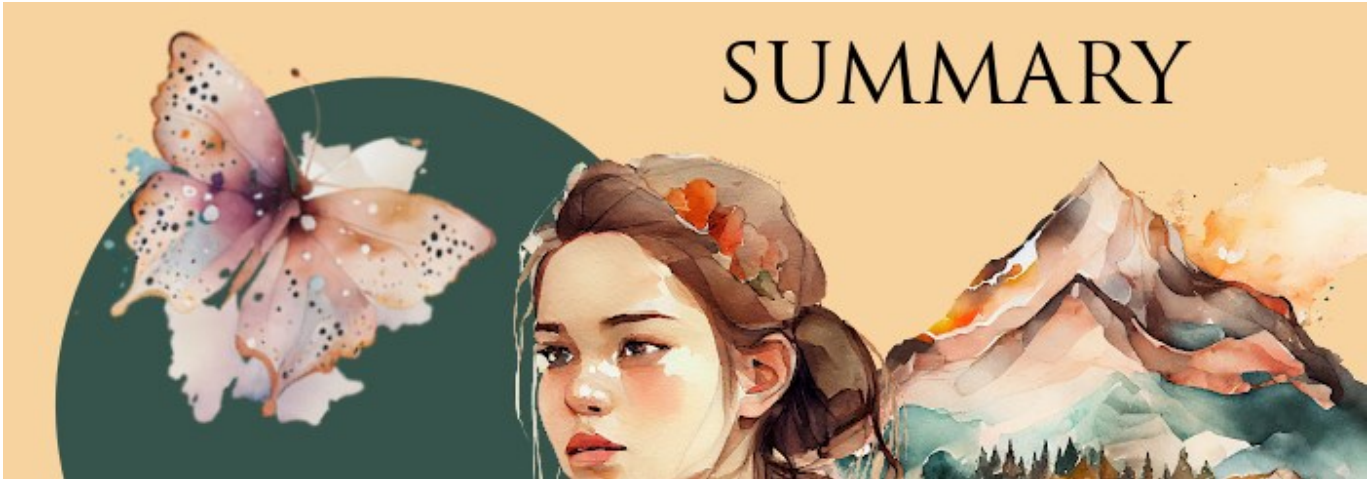
If you don't really want joy for a houseguest though, believe me, it will know and it will go. If you aren't going to feed your joy while it's visiting, then it will waste away to nothing and it will be gone. If you don't give your joy some attention so it remains healthy, it will shuffle off and away. And finally, we can never forget that joy is a fruit of the Spirit in

the life of a Christian and if we aren't living in the Spirit, joy will be a missing fruit.

When we don't have joy, it can deflate us. We can get down in the dumps. We can get depressed. Joy is a natural mood booster. I love what Proverbs 17:22 says.

*A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.*

My hope is that you will find more joy in your life and that you will cling to it. It can help us keep our minds focused and *stayed* on the Lord.



We have reached the end of our *Perfecting a Stayed Mind* series. I have enjoyed going through each session with you. I needed this series as much as anyone. I do have to really be careful, or my mind can fill with all kinds of things that just shouldn't be there. Or I overfill it with just all kinds of thoughts that go in all directions. I do a lot of writing, so there are all these ideas for devotionals and books going on at the same time in my head. It's all those untamed thoughts that just rattle around up there in my brain. And then those anxieties can get to me and really affect my thinking. Emotions tend to play a big part in all of us in how we feel and think and that plays on our mind.

It's not just bad things that can clutter our mind and make us lose focus either, but it's just all that activity and stimulation can sometimes make the rest of our body feel worn out so that we can't function.

Keeping our minds on the Lord can help us rein in and adjust our thinking so that we can breathe just a little more freely.

Let's go over our theme verse just one more time.

*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.*  
Isaiah 26:3

As I mentioned in Session 3, I hope you all have memorized this verse if you didn't already know it. When I am feeling stressed in my mind, this is one of those verses that I have always grasped and recited in my head. It reminds me that I have to focus on the Lord if I ever want any peace.

Let's review the main points that we have discussed this week through this series. There are four things that we can cling to in order to help us get our minds *stayed* on the Lord.



Our security is important because it manifests in how we feel safe, secure, and loved. So, all those feelings and emotions regarding our jobs, relationships, finances, and our safety can really affect us.

Next, prayer helps give us our power back. It gives us energy and focus. And thankfully, it gives us a place to give over all of those rollercoaster emotions that we carry around with us. Prayer is that safe place for our minds to rest.

The next thing we covered was to cling to peace. And oh my, do our minds need some peace. To get to that peace though, we are going to have to start decluttering our minds, focusing more, and relaxing more. The effort will be worth it!

The last thing we discussed was joy. And oh, what a wonderful thing joy is to cling to when we need some uplifting in our minds. It's another one of those things that might need some effort. We have to make room for joy, feed our joy, and we even have to work on having a healthy joy. And most importantly, we have to remember that joy is one of those fruits of the Spirit that we need to bear in our lives.

I hope that you will start clinging to these four things when you start feeling your mind going in the wrong direction. We have to move our focus back to the Lord, and I hope that this series will have helped in some way for you to concentrate on doing that.

Perfecting a stayed mind does require some work as we have discussed during this series, but I hope and pray that we are all up for the challenge.