

Three years ago, you started at Random Church. You were so excited! There was some traction at first, but one failed idea after another, you started meeting heavy resistance from the people. Now, you don't even want to stay after church and talk to your members. You want to preach your sermon and go home. You start thinking, "This church wastes my time." Or, "They need a better pastor; certainly not me."

The longer the labeling and negative thoughts continue, the further you step away from the church where God called you, for His glory. If we don't step back and regularly have some self-awareness, and if we are not mindful of our current state of emotions, we can easily let negativity consume us and rob us of our calling.

Mindfulness and Ministry

Mindfulness may be a secular term, but the implications of it are seen throughout the scriptures. Mindfulness means that you pay attention to the thoughts in your mind and discover if your thoughts are either being informed by truths or lies. Negative thinking can also drift into a place of darkness or discouragement.

Second Corinthians 10:3-5 [says this](#):

"For though we walk in the flesh, **we are not waging war according to the flesh.** For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh **but have divine power to destroy strongholds.** We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and **take every thought captive to obey Christ...**"

This scripture tells us that Christians have been given the power of the Holy Spirit to take every thought captive to obey Christ. Toxic negativity can drive our minds to madness where we feel there is no way out. But the reality is that sometimes we need to arrest those thoughts and remind ourselves of our identity in Christ and the validity of the situation we are in.

Arresting Negative Thoughts

Negative thoughts can be a detriment to your ministry.

While we are redeemed people who have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit, the reality is that we are still living as physical beings with flesh. That means having a mind that can sometimes be distorted by sin. In this [recent podcast series](#), we've been looking at the topic of mindfulness. Mindfulness involves being self-aware of our state of mind while serving in ministry.

According to the [Sage Neuroscience Center](#), negative thoughts can manifest as incorrect assumptions, unrealistic self-criticisms, and even the denial of reality itself. Here are a few ways that these negative thoughts can seem to overcrowd our minds and put us in a state of confusion:

1. Black-or-white thinking:

This type of thinking paints unrealistic expectations of decisions. Examples are “me vs. them” thinking, good vs. bad, right vs. wrong, and “If someone is not for me, they are against me.” This type of thinking doesn’t give grace towards people who share different opinions and make mistakes. It forces you to feel trapped in a decision and doesn’t give room for gray areas.

2. Emotional Reasoning:

This happens when we insist that something is true, but our only “facts” are our feelings. Emotions can cloud our judgment. In ministry, sometimes we confuse “discernment” with feelings, and let those drive us to make unnecessary and rash decisions.

3. Overgeneralization:

Someone may overly fixate on one negative detail and overgeneralize it to all of life. As an example, a pastor may say, “I preached an awful sermon Sunday. Maybe I shouldn’t even be the pastor here! Who would want a pastor like me?” Speaking of a church member, they might say, “That person always raises a question during business meeting! They are always against me.”

4. Labeling:

This means you are putting negative labels on yourself and people around you. It’s a type of negative-self talk that comes from a sense of shame. If you label yourself as a bad leader, father, husband, or pastor, you are labeling yourself. At the root of this in ministry is a failure to understand that your actions do not define you or your identity.

5. And more:

There are several more ways that negative thoughts can manifest themselves, such as: jumping to conclusions, fortune-telling and mind-reading, catastrophizing, inability to be wrong, minimizing, and self-blame.

In a Replant or Revitalization, tensions can become even higher and more emotional than ever. Think about it: you are working with historical landmarks, memories, control, power struggles,

and so much more! But how can we get to a place where we can arrest our thoughts and think rationally, and not let negativity ruin our ministry?

Transform Your Negativity

Here is another scripture to consider: [Romans 12:1-2](#)

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewal of your mind**, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

When God saved you, he gave you a new heart, but your mind is something that has to be renewed over time! While God gives us new desires and we are a new creation, we have to discover what that means through a renewal process. The Bible calls it sanctification. So as my mind is being sanctified, what are some ways I can be mindful of negativity in my life?

Be a Worshiper

Based on that scripture, the first question we need to ask if we have negative thoughts is this: Am I regularly giving myself to God as a worshiper? There is undoubtedly a wrong way to worship. Jesus taught in John 4:24 that “God is spirit. And those who worship him worship in **Spirit and Truth.**” The downward spiral of negativity all begins with **our belief in a lie.**

But when I regularly present myself to God as a living sacrifice, and I live a life in worship of him, I surround my thinking and my mind with truth—the truth about God, the truth about myself, and the truth about my situation. If your mind is starting to go in that direction, recognize that you have the opportunity to surrender it to the Lord.

Don't be Conformed to the World

In the same verses, Romans tells us not to be conformed to this world. One of the reasons we get caught up in negativity is because we listen to what the world says about issues we are facing instead of listening to God's word. The world tells us that if we are overly negative, it's because we are missing something. So we try to fill that void with everything the world offers. But God's word tells us that we can cast all our anxiety on the Lord, for he cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). The world tells us to cut out all the “toxic people” from our lives, but pastors have a

responsibility to care for people's souls! (Hebrews 13:17). We know that the gospel has the power to transform people...even "toxic" people.

1 John 2:15-16 says, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life is not of the Father but is of the world." If we listen to the world, and worldly solutions, our negativity is not being answered by God's word. Let's listen to him, instead.

Renew Your Mind

Renewing your mind takes an intentional effort to be aware of your emotions. Where are your thoughts coming from? Did they come from an experience that actually happened? Or did you draw conclusions from something that could have happened?

Sometimes we need an outside perspective from others. Confide in a friend and ask someone to help you normalize your emotions and analyze what is actually going on. In the podcast, Jimbo mentioned "Anxiety is the disease of self-focus." We can be so inside our thoughts and feelings, it may be challenging to see the truth. But when you pull yourself out to get perspective from others, they can remind you of what is happening around you.

Once we give these things to the Lord, make sure you spend time in the word each day (not for ministry, but for yourself). Apply scripture to the things that God reveals about where you are. You will find that when you open the word for the renewing of your mind, not others, God will meet you in that place.

Instead of listening to your negative thoughts, listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit and God's word. That transforms our thinking and our mind. Don't just identify negativity, but chase it out and get back to a healthy, vibrant mindset. Let God use the testimony of others to teach you how to renew your mind and put your hope in him again. And always be mindful...of your mind.