*Christ’s Community Church – Reaching, connecting, and equipping people to become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ!*

Rewired By Christ

## (Matthew 4:1-11)

Welcome to Christ’s Community Church. Today, we are going to see that overcoming temptation is entirely possible and I believe this is going to be very helpful for many of you. But honestly, I can’t speak for you, I don’t know exactly what you are going through, but I do know that sometimes I give up too easy. And so, preparing for this message has been a great encouragement to me and I believe it will be for you as well, because sometimes I get frustrated at my lack of progress. In other words, sometimes I struggle, I fight, and then I give up. I try to change, I try to do better, but it’s like my mind and my will are not connecting.

In fact, in the Scriptures we find the apostle Paul talking about this same struggle in Romans chapter 7. And he almost sounds like he is going crazy with the thoughts in his mind when he says,

“I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do” (Romans 7:15).

I wonder if there are any of you who have felt that way before? I don’t do what I want to do, but that which I do, is what I didn’t want to do.

As we follow the life and ministry of the apostle Paul, we see him rising up in victory as he learns to wage war against the lies of the enemy that attack his mind. And the Holy Spirit wants to do the same for you when you struggle with temptation and wonder why you are so quick to give in to the thoughts in your mind. Like the apostle Paul, we are going to learn from Jesus to be overcomers, more than conquerors as our minds are Rewired By Christ.

As we turn to the gospel of Matthew in chapter four, we find Jesus has just begun his ministry, he had come on a rescue mission, and he comes into the world not only to save us, but also to leave us an example so that we can be victorious as well. In verse one, we are going to look at a passage of Scripture that models for us victory in a time of testing.

“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread" (Matthew 4:1-3).

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

“Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

"'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone” (Matthew 4:5-6).

“Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test” (Matthew 4:7).

“Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me” (Matthew 4:8-9).

“Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only” (Matthew 4:10).

“Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him” (Matthew 4:11).

I want you to notice that Satan tempted Jesus in the same way that he tempts all of us. He tempted Jesus with food, safety, security, wealth, and power. And it is those exact temptations that so easily become idols in our lives, but Jesus did not fall for it. He was tempted in every way as we are, and yet he was without sin.

Three different times Satan made him an offer to tempt him, and each time Jesus rejected his offer. Three times Satan tested him, twisting the truth, and each time Jesus ignored the temptation and responded with the truth. And then after those three temptations, Jesus simply spoke four words, “Away from me, Satan” and he immediately obeyed. In other words, Jesus demonstrated his authority over Satan, every demonic power, every created thing in the heavens, on the earth, and under the earth.

This is such good news for you and me, because as followers of Jesus, if you have been baptized in the Holy Spirit, you have received the promise of the Father, and you have been clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:49). In other words, you have the fullness of Jesus dwelling within you as the Bible says in Colossians chapter two,

“In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority” (Colossians 2:9-10).

In other words, all the power and authority of God, the fullness of God lived in Christ, and you have been given that fullness. Meaning that you also are head over every power and authority, and so let’s look at how Jesus responded to temptation with all the power and authority of God.

Each time Satan tempted Jesus he responded with authority declaring the truth of Scripture. That’s important for us to understand and I want you to notice that Jesus didn’t have to reach in his pocket for a pocket Bible or pull up a Bible app on his phone, but he had these Scriptures planted deeply in his mind. In other words, they were readily accessible, they were on the tip of his tongue, and so when Satan tempted Jesus with food, Jesus shot right back at him,

“Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord” (Deuteronomy 8:3).

Again, a second time when Satan tempted Jesus with safety and security, he responded,

“Do not test the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 6:16).

And then finally, when Satan tempted Jesus with wealth and power, Jesus replied,

“Fear the Lord your God, serve him only” (Deuteronomy 6:13).

My prayer for you this week has been that by the Spirit of God that you would be armed and prepared to overcome every temptation, whether it’s to cheat on your diet, to look at something you shouldn’t look at, to spend money on something that you don’t need, or to lash out in anger to someone that you should be responding to with grace. Whatever it is, I pray that you would be able to overcome, because you have been Rewired By Christ.

This is what we’re going to talk about today, we are going to learn from the Scriptures how to win the battle in your mind, so that you can be free. I mean really free, not just right now in this moment, but living free and staying free as you follow the example of Jesus. And so, I want to show you and encourage you, building you up in your faith, because we have this promise in the word of God that everyone who has been born of God, born of the Spirit, overcomes the world (1 John 5:4).

Therefore, we must recognize and understand that there is a battle being waged in the world and it is a battle for your mind. In other words, we are not wrestling with flesh and blood, but we are fighting the powers of this dark world and spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places. And so, we can’t let down our guard, because the robber comes when we are least aware. In fact, the Scriptures exhort us saying,

“Let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled… Since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet” (1 Thessalonians 5:6, 8).

And so, we want to put on the armor of God, standing firm in faith, because we know,

“In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Romans 8:37).

The problem is that too many people don’t resist temptation, and they are easily overcome by the war for their minds. They don’t even put up a fight, because as soon as there is a little bit of suffering or self-denial they surrender and throw in the towel. And yet the Scriptures encourage us saying,

“The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast” (1 Peter 5:10).

And so, there may be suffering involved, self-denial, but when your mind is free from the control of the evil one, what the Bible calls having a renewed mind, or the mind of Christ, then you will be able to walk in freedom, because if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. And so, we need to be Rewired By Christ, having a renewed mind, because the Bible promises that…

“The mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace” (Romans 8:6).

But as the children of God we understand that we are Satan’s primary target because we are God’s treasured possession and he is jealous, and that makes him angry and vengeful. And so, day after day, you are the primary target for the rulers, authorities, and powers of this dark world. All the spiritual forces of evil are using you for target practice and specifically they are targeting your mind.

In fact, the Scriptures insinuate that our spiritual enemy uses a bow, maybe a crossbow or compound bow, and that is why the Bible tells us to

“Take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one” (Ephesians 6:16).

And so, the evil one is aiming for you, and it is your mind that he wants to hit, because he knows if he can get your mind, it will affect your body. And so, he will use sickness, poverty, relationships, children, whatever he can to destroy your mental health and torture your mind.

Your spiritual enemy, the evil one, will use external circumstances to infiltrate your mind through your senses. And your mind will begin to dwell on those things, thinking on those things, and harassing you with these intrusive thoughts and temptations. Suddenly, depression attacks and you find yourself discouraged and defeated because you are being harassed and tormented, when you should…

“Resist him, standing firm in the faith” (1 Peter 5:9).

… and taking authority over your mind.

And so, I want to talk to you about some practical steps to begin to shift your state of your mind, because this is a process, you don’t change the way you think overnight, but as you submit to the Holy Spirit you are aligned and connected to be reprogrammed or Rewired By Christ.

Number one, this process begins by taking responsibility for your thoughts, because if your mind has been accustomed to responding to life like this for years, as if it was beyond your control, you will have to begin thinking differently. And so, this is going to be a process, because change is difficult, and you will find yourself continually going back to what is familiar, what is normal, or what is easy. As the proverb says,

“A dog returns to its vomit," and, "A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud" (2 Peter 2:22).

And so, if your mind has been like a battlefield and you have lost more battles than you have won, you need to be Rewired By Christ. Instead of redesigning yourself to saying, “I’ve always been like this, I can’t control my thoughts, I can’t resist the temptation,” you need to change the state of your mind which starts by taking responsibility for your thoughts.

The second thing we must do is understand that you may have these thoughts, but that doesn’t make them your thoughts, and so you don’t need to foster them, claim them, and make them your own. You see, we all have thoughts, but they are not necessarily our thoughts, and it is what we do with them that is so important. Jesus said it this way,

“Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander” (Matthew 15:19).

Now, for some of you this may be a huge revelation, but you are not your thoughts, just because it came across the radar of your mind, taunting and teasing you, that doesn’t make it your sin. It’s only when you latch onto it, when you claim it, own it, dwell on it, fantasizing about it, and dreaming about it does it become sin for you.

That’s what Jesus was talking about when he said,

“Anyone who looks at a man or a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with them in their hearts” (Matthew 5:28).

In other words, you can have a thought, but you have to have a system of processing your thoughts, a system of filing or categorizing those thoughts that come into your head. And so, you are going to definitely need to have a trash file, maybe a think about it later file, or an open file that gets your immediate attention.

When we take responsibility for our thoughts, not letting them dominate us, overwhelming us, and bogging us down, but immediately filing them in the appropriate category, it will free up our minds for more important things. For example, the Bible tells us in Philippians chapter four, “Think about such things,”

“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy” (Philippians 4:8).

That means that you can direct your attention or focus your thoughts, and so when you find your mind busy doing its own thinking, you simply have to draw a line in the sand and command it to stop. And you must, because the Bible tells us that thoughts left unchecked, well, as a man or a woman thinks in their hearts, so are they (Proverbs 23:7, NKJV).

In other words, if a thought is allowed to continue unrestrained, unbridled, until you begin to entertain a thought, now it is you who is doing the thinking. And so, we can’t allow our minds to think on their own, without any boundaries, or without any filters, and we need to take authority and put on the brakes.

You must take authority over your thoughts, because you alone are responsible for your thoughts, and you alone have control over your thoughts. The apostle Paul said it this way in first Corinthians chapter fourteen,

“I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind” (1 Corinthians 14:15).

And so, Paul was led by the Spirit and therefore by the Spirit he directed his mind.

I want to encourage you today if you find yourself spending too much time living in your head, dwelling on your thoughts, come out of yourself. Open that door and come out, telling your mind what you are going to do, and don’t let your mind dictate your mood, your emotions, or your actions, because Jesus gave you authority. And so, it begins with you announcing to yourself, taking control of your thoughts, and commanding your mind to submit to the Spirit of God.

You see, the Bible tells us that we are not controlled by the sinful nature, but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ (Romans 8:9). And so, if you are a believer, if you belong to Christ, you can take authority over your mind, otherwise the Bible would never tell you to set your minds on things above (Colossians 3:2). In other words, you can set the direction of your mind, the focus of your mind, and the purpose of your mind, because as the Bible says we all do it and there are only two options.

“To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot” (Romans 8:6-7, ESV).

And then number three, we must remain awake, alert, and aware of our thoughts so that we instantly recognize when a random thought is running around in the back of your mind, tickling your mind, teasing you and enticing you. That’s why the Lord said to the children of Israel,

“Give careful thought to your ways” (Haggai 1:7).

Because when you pause for a moment to consider what is going on in your mind, why these thoughts are filling my mind, and who put this thought in my head without my permission? When you are alert, you are able to observe what is happening in your mind, realizing they are trespassing, and there is a conspiracy going on behind-the-scenes, and you are able to take back control. That’s what the apostle Paul tells us,

“Take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one” (Ephesians 6:16).

In other words, when you are alert and recognize those thoughts filling your mind, thinking on their own, and crowding out your own thoughts, you are able to be proactive and bring them to obedience to Christ.

And so, you stand firm believing who you are in Christ, holding up the shield of faith, and you are able to extinguish those fiery arrows as principalities and powers, rulers of darkness, and spiritual hosts of wickedness are attempting to use you for target practice. Therefore, the Bible says, “taking the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17).

And so, you can crush them, extinguishing them, bringing them to a halt, because you have taken the sword of the Spirit, and you have purposefully and intentionally filled your mind with the Word of God. You protect your mind with the helmet of salvation, because this is warfare, and God provides everything you need to be prepared to engage with the enemy.

“Therefore, the Bible says, “Put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground” (Ephesians 6:13).

Because God wants you to be prepared, he wants you to be protected, and he is going to train your hands for war and your fingers for battle, because like David said, “He is my loving God and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield in whom I take refuge” (Psalms 144:1-2). And so, God wants you to apply your faith, training your thoughts, fixing your minds on things above. And as followers of Jesus, we’ve got to work out this thing, standing firm and fighting this battle for our mind.

Number four, we want to take every thought captive. In other words, there is no place for passivity because God’s word is living and active. It’s powerful, but what many of us do is we surrender when we should be fighting, or we attempt to overwhelm the enemy and subdue temptation in our own strength, and we find ourselves exhausted. That’s why we’ve got to do it God’s way, because,

“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds” (2 Corinthians 10:4).

And so, the weapons we fight with have divine power and you’ve got to put on the armor of God, you’ve got to put God’s word in your mind, because that is the sword of the Spirit, and you’ve got to be aggressive and pray in the Spirit at all times (Ephesians 6:18).

When your enemy comes, twisting your thoughts, and tormenting you with these random thoughts, birthing these fantasies, idle thoughts, causing you to fantasize and covet what you don’t have, you’ve got to take those thoughts captive. The apostle Paul said it this way to the Corinthians,

“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” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

We take our thoughts captive, like prisoners of war, making them obedient to Christ. Then, once we have done that,

“We will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete” (2 Corinthians 10:6).

And so, once your obedience is complete, once you’ve taken your thoughts captive, I want to encourage you to keep fighting, identifying the enemy’s lies that have held you back and confess that you can do all things through Christ who gives you strength. Each one of you are fearfully and wonderfully made and God has given you gifts to make a difference in this world, and you are an overcomer by the blood of the Lamb and by the words of your testimony. You are not who the evil one has been telling you, whispering in your mind, but you are who God says you are. Armed with this truth, the truth will set you free, and his name is Jesus.

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