

Thought For The Week

Articles

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Wholesome Thinking, Part 1

A Biblical Path to Mental Peace and Spiritual Strength

In a world increasingly gripped by mental health challenges, the timeless wisdom of Scripture offers profound insights into cultivating a healthy mind. On February 22, 2026, during the morning service, preacher Jim delivered a compelling sermon titled "Wholesome Thinking, Part 1," drawing from key biblical passages to emphasize the Holy Spirit's role in guiding believers toward pure, sincere thoughts. With Scripture readings by Roger from Philippians 4:4-7 and Wyatt from 2 Peter 3:1, Jim's message underscored how wholesome thinking not only combats negative emotions like fear, worry, and anxiety but also aligns us with God's will, fostering mental resilience and spiritual growth. This article explores the sermon's core teachings, weaving together biblical truths, historical context, and practical applications to illustrate why nurturing our minds is essential for a fulfilling Christian life.

The sermon opens with a call to rejoice, rooted in Philippians 4:4-7: "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice. Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." This passage sets the tone, promising divine peace as a safeguard for our inner world. Complementing this, 2 Peter 3:1 reminds believers: "This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder." Jim highlights that it's the Holy Spirit who stimulates this "wholesome thinking," a term translated variously as sincere, pure, or honest minds in different Bible versions.

Peter's letters were penned to prepare early Christians for false teachers who would infiltrate the church with worldly ideas and practices. By encouraging sound, clear thinking, Peter equipped believers to discern truth from deception, comparing apostolic teachings against imposters. While Jim's lesson isn't directly about false teachers, it pivots to how wholesome thinking bolsters mental health and reveals God's broader plan. In an era where mental health crises afflict nearly every family—evident through words, actions, and undiagnosed struggles—Jim argues that unwholesome thoughts are at the root. He defines "wholesome" using Webster's dictionary: sound, contributing to mental health, favorable to morals, religion, or prosperity, encompassing wholesome advice, doctrines, and truths.

Delving deeper, Jim distinguishes between three interrelated negative emotions that erode wholesome thinking: fear, worry, and anxiety. Fear is a natural, immediate response to real danger, activating the body's fight-or-flight mechanism, such as swerving to avoid a car accident. It's typically short-lived, dissipating once the threat passes. Worry, however, is a mental preoccupation with potential negative outcomes, involving repetitive thoughts aimed at anticipating or solving

problems. While mild worry aids planning, excessive forms become uncontrollable, spiraling into anxiety—"worry on steroids." Anxiety fixates on future threats that may not even exist, like dreading an upcoming sermon, exam, job interview, or health issue. Unlike fear's tie to the present, anxiety brews apprehension, fear, and worry, leading to restlessness, sleeplessness, poor concentration, and panic attacks. Physically, it manifests as muscle tension, heart palpitations, nausea, chest pain, and shortness of breath, often mimicking heart attacks and prompting unnecessary hospital visits.

These emotions rob us of peace, which is vital for wholesome thinking. Jim laments the national mental health crisis, where unwholesome thoughts fuel widespread suffering. Recognizing someone's mental state often comes from observing their speech and behavior, revealing inner turmoil. To counter this, Jim explores ancient beliefs about the mind's seat. In pagan Egyptian culture, the heart was preserved during mummification, believed to be weighed in the afterlife for worthiness. Greek philosopher Aristotle viewed the heart as the center of psychophysiological activity, generating "vital pneuma" (spirit or breath) that enabled sensation and movement, noting brainless animals could still function.

This heart-centered view echoes Judeo-Christian thought. Paul describes humans as tripartite beings: body, soul, and spirit (1 Thessalonians). Genesis recounts God breathing life into man, animating the body; at death, the spirit returns to God. Leviticus states, "The life of the creature is in the blood," suggesting the spirit resides there, pumped by the heart and oxygenated by the lungs. Physiologically, the brain serves as the central nervous system's input-output hub, coordinating with organs—a marvel prompting King David's praise: "I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14). Jesus, the Creator, alludes to thoughts originating in the heart, speculating if the soul resides there. In Luke 6:43-45, He teaches: "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit... The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks."

Thus, people are known by their "fruits"—speech and actions reflecting inner thoughts. Whether the mind is in the brain or heart is secondary; we are accountable for what we dwell on. Jim urges training the mind to evaluate thoughts against God's Word, the ultimate standard. Quoting 2 Corinthians 10:5: "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." Believers must defend God's truth against false religions, theories, and philosophies, exercising self-control—a fruit of the Spirit—to reject contrary ideas without lingering on them.

Thoughts arise involuntarily, but persistent negative ones demand rejection, prayer, and redirection. Peter advises in 1 Peter 1:13-16: "Prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'" As sanctified by Christ's blood, believers must pursue holy thoughts, resisting old evil desires.

We're not alone in this battle; Satan sows doubts of unworthiness or revives past sins to derail us. Emulate Jesus, who countered Satan's temptations with Scripture. The Holy Spirit, promised by Jesus as our Helper, indwells believers upon obedience, providing strength. When overwhelmed, pray for guidance and immerse in God's Word. Jim "ruminates" on Philippians 4:4-7 as God's antidote. Verse 4's double command to rejoice—amid Paul's persecutions—reminds us of our

identity as God's elect, children, and Christ's bride. Trusting God's sovereignty makes rejoicing an antidote to anxiety, shifting focus from self to eternity: "We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18). Avoid self-absorption; embrace heaven's hope, knowing trials build character.

Peter echoes this in 1 Peter 4:12-13: Rejoice in sufferings to share in Christ's, overjoyed at His glory's revelation. Verse 5 calls for evident gentleness, remembering the Lord's nearness for help and correction. Verse 6 combats anxiety: Present requests to God with prayer, petition, and thanksgiving. Anxiety signals distrust; recall Jesus rebuking fearful disciples in the storm: "O you of little faith, why are you afraid?" Trust God post-prayer, allowing trials for growth. Jesus' Matthew 6 teaching reinforces: Don't worry about necessities; God feeds birds and knows your needs. Seek His kingdom first, and provisions follow; tomorrow's worries suffice for themselves.

Verse 7 delivers the promise: God's transcendent peace guards hearts and minds in Christ. Surrendering anxiety invites this peace to fill voids, defying description. Jim concludes with Isaiah 26:3: "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you." Practicing these principles yields mental health and spiritual vitality.

This sermon, though Part 1, offers a blueprint for wholesome thinking amid modern chaos. By rejecting unwholesome thoughts, rejoicing always, praying with trust, and relying on the Holy Spirit, believers can experience God's guarding peace. In a society plagued by anxiety, these biblical strategies remind us that true mental wholeness stems from aligning our minds with divine truth, leading to lives of holiness, joy, and purpose.

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Wholesome Thinking, Part 1

Guarding the Mind with God's Peace

In a time when anxiety and mental strain touch nearly every life, Scripture provides a clear path to mental and spiritual health. On February 22, 2026, preacher Jim delivered “Wholesome Thinking, Part 1,” urging believers to cultivate pure, sincere minds as the Holy Spirit intends. Drawing from Philippians 4:4–7 and 2 Peter 3:1, he explained that wholesome thinking—sound, morally uplifting, and spiritually nourishing—is essential for resisting negative emotions and aligning with God’s will.

Fear, worry, and anxiety were identified as primary enemies of a healthy mind. Fear responds to immediate danger and fades quickly. Worry fixates on possible negative outcomes, while anxiety amplifies this into persistent dread about uncertain futures—health, work, or family concerns. These emotions trigger physical symptoms like heart palpitations, sleeplessness, and panic, often mistaken for medical emergencies. Jim described them as “unwholesome thoughts” that rob peace and contribute to a widespread mental health crisis.

Yet God offers a powerful antidote. Philippians 4 commands believers to “rejoice in the Lord always,” even amid trials, because rejoicing shifts focus from self to God’s sovereignty and eternal hope. Gentleness flows from a self-controlled mind aware that “the Lord is near.” Most crucially, verse 6 instructs: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” Prayer with trust replaces anxiety; Jesus Himself taught in Matthew 6 not to worry about tomorrow, for the Father knows our needs and provides when we seek His kingdom first.

The promise in verse 7 is transformative: “The peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” This divine peace fills the void left by surrendered fears, protecting both body and spirit. As Isaiah 26:3 declares, God keeps in perfect peace the mind that is steadfast because it trusts in Him.

Wholesome thinking is not passive. It requires taking thoughts captive (2 Corinthians 10:5), rejecting what contradicts God’s Word, and redirecting the mind to holy, heavenly truths with the Holy Spirit’s help. By rejoicing, praying, and trusting, believers can experience the mental clarity and enduring peace God desires for His people.

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Articles

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Wholesome Thinking, Part 2

Wholesome Thinking: Guarding the Mind for Peace and Godly Living (Part 2 – February 22, 2026 Evening Sermon)

In a world filled with distractions, negativity, and inner turmoil, the call to wholesome thinking stands as a timeless biblical imperative. Building on the morning lesson, preacher Jim delivered a compelling evening message titled "Wholesome Thinking, Part 2." Drawing from Scripture, personal testimony, and vivid biblical examples, Jim explored how negative emotions can derail spiritual health, why some thoughts must be rejected immediately, and how believers can cultivate minds aligned with God's peace.

The service opened with scripture reader Mike presenting Jeremiah 4:14 from the New King James Version: "O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved. How long shall your evil thoughts lodge within you?" This verse set the tone, emphasizing the urgent need to cleanse the heart of wicked, unwholesome thoughts to experience salvation and restoration.

Jim began by recapping the morning's focus: defining wholesome thinking and identifying common negative emotions—worry, fear, and anxiety—that often interfere. While some label these as the most frequent "Christian adult sins," Jim disagreed, viewing them as natural human responses rather than inherent sin. They become sinful only when excessive and uncontrolled, harming relationships and revealing a lack of trust in God's sovereignty.

To illustrate, Jim shared his own lifelong battle with public speaking anxiety. As a student, he fantasized about escape routes or skipping school entirely to avoid speeches. He failed every high school speech class he attempted. Later, during sheriff's department officer training, anxiety manifested physically: hives, flushed skin, and visible redness that a classmate cruelly pointed out mid-presentation. Another required video-recorded speech felt like facing a firing squad. Even after becoming a Christian at age 22—prompted by a seed planted by his older sister—and attending the No Bottom Road Church of Christ with his wife Ruth, the fear persisted. Soon after, the small congregation asked him to deliver a Wednesday invitation, thrusting him back into the spotlight he dreaded.

Jim connected his experience to Scripture. Moses famously resisted God's call to speak to Pharaoh, offering excuses until Aaron assisted him. The apostle Paul, once boldly persecuting Christians, admitted to the Corinthians that he came "in weakness and fear and with much trembling." These examples show that even great biblical figures experienced such emotions.

The key to overcoming them, Jim explained, lies in prayer, thanksgiving, and trust. He quoted Jesus' invitation: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." David urged seeking the Lord's strength continually. Using Jesus' agricultural metaphor of yoking a young animal with an experienced one, Jim encouraged believers to yoke themselves to Christ through His word, prayer, and teachings. Trusting God's promises—such as answering prayers offered in Jesus' name—allows the oppressed to rise in peace. A joyful, rejoicing attitude, as Paul commanded,

ushers in the "peace of God, which surpasses all understanding."

Jim then distinguished between "good" and "evil" negative emotions. Sorrow, sadness, embarrassment, remorse, shame, and guilt serve as alarms for wrongdoing. When addressed constructively, they lead to repentance, healing, and salvation. In contrast, sinful emotions—jealousy, envy, covetousness, greed, selfishness, lust, hatred, malice, anger, rage, bitterness, arrogance, pride—represent soul sickness. They distance believers from God, hinder prayer, and demand immediate repentance.

True repentance requires humility and contrition. Isaiah 66:2 describes the person God esteems as humble, contrite in spirit, and trembling at His word. Proverbs 28:13 promises mercy to those who confess and renounce sins, while 1 John 1:8-9 assures forgiveness and cleansing upon honest confession. For God's children, this involves humble prayer, acknowledging broken law, and making a firm oath-like commitment to forsake sin. Jeremiah 4:14 returns as the remedy: wash evil from the heart through sincere repentance, prayer, and confession—refusing to harbor wicked thoughts.

Echoing the morning lesson, Jim stressed not dwelling on evil. When unwholesome thoughts arise, compare them immediately to God's word and "take them captive to obey Christ." He humorously corrected a slip ("race" for "grace," blaming cold medicine) before examining biblical cautionary tales.

Cain's story stands as a stark warning. After God rejected his improper sacrifice, Cain stewed in anger and jealousy toward Abel. Ignoring God's counsel to do right, he murdered his brother. Envy and unwholesome dwelling led to tragedy.

Simon the sorcerer, newly baptized with sins washed away, harbored bitter envy. Desiring Peter's power to impart the Holy Spirit, he tried buying it with money. Peter rebuked him sharply: his heart was not right, full of bitterness and captive to sin. Proverbs 14:30—"A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones"—proved true. Simon forfeited new life and peace for worldly ambition.

David's unrepented sin caused physical anguish—"my bones wasted away"—until confession restored joy. Proverbs 17:22 warns that a crushed spirit dries up the bones, while a cheerful heart is good medicine. Jim noted personal observations: unchecked anxiety harmed a loved one's heart; bitter envy led another to physical, mental decline, and death. Unwholesome thinking produces bad choices that ripple outward, damaging families and communities.

The pre-flood world exemplified total corruption: "every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). Violence filled the earth; God detested wicked thoughts (Proverbs 15:26). Only Noah's faithful family survived. Paul described this era in Romans 1: humanity knew God through creation yet became futile in thinking, darkened in minds, exchanging truth for lies and worshiping creation over Creator.

Isaiah 55:7-9 contrasts God's higher thoughts with man's: the wicked must forsake their ways and thoughts, turning to the Lord for pardon. God desires cleansed minds filled with wholesome thinking.

The antidote is Scripture itself. Hebrews 4:12 declares the word of God living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, piercing to judge thoughts and intentions. By filling the heart with

God's word, believers evaluate themselves honestly, reject unwholesome thoughts, and cultivate peace.

Jim closed with Jeremiah 6:16: "Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls." He extended an invitation for prayer or confession, as the congregation prepared to sing.

Wholesome thinking is no mere suggestion—it's essential for spiritual vitality. By rejecting dwelling on evil, yoking to Christ, confessing sin humbly, and saturating the mind with Scripture, believers replace turmoil with transcendent peace. In an age of constant mental noise, the call remains: wash your heart, guard your thoughts, and walk in God's good way.

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Wholesome Thinking, Part 2

Cleansing the Heart of Wicked Thoughts (February 22, 2026 Evening Sermon Summary)

In the evening service preacher Jim continued his series on “Wholesome Thinking, Part 2,” urging believers to guard their minds against destructive thoughts. Scripture reader Mike opened with Jeremiah 4:14: “O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved. How long shall your evil thoughts lodge within you?” This verse framed the message: unwholesome thinking must be actively cleansed for spiritual restoration.

Jim reviewed the morning lesson, noting that natural emotions like worry, fear, and anxiety become sinful only when excessive, eroding faith and harming others. He candidly shared his own decades-long struggle with public speaking anxiety—from school escapes and failed classes to breaking out in hives during sheriff’s department training. Even after becoming a Christian at 22 with his wife Ruth, he faced the dreaded task of giving an invitation at the No Bottom Road Church of Christ. Biblical giants like Moses (who resisted speaking to Pharaoh) and Paul (who came “in weakness and fear and much trembling”) showed such fears are common but conquerable.

The remedy, Jim explained, is prayer, trust, and yoking oneself to Christ. By unloading burdens on God and rejoicing always, believers receive the peace that surpasses understanding. While “good” negative emotions—sorrow, guilt, shame—prompt repentance and healing, sinful ones—envy, hatred, pride, bitterness—poison the soul and demand immediate rejection.

Repentance requires humility, confession, and renouncing sin, as Proverbs 28:13 and 1 John 1:8-9 promise mercy and cleansing. Jim warned against dwelling on evil thoughts, citing Cain’s jealousy-fueled murder, Simon the sorcerer’s envious greed, and the pre-flood world’s continual evil intentions. Scripture—living and active (Hebrews 4:12)—judges thoughts and cultivates wholesome ones.

Closing with Jeremiah 6:16, Jim invited listeners to seek God’s “good way” for rest. Wholesome thinking begins with washing the heart through prayer, confession, and filling the mind with God’s word—replacing turmoil with lasting peace.

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