

From Head to Heart

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[0 : 0 0] thanks for inviting me to speak tonight. This is a topic that really interests me. When I did become a Christian all those years ago, I think the very first question I asked when we had an opportunity at a Bible talk was, what is the role of emotions in the Christian life? I can still remember asking that. I didn't get an especially good answer. And I've realised over the years it's because it's a very complex question and it leads into all sorts of other areas of how do we think about Christian life. So I'd like to start with a list of Bible verses about our inner person, what the Bible refers to as our hearts. And this includes motivations, desires, emotions, the real person we live with every day, the person that other people don't necessarily get to see. But you know it's there.

You know that this is the real you, the internal you as you experience life. And the Bible has a lot to say about what this inner heart should be like and how we should be reacting to the outside world.

So it says, blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice. That should be your reaction to this, that you rejoice and be glad.

It says, but I tell you, love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you. Love even enemies. And if you're loving your enemies, what does that say about the Christians around you, the ones that you envy, the ones who fill you with bitterness because you look at someone else's life and think that's not fair.

The Bible says, therefore I tell you, do not worry. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Get rid of all bitterness.

[2 : 1 0] Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. In humility, value others above yourself. Do everything without ever grumbling or arguing. Rejoice in the Lord always. And he says it again, rejoice. Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about everything.

I mean, listen to the repetition there, the emphasis. We're told, let the peace of Christ rule in your heart, since as members of one body you were called to peace. Now, peace isn't necessarily a feeling of peace, but it is a state of peace because we are at peace with God. And that verse reminds us, be thankful.

But we're also told, may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. And that's getting closer towards an experience, a feeling of peace. Godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out of it. If we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Really? Just food and clothing? Keep your lives free from the love of money. Be content with what you have. And consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Well, I don't know about you, but I read these verses and I think, really? How realistic is this? It just sounds so out of reach. Don't worry ever. Don't have any selfish ambition. Don't ever grumble. Have peace at all times and in every way. Always content. And that trials are pure joy. Well, okay, I can admit that trials give me perseverance, but is that actually giving me pure joy? And so it makes me ask the question, how on earth do you do it? I would like you to discuss that now in twos and threes, just with people around you.

Just share some ideas. Given the challenge that we're faced with, how on earth do you do that? Go. Okay. Let's come back together. I won't ask you for feedback from that discussion. We'll be having a few more bits of discussion where I might ask you for some feedback. But just right now, I just want you to hold those ideas. Some of the ways I've found people dealing with these sorts of verses is the first way is just saying that the Bible isn't really serious about it. That these are ideals, but they're not really possible and no one actually expects you to be like that. And I must say, I've even heard sermons which just explain away these kinds of verses and the words in them. They actually mean something else. By joy, it doesn't actually mean joy. It means some other sort of thing.

It means just an intellectual conviction or something like that. Or contentment isn't really about being content. It's maybe it's just restraining your complaints or something like that. Peace isn't actually about being peaceful. But I think more often, most Christians just don't really think about it that seriously. We skate over these things. We get by day to day. We kind of do our best to get through the day and get on with people. We try to be patient and kind, but we're very frequently beset by worries and anxieties about all sorts of things. And you just accept that's what life is like.

[6 : 32] It's just an anxious world to be in. And so we're frustrated. We don't have the things that we want and that bothers us. We're worried about things that might go wrong. It's very easy to be fearful.

And we don't really take seriously the idea that we might be expected to change that. But I think the Bible does take that seriously. I think these verses mean what they say.

That God is saying to us, work on your inner person because there is a different way to be. And how much we miss out on when we don't do that.

How wonderful would it be if you were really like this person, the one described in these verses, the one who doesn't worry, who does love truly from the heart, who does live in trust of God all the time, who does the thing that God wants. And it's not a matter of gritting your teeth and just doing it because you know it's the right thing, but you do actually get joy from this Christian life.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to be that person? Consider the person of Psalm 1. Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord and who meditates on his Lord day and night.

[8 : 12] That person's like a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither whatever they do prospers. Not so the wicked, they're like the chaff that the wind blows away.

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous. The way of the wicked leads to destruction.

I've been really glad that we've been doing Psalm 1 with the children in the morning congregation. I think you can see Psalms 1 and 2 as the introduction to the whole book of Psalms. They kind of set the tone and the framework of what the whole book of Psalms is going to be about.

What it's aiming for. So let's look at some specific aspects of Psalm 1. Blessed is the one.

This word blessed that starts the psalm. There's a number of verses in the Old Testament that talks about the blessed person. And it's the person who's thriving.

[9 : 15] The person who is experiencing the goodness of God. It is sometimes translated happy. And in one definition of happy, that's quite appropriate. Happy as in things are going well.

It's the kind of happiness that in those world surveys of which is the happiest country. It's the ones where life is generally good and people are flourishing and thriving.

It's that sort of word. And translated into the Greek, this is the word that Jesus is using in the Beatitudes. The blessed person. Well, this is the person that is experiencing the goodness of God.

So this is the person we want to be. It's the person who's like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season, whose leaf does not wither. It's growing and flourishing.

And it's producing the fruit that it's meant to produce. And I think it's no accident that we get this metaphor in the New Testament for the good deeds that we do and the good qualities that we show.

[10 : 17] They're the fruit that naturally grow out of being the kind of person who is growing to be like Christ, who is growing in the image of Christ.

Well, more specifically, this person has delight in the law of the Lord and who meditates on his law day and night.

It's delighting in what God says. Because what God says is the best thing we can hear. What he's saying on any topic. And meditating on that day and night.

Do we really do that? I mean, I hope that most of us have been encouraged to have a regular, even daily, Bible time. That's kind of hard enough to do on its own.

Do we really think about it day and night? Do you take the trouble outside of your Bible time to think, oh, what was I thinking about this morning? What was that verse about? Just bringing it back to mind.

[11 : 16] Meditating on it. Mulling over it. Thinking about it. That's the kind of way we start to get ourselves into the mindset of the person who's experiencing this blessing of the Lord.

Psalm 37.4 says, Take delight in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. That's what we want.

We want to get the desires of our heart. And the way to do it is to make sure that what we're desiring is the things that God wants to give us so that we do delight in the Lord.

Psalm 40 says, I desire to do your will, my God. Your law is within my heart. Well, how do you get to be that person? How do you get to be the person who really desires to do God's will?

And so you do get all your desires satisfied. And so you are content because everything you want, you know that you have and you're experiencing that all the time, every day, no matter what else is happening.

[12 : 23] Well, that's what I want. That's what I've been working towards. I want to trust God so fully that I'm genuinely happy when I see his plans prospering.

And I don't care what else is going on. I really am content with life. I'm not worrying. I'm rejoicing. That's the person I want to be.

So how? How do we do it? It is a matter of moving from the head to the heart. You might be wondering as you read through Bible verses like the sorts we've been looking at, when do you reach that peace and contentment?

How long is it going to take? It seems if you are going to take it seriously, and it seems to be promised that you can get to be this person, how do you get there?

And you're probably still experiencing the same turmoil and worry that I know is normal for life that seems to have always been there. And it's very easy to read commands like Jesus commands not to worry and think, but I can't help it.

[13 : 38] I just can't help it. Now, a lot of the Bible teaching I received as a young Christian promised me that it would just happen. It would just eventually sort itself out, as long as I kept reading the Bible and seeking to be godly, that eventually my emotions would follow.

And I can remember a diagram of a little train that has your doctrine at the front. Get that right. That's the engine that's pulling it along. And then your actions. So do the right things. So don't do overtly sinful things.

Just do the right things. And your emotions, your inner life is kind of the little caboose at the end. It will just trundle along and eventually it will follow all the others.

But what if it doesn't happen? You think, well, what can I do? So I'd like you to go back and discuss again.

What have you been taught about your inner desires and emotions in the Christian life and what you should be doing about emotions? So discuss that with the people around you for a few minutes.

[14 : 44] Right. Let's gather some of these ideas. You know, some people, when I posed that question, from the blank looks on your faces, I think some of you are thinking, gosh, I've never been taught anything about this.

But what were some of the things that you came up with? What have you thought of? Yeah?

That's right.

Yes. We're in God's image. God created us with emotions. God has emotions. God experiences emotions differently from the way we do because God is spirit.

He doesn't have that bodily part of emotions. But yes, we do have emotions and we do need to learn what to do with them. The beautitudes, like peacemaking, pure in heart, I think those are the positive emotions in the New Testament that strikes me the most.

[16 : 02] And also, there's a parable that Jesus talked about in Mark the Gospel. And it's like the things that goes in doesn't defile us, but it's the things that comes out of our heart that defiles us.

I think it's like the seven deadly sins, if that's right. So, like, I think those are, like, the negative emotions. And, like, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talked about how we can deal with them, like, really practically and stuff like that, I would say.

Yes. Yeah, a lot of the Sermon on the Mount talks about that inner experience, that inner person. And you're right. It is affected by what's around us. But what is important is our heart and what comes out of that heart.

Okay, one more. Over here. Thank you. We were discussing here, but I think some of the emotions that we experience between them, of course, to grow as Christians, and feel guilty about saying something wrong to someone, and that sort of means you are actually a living Christian, including a girl, but you don't think something's very wrong with them.

Something like guilt can be very useful, and you shouldn't be suppressing guilt. I mean, that has been some secular teaching. If you feel something like guilt, you just get rid of that feeling because it's an unhealthy feeling.

[17 : 28] It actually can be very healthy because it leads you to repent and to apologise if you need to and to do something about the thing that has given you that guilt.

There are some strands of Christianity that seem to be all about emotion, and you'll have church services which deliberately try to evoke emotion through music, through the experience that you have, and you can certainly bring out a lot of emotional response simply by using things like music and lighting and the experience you have.

There are other strands of Christianity will say, no emotion, it's not appropriate. You should be being a certain disciplined, rigorous kind of person and don't be an emotional person.

But neither of those actually gets to what the Bible describes as the person of God, that we are to have emotions, and there is such a thing as godly emotions.

Now, in our post-enlightenment world, often we think that emotions are not controllable, but that emotions are irrational.

[18 : 50] They just happen or they don't happen and there's nothing much you can do about it. I mean, that's not even what psychology teaches anymore. And so it certainly isn't something we should be reading in the Bible because the Bible never presented that.

The Bible says, yes, you will have emotions. That's part of being human. And there are ways of having godly emotions just as you can have godly actions or godly thoughts.

Well, how does that happen? The Bible does actually give us a lot of instruction about how we go through this process of shaping our emotions to be godly ones.

So, for instance, Ephesians 4. You were taught with regard to your former way of life to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires, to be made new in the attitude of your minds, to put on the new self created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

That's not just talking about actions. That is talking about the inner self, your desires, how you're actually feeling about it. And it's about being made new in the attitude of your minds.

[20 : 11] Philippians 4. Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things.

Or Colossians, set your mind on things above, not on earthly things. So, it does come through our thoughts.

It doesn't come just through a manipulation of emotions through music or whatever else. It has to start in your head. It has to start with the right mind, with the right thoughts and knowledge of God.

But it can't end there. Overall, it is true that emotions will change as our thoughts change. But this process can be slow and even slower if we don't ever pay attention to it.

So, the idea that you just get your doctrine right, don't ever think about emotions. No, no, that's not the way to do it. Yes, you get your doctrine right and you pay attention to how that is changing the rest of you.

[21 : 21] All the time, there's all sorts of voices in the world telling us how to feel. They're trying to educate our hearts, voices from advertising, from social media, from TV, from movies, or any of the other multiple sources of input that we have every day.

And those voices are extraordinarily easy to listen to. Of course they are. That's specifically what they're designed for. Millions and millions of pounds goes into advertising to find the right thing that is going to manipulate your heart and make you want a certain thing.

So, given that all the time we're getting these other things educating us about how to feel, we need to pay attention to educating our hearts in what is actually the truth.

It's very easy to let the world dominate our beliefs. And so we must make an effort to make sure that those teachings are not the ones that are dominating our beliefs.

It's all the more important to think about how we educate our hearts with the truth. Now, that's precisely why I've written about the Psalms because the Psalms do this process with people.

[22 : 39] The Psalm writers are doing this to themselves as they write the Psalms. Many Psalms show us how to address that inner person who does not have the desires of God at heart.

So, that's the way most of the Psalms are shaped or a good many of them are shaped. You start off with some situation which is not the ideal, some situation which was bad and the Psalmist is feeling bad about it.

The Psalmist then goes through and reminds themselves of the truths of God and comes out at the end with a changed heart. This is what so many of the Psalms do.

It's how to challenge yourself and how to change your heart from the despair that you might be feeling to joy. It's more than just knowing the truth.

It's embedding the truth in ways that deeply affect our emotions and our inner person and actually, practically, change us.

[23 : 46] Now, as I was writing the book on Psalms and I was specifically thinking about how to change anxiety into something more positive, but I was also reading Packer's a passion for holiness at the same time.

And it was astonishing that how often what I was trying to write about anxiety in the Psalms was exactly the sort of thing that Packer was saying about holiness. Now, he wasn't writing about emotions at all.

He wasn't interested in that. He was writing about holiness and what an essential and wonderful quest holiness is for the Christian. But, of course, the two are closely linked.

Holiness is good for us. We shouldn't be surprised at that. When we live the way that God wants us to live, we will thrive more. And when we spend our lives communing with God and striving to please God and thinking about God, that's the healthiest, most joyful, most psychologically beneficial way we can possibly live.

God is good and he does offer us the truly good life. Now, I want to go through an example of how we might do this with one of the Psalms.

[24 : 59] But there's so many passages of the Bible that you could do this for yourself. I just think the Psalms are particularly conducive to this way of changing how you're thinking about yourself in life.

So, if you have Bibles there, please open up to Psalm 3. Psalm 3. Now, the Psalms or any truths of the Bible can help us with any number of struggles.

I wrote about fear in particular because that's what I have struggled with a lot in my life and I think a lot of people do struggle with. Fear is particularly hard to combat.

So, if you learn to challenge fear and anxiety with godly truths, I think that gives you a good basis for challenging all sorts of other wrong ways you can be reacting to the world.

And after all, fear can be very harmful. Fear can be really crippling and just rob you of your will to do anything. But it doesn't have to. So, consider what David says in Psalm 3 verse 5.

[26 : 09] Now, I am going to take David as an example for us.

You can't do this in every aspect of David's life because after all, David was a special person. He was God's anointed king, a prefiguring of Christ. Yet, he was also a godly man who faced real danger and as he's writing this psalm, he is facing actual danger.

And so, we can learn from his example about how he reacted to fearful circumstances by remembering his relationship with God.

David lived a life of faith and that faith led to genuine peace that enabled him to sleep in the midst of armed enemies.

Now, remember, for all God's promises to David, he had never promised David, you will not die in battle. David knew he might be facing death, but yet he could still lie down and go to sleep.

[27 : 22] He could sleep calmly because he knew God. He did it by knowing who God is. He says, I will not fear, not because the situation is not frightening, but because of his knowledge of God.

So, verse 3 says, God has lifted David's head high. So, think of what David has experienced in his past up to this point. For all the difficulties he's been through, God has delivered him.

Even though God might not deliver him for this one, David knows he can trust God to be good to him. God has stayed faithful to him, even when David was not at all faithful to God.

So, David knows that he can cry out to God and God will hear. Whatever the outcome, God will be on his side. Now, it's a great thing to have someone on your side, whether it's a friend or a relative or a parent or someone that you can come home to, someone that you can talk over the day with.

It's great to have someone that you know will be sympathetic, no matter what you're saying to them or, you know, what you're talking about. So, when you come home with the story of, I had this really bad day, the boss was awful and so-and-so was rude to me, you know you can tell your story to this person and they will be sympathetic.

[28 : 49] They'll be on your side in the story. Or you're talking about this great thing that happened. You saw this fantastic car on the way home or this fantastic dress or a cup of coffee or whatever it might be.

Big or small, it's one of the joys of life that you can share life with someone who's on your side. And it seems to be one of the drivers that sends so many of us onto social media.

We want to share with people. It's just so nice to have that person who's on your side. And I can remember a friend saying that that's what she especially liked about her new boyfriend, that whatever story she told him, he'd be on her side in the story.

It's that feeling of, you know, someone's at your back. Someone's going to be there for you. Some of us feel that there is no one on our side. Maybe it's because you're single and you wish there was that person there that you could be sharing your life with and they're just not there.

It could be that you're not single and the person who's there is the one who's actually making life difficult. And you actually, that's why you feel like there's no one on your side.

[30 : 05] David was being attacked by his own son. He could easily feel that the people who, you know, the person who's meant to be closest to him is the one who's against him. He could well have felt that no one was on his side.

But he didn't because he knew that whatever else happened, God was on his side. David says, you are a shield around me. That's his way of describing it.

God had proved time and time again that he was on David's side. He had chosen David. He'd raised him up to be king. And even through David's betrayal and the consequences that David suffered, God had remained with them.

God is on our side. God is on our side. God is on our side. God is on our side. Now stop for a moment and let that sink in. Think for a moment what that means.

It's not saying God will make everything in your life comfortable and easy because it is a fallen world. Bad things happen and they will keep on happening for as long as this world lasts.

[31 : 17] It's a world under a curse and it's under God's curse as a result of the rebellion of Adam and Eve. After all, he told them if they ate from that tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they will die.

If they had trusted him, they could have gone living that blessed life, having everything that they need in a paradise of fruitful work and blessed relationships. They didn't.

They ate of the tree. They tried to make themselves the gods of their own lives who would decide what good and evil were. They were meant to be the progenitors of the human race, the representatives of the human race, but they decided that the human race was better off without God.

Well, we haven't been and we've seen all the terrible consequences and we still suffer them every day living in this fallen world. But God did not abandon us.

God remained on humanity's side and through that long, long story of his grace to Abraham, to Israel, his ongoing and repeated promises of the salvation he was bringing, again and again, he made those promises that he would send the Saviour.

[32 : 32] David knew that as he was writing the Psalms. All the psalmists knew that and this is part of what they call upon as they're turning their emotions around from fear to joy because as they're writing the Psalms, they remember, yes, these things are happening and they're awful, but God is on our side and he has promised he will always be.

David knew he was part of that story. Even if he didn't know how it would end, he could look back and see all of God's faithfulness to Israel up to that point.

He could see how God kept his promise to Abraham, the promise that Abraham would have the thousands of descendants that would be God's people. David could remember how God stayed with the people and brought them out of slavery in Egypt.

David could remember how God had consistently raised up judges when his people cried out to him. And more recently, David would know that God responded when the people asked for a king and how God had rescued David in his own life.

What can you remember about God in your own life when you're facing trouble? Have those things in your mind. What can you look back to that you saw that thing was awful but God brought me out of it?

[33 : 57] And remember, we know far more than David ever did. We have far more available to know, remind ourselves of about God's faithfulness than David could because unlike David, we know how the story ends.

We know that the whole of the Old Testament pointed forward to a salvation that has come. God did keep his promises. David knew that God had promised that David's throne, his royal house, would last forever.

We know that God wasn't talking about just an earthly throne but a genuinely eternal throne on which Jesus will reign forever.

We know that we can look forward to not just a land on earth, the land that David lived in, but a whole new creation where there will be no pain or suffering and none of the frustrations, none of the difficulties that we have in life now because Jesus took that upon himself.

And we know that because of that death, we come into the very throne room of God, into God's own family. We will be in God's presence, in perfect, resurrected bodies forever.

[35 : 12] And we know that even in this life, we have every spiritual blessing. Jesus, by his spirit, is with us in reality.

That's true. That's real. He is with us. He is with you right now. Those in Christ are united to Christ and genuinely in his presence now.

Talk about having someone on your side. God. So if David had reason to sleep, even in the midst of troubles, we have much more reason. We can trust God that he knows what he's doing, regardless of whatever's going in our life right now.

We can know that whatever suffering we're going through, the purpose is good and the outcome will be good. And we can trust him that suffering won't last forever.

And can I encourage you, those of you who are still pretty young or young in the Christian life, as you go on, you will start to accumulate example after example after example of the way in which you can trust God because whatever hardship you're going through, God will bring good out of it and you will see that.

[36 : 30] Even in the worst of times when we feel most alone and most helpless, God is on our side. But that can be hard to remember. So just for a few moments now, I just want you to discuss what makes it hard to remember that God is on our side.

Go. So what are some of the things? What are some of the things that make it hard for us to remember truths like that when we're going through difficulty?

Sorry, we don't...

Oh, yeah, the devil. Yes, yes. We do have opposition in this process. We will have other voices and remember the devil likes to use those other voices that are teaching us other truths that are not godly and we'll bring those to mind.

Yeah. We forget. Yes.

[37 : 46] And isn't it interesting how often the Bible tells us to remember? No, talk to each other, tell your children, remind each other. Yep. God's invisibility. Sorry, that...

God's invisibility. God's invisibility, yes. After all, he's not exactly the same as a friend that you can have at home or chat to in a coffee shop.

So it's an extra step to keep reminding us that he is real, he is there, he is with us all the time. So that does actually take a step of effort of making sure that you remember.

Now, what I'm going through here is an example of the sorts of things you need to do so you actually do get transformed so that the truth you know actually changes how you are feeling and experiencing and reacting to the world.

But it is hard to do. It is hard to do. When we're stressed and troubled, we need to make the effort to remember a truth like God is on your side.

[38 : 56] It's not a natural thought. You will be tempted to think, well, if God is on my side, why doesn't he make life easier? Because that's what we actually want, isn't it?

We want the trouble to stop now. We want the easy life now. We don't want to think, okay, it'll be lovely in eternity when there are no tears or crying or pain or suffering, but how about now, God?

Well, we don't want to hear about the strength and the good character things that come out of our perseverance. But the fact is that's how we get them.

You have to undergo some level of stress in order to grow. That's how the world works. I mean, you know perfectly well that's how it works in exercise.

That's how it works in your inner being as well. What you can remind yourself of, what will actually help you endure and so build that character is the truth about God and that is what you need to do and do it deliberately.

[40 : 05] Have a program that you set yourself to do that. Make sure that you have the time, you concentrate your mind and you think about these things. Think about what God has promised.

Think about how wonderfully he has kept that promise. Think about the truths of God. That knowledge is real and reminding yourself of it is effective.

Write it down. That's another thing that you can do as well as thinking about it, actually writing it down. We don't actually know psychologically why writing things is so particularly effective but it actually is.

And I've got another book about journaling if you're interested in that. Writing things down makes this process all the more effective. But remind yourself.

Remind yourself of God's love, his character, how trustworthy he is. Remind yourselves that even though you can't see the end, God knows what it is. You can't see what good's going to come out of this suffering but God knows what it is and it will be good.

[41 : 12] Remind yourselves of these things as David must have continually reminded himself because we can see it expressed in his Psalms. So think about God instead of your worries.

It's more fruitful and it works. It will change you. And pray. All these processes can be gone through in prayer so you're actually addressing it to God as you're reminding yourself of these truths and you're asking God at the same time help me stop focusing on these things.

What you pay attention to will affect you. So pay attention to what you know is true. Now there are practical things that you can do to make this a reality in your life and I've got more suggestions on these in what I've written about.

Make a plan for tonight. That's something I want to suggest to all of you right now. Make a plan for tonight. So maybe start your process of going to bed a bit earlier so you have some time to reflect and if you normally spend some time journaling in the evening maybe you can do that there.

Write down what is worrying you, what are the problems. Write it down as a prayer as you express what troubles you. And spend some time remembering and perhaps writing down how great God is.

[42 : 45] And so think about this. Think about the highlights of the Bible. Think about the truths that you know. Think about the promises. Write down the blessings that God has given. And as you go to sleep repeat those things three times to yourself.

I'm taking this from an empirical approach to psychology. People have experimented with these sorts of things of what you do just before you go to sleep.

And repeating a positive thing to yourself three times is effective in actually changing your mindset. If your mind keeps returning to your worries then break it.

Make an act of will. Break that and think about the positive thing instead. If this is the first time you've done it it will be hard to do and you will keep going back to your worries but it is a matter of practice.

So start training yourself in this process of thinking about the positive things of God. Consider giving yourself a change of perspective whenever you're fearful.

[43 : 50] What is it that you fear and what difference does it make if you think of the difficulty of something that you don't have to face alone because God is there. God is on your side.

Now I can't remember what's our next slide. Where are we going? Okay some more advice. Good. Take some time this week to list the strong qualities of God.

So think about Bible verses that mention this. Find a hymn that expresses joy because of God's qualities and mercy and make sure it's one that you like and just sing it.

Sing it at the top of your lungs. Have paper or a journal by the bed and if you find yourself worrying as you go to sleep write down your thoughts and challenge them with some truth about God.

Or a phrase I find particularly helpful, I was in Christ today and that's enough. It can be really useful to tell someone else if you are particularly struggling.

[45 : 01] So if you are having a particular difficulty with something emotional or something in your life it is useful to speak to a counsellor.

So if you think that's something that you particularly need you can talk to me or one of the other church staff we'll see if we can help you. You can also talk to each other, bless each other by reminding each other that you are saved fully and completely and Christ is enough.

And remember our hearts and our mindset can change, it can change, it comes through habits of thought, particularly habits of thought when you're in those times of stress and difficulty.

If we approach that with a godly mindset, that is with a mindset that keeps thinking about God, not being surprised by difficulty, expecting it because it is a fallen world, not thinking of it as something out of the ordinary or something that just shouldn't happen to me, but something to be expected and put in the right framework, then those times of difficulties will be the times that build our perseverance and so can actually be a source of joy.

You can actually feel joy in difficulty because you know that it's building you up, because you know what God will be bringing out of it. Actually, that's what psychology tells us as well, but Christians always knew it was true.

[46 : 38] We've known it for thousands of years. God's strength is with us, we can trust him, and we need fear, no one and nothing else. We are on the winning side.

The devil will not prevail, nothing will prevail against God. We can throw ourselves on God and he will protect us. So make this your mental framework.

Whatever you do, make the truths of scripture, the architecture and basic structure of your mind, because those truths are real. They are the actual shape of reality.

So trust in what is real, and that is what will actually transform your hearts. Okay, Martin, shall we go to question time?

Great, thanks, Kirsty. Why don't we, we could just try 30 seconds, turn to your neighbour, say if you think you've got a question. Just to help people think. And maybe one minute.

[47 : 47] So turn to a neighbour, do you have a question? What does your neighbour think of the question? Is it worth asking the question? We'll ask Kirsty some questions. thing, do you Thank you.

Thank you.

So I couldn't find the actual verse in the Bible, which is probably not very helpful. But in the Bible, I think David in some of the Psalms asks God to punish his enemies in some way.

Is that a good thing? I realize it's not helpful that I can't actually look up the context. It's probably much better than I'm thinking. But have you had anyone else? Okay. So, yeah. Is it right to ask God to punish your enemies?

That's basically what you're saying. Or how should we react when we see someone like David saying, punish these people? Aren't we supposed to love our enemies? Is this a contradiction between the Old Testament and the New Testament?

[50 : 24] We know that in the end, everyone who opposes God will be judged. Judgment is coming and people will be punished for opposing God. That is right and just and will happen.

We are not the ones who will be doing, who are to punish enemies. We are to forgive. And we know we can forgive because God will see to justice.

That's his job. So we can read verses that make us uncomfortable because they talk about, God, will you punish this? They make us uncomfortable because it isn't our job to be doing that.

It is right for God to look after justice and we can trust him to do that. Sometimes it can be helpful to think about, well, what are my actual enemies right now?

My actual enemies are not really people who oppose me. My actual enemies are my sin. Are the devil who is tempting me not to trust God.

[51 : 28] And it's very easy for me to say, God, punish those enemies. Get rid of those enemies. I want them out of my life. That can be a more helpful way to think about this in terms of how do I turn to God in these difficulties.

Okay, that's a couple of things I've said. That's a big topic, but I hope that starts to give you ways of thinking about it. Great.

Wasn't expecting that question. Love it. Darren. How would you address the tension? See the advice you gave that that doesn't just become a mantra that actually makes us ignore what we're feeling.

Because I guess sometimes when you pay attention to our feeling, God's actually speaking to us and telling us something. So it still might be uncomfortable, but we should pay attention to it. Maybe you don't think that, but how would you address that tension?

You do need to get to be practiced in this. Sometimes an emotion can be a very good diagnostic.

[52 : 31] You're experiencing emotion. What is that telling you? It could actually be telling you, I didn't eat enough lunch. I need to go eat something. It could be telling you, I'm actually not thinking correctly about God right now.

Because what I'm feeling, I actually know that's inappropriate given the glorious forgiveness that I have in Christ or something like that. And so you can challenge the belief that's behind the emotion.

But it is a matter of practice. It's a matter of getting to know yourself. If you're suffering from something like depression, like an illness, that will actually put your emotions out of kilter.

And you need to learn that as well. So that you don't pay attention to emotions because they're coming out of the illness. They're actually not a rational response to anything.

But it is, so yeah, you do need to practice this and get to know what your emotions mean. So that you do pay the right amount of attention to them.

[53 : 45] Hi there. You think of something like anger, where Jesus was angry and turned the tables in the temple. And it's often said, you know, there's this distinction between a righteous anger where it's justified and other anger.

But that's just anger. So I was confused as to what you meant by a godly emotion. Because anger by itself is just an emotion. It's not godly or ungodly.

It's how it's applied. So I was curious as to the definition of what you meant by a godly emotion. Yeah, so by a godly emotion, I mean, what is it that evokes that emotion?

He got angry on other people's behalf or on God's behalf because others were being treated wrongly. So his emotion was evoked by the right things.

So we do know ways in which our anger can be sinful. And frankly, that's pretty much all the time. You know, it is very unusual to find humans who are genuinely feeling righteous anger.

But with any emotion, yeah, emotion on its own, it's just an emotion. But it can come from certain things. And we can train ourselves for the emotion to come from certain things.

[56 : 09] And that's something that we often don't do. But we can train ourselves to think that is actually joyful. And the more I think about that and pay attention to it and think about its consequences, I can train myself to have joy from the things of God.

[illegible]

Thank you so much, Kirstie. It's been so helpful. Obviously, it's a huge, huge topic, isn't it, for the whole Christian life. I'm great to have had some time. Some of us will have already thought about this a lot, others, this will be very new.

[59 : 44] I wonder if it might be good just to pray in pairs now, just as we close. So just if you feel willing, if you're not comfortable to do it, it's fine, but just to turn to your neighbor and just pray about something that struck you from tonight. We've heard some great truths about God that we can praise him for in terms of his character towards us, his faithfulness. Or we can just pray in some of that application of longing that God's Spirit will enable us to help these truths deeply affect us on the inside so that they do transform us in the ways that he commands. So let's do that now. Let's close by just praying in pairs and then we can continue to chat.