

Renewing Your Mind With Music - Larry Coy

“Meditation, Music, and the Thought Life”

Opening

- The pastor asserts that God gives a sweeping promise of success tied to one principle practiced across all areas of life, illustrated here specifically in the thought life.
- Core claim: God guarantees prosperity and good success when we meditate on His Word and obey it.

Scripture Foundation and Context

- Highlighted Scriptures:
 - **Joshua 1:8** — “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night... then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”
 - Context: God commissions Joshua to lead Israel into the Promised Land. The condition for success is continual meditation on the Law, coupled with obedience. Prosperity is defined as walking in God’s will, not merely material gain.
 - **Psalm 1:1-3** — “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly... but his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night... whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”
 - Context: A wisdom psalm contrasting the righteous and the wicked; delight and meditation in God’s Law produce stability, fruitfulness, and prosperity.
 - Proverbs (paraphrased) — “Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth or a foot out of joint.” (cf. **Proverbs 25:19**)
 - Context: Trusting unreliable people causes harm; seek godly counsel.
 - Isaiah (principle cited) — “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.” (cf. **Isaiah 55:8-9**)

- Context: God’s wisdom surpasses human comprehension; we must adopt God’s perspective rather than reduce His words to our summaries.
- Deuteronomy (pattern referenced) — Turning the mind to God “when you lie down, when you rise up, when you sit in your house, and when you walk in the way.” (cf. **Deuteronomy 6:7**)
 - Context: The Shema’s call to saturate daily life with God’s words.
- **Psalm 4** (prayer snippet referenced)
 - Context: Evening trust in the Lord; the pastor cites using a brief prayer when exhausted.
- **Ephesians 5:18–19** — “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”
 - Context: Spirit-filled living manifests in worshipful speech and song; music given as a practical means to orient heart and mind toward God.

Who God Is and How He Responds

- God is faithful to His promises: He ties prosperity and success to meditation and obedience (**Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1**).
- God’s wisdom is higher than ours: He communicates in His categories and intends practical application (**Isaiah 55:8–9**).
- God is gracious in repentance and restitution: He honors honesty, confession, and clearing the conscience with unexpected favor (example of stolen items returned leading to reconciliation and even employment).
- God’s design is that the more we expose ourselves to what is right, the more sensitive we become to darkness. He does not want us to learn evil through experience, but to know what is good.
 - Application: God’s original command to Adam and Eve was, “*Do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*” We don’t need to eat garbage to know it’s bad.
- God’s Spirit indwells our human spirit when we are born again. This is where His Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are His children and where His Word is confirmed as our ultimate authority.

Identity and Calling for the Believer

- You are called to be:
 - A person who delights in God’s Law and meditates on it “day and night” (**Psalm 1**).
 - Someone who seeks godly counsel, not the advice of the ungodly or the unfaithful (**Psalm 1:1; Proverbs 25:19**).
 - A repentant and honest disciple who clears the conscience through confession and restitution, living out tangible obedience.
 - A Spirit-filled worshiper who employs psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to align thought and emotion with God (**Ephesians 5:18–19**).
- You are the guardian of your own heart and affections, responsible for what music and media you allow to influence your mind.
- If you are a parent, you are responsible before God for the environment in your home and have the authority to set the standard.

Exposition: What “Meditate” Means

- The pastor challenges common assumptions:
 - Misconception: Meditation is merely going off alone to think about God abstractly.
 - Correction: Biblical meditation involves ongoing, practical engagement with God’s Word that shapes thoughts and actions, particularly in “spare thought times.”
- Language analogy:
 - Learning Spanish illustrates the difference between translating thoughts and truly thinking in a language.
 - Application: We must learn to think God’s thoughts in His categories (Scripture’s own words and rhythms), not merely translate them into our summaries.
- The pastor defines meditation as “The spiritual and mental process of digesting scripture, so that it actually becomes a living part of my life.” The goal is for God’s Word to become our spiritual sustenance, as Jesus said in **Matthew 4:4**, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

Practical Rhythm: “Spare Thought Time”

- The pastor identifies four daily touchpoints (cf. **Deuteronomy 6:7**):
 - When you lie down (night)

- When you rise up (morning)
- When you sit in your house (mealtimes/home routines)
- When you walk in the way (commuting/transition moments)
- Insight:
 - These are not “all the time,” but the recurring spare-thought windows when the mind is unoccupied and prone to temptation, worry, discouragement, or negative ruminations.
 - Most thought-life battles occur in these windows, not when engaged in demanding tasks. To keep our hearts pure, we must intentionally fill this time with God’s thoughts, His music, and His words.

Thought Life Dynamics: Mind and Emotions

- Problems involving mind and emotions:
 - Lust, temptation, fear, discouragement, depression, and worry.
- Challenge:
 - Reading the Bible engages the mind but may not immediately calm runaway emotions.
 - Praying about intrusive thoughts can sometimes amplify them by bringing them back to mind.

God’s Practical Provision: Music

- A temptation entering our mind is like God tapping us on the shoulder, alerting us that our thoughts are on “garbage” and inviting us to turn back to Him. The key is to immediately get our minds off the garbage.
- From **Ephesians 5:18–19**, the pastor highlights music as God’s strategic answer:
 - “Be filled with the Spirit” is followed by worship in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.
 - Music engages both mind and emotions, redirecting desire and attention to the Lord.
- Application step:
 - Choose specific hymns or worship songs to sing or hum during spare-thought windows, particularly when temptation arises.
 - The pastor shares his personal strategy: when a temptation arises, he immediately begins to sing a hymn like “How Great Thou Art.” You cannot simultaneously sing praises to God and entertain an impure thought.

- Recognize temptation is not yet sin; like Jesus, you can be tempted without sinning. Redirect immediately through Spirit-filled song.

Music: God's Solution and Satan's Weapon

- The pastor explains why music is God's chosen solution and a spiritual battleground.
- **Satan's Original Role:** Before his fall, Satan (Lucifer) was the chief musician.
 - Scripture: **Ezekiel 28:13** describes him: *"The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created."* Music was integral to his being.
- **Psychological Insight:** A psychologist told the pastor that the part of the brain processing music is a separate circuit from the part that thinks. This means music can directly influence one's philosophy of life without being filtered by rational thought.
- **A Spiritual Battleground:** This is why people are often defensive about their musical choices. Satan uses music to attack us where we are most defenseless.
- **God's Counter-Strategy:** Just as Satan uses music for destruction, God uses it for restoration. He puts a "new song" in our hearts to turn our minds and emotions back to Him and clear out the "junk."

The Three Components of Music and Life

- The pastor parallels the components of music with the parts of a human being:
 - **Music:** Melody, Harmony, and Rhythm.
 - **Humanity:** Spirit, Soul, and Body.
- He links them as follows:
 - **Rhythm** is linked to the **Body** (the physical).
 - **Harmony** is linked to the **Soul** (the mind, emotions, will).
 - **Melody** is linked to the **Spirit** (the message of the song).
- **God's Design:** The message (melody) should be the focus, with harmony and rhythm serving to turn the heart toward God. The beat itself is not inherently evil; proper ordering and purpose are what matter. The hymn "Because He Lives" is an example of a beloved song with an eight-beat rhythm.
- **Satan's Reversal:** Satan inverts this order, making the **rhythm dominant** and the **harmony dissonant**, often with unintelligible words. Even when the words are clear, Satan ensures they are anti-Christian, thereby controlling minds.

The Process: A Practical Method for Renewing the Mind

- The pastor outlines a step-by-step process he developed for “digesting” Scripture, using his struggle with temptation and his study of **James, chapter 1** as the primary example.

1. Identify the Problem & Gather Scripture

- Acknowledge a specific area of struggle (e.g., temptation and lust).
- Go to God’s Word and gather all verses addressing that topic. This is the foundation of gaining wisdom, which is “looking at life from God’s viewpoint.”

2. Memorize God’s Thoughts (Into the Mind)

- Commit the relevant Scripture to memory. The pastor memorized **James, chapter 1**.
- This replaces our flawed human thoughts with God’s actual thoughts. He used a group to memorize 2-3 verses a week, writing them on a 3x5 card for review during “spare thought time.”

3. Personalize the Word (Into the Emotions)

- Once memorized, begin true meditation by shifting the Scripture into the first person, turning it into a personal conversation with God.
- **Example:** “When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into *my* life, *I’m* not going to resent them... *I’m* going to welcome them as friends because now *I* know that they come to test *my* faith.”
- This allows God’s truth to connect with your emotions and change your perspective.

4. Make a New Decision (Into the Will)

- As God’s perspective reshapes your thinking and emotions, you are empowered to make new choices aligned with His truth.
- **Example:** “*I’m not going to* resent trials... *I’m going to* welcome them as friends.” This is a volitional choice.

5. Experience Outward Change (Behavior)

- When the inward change in the mind, emotions, and will is real, the outward behavior naturally follows. This is genuine transformation from the inside out.

Key Scripture for Renewing the Mind

- **James, Chapter 1:** This chapter was the pastor's primary text for overcoming temptation.
 - **Context:** James writes to believers scattered abroad, facing various trials.
 - **Application:** The pastor memorized and meditated on these verses:
 - **James 1:2-4:** "When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives, my brothers, don't resent them as intruders but welcome them as friends. Realize, they come to test your faith and to produce in you the quality of endurance, and let that process go on until that endurance is fully developed, and then you will become a man of mature character..."
 - **James 1:5-8:** "If in the process you don't know how to solve any particular problem, let him ask God... and He will give it to you... But you must ask in sincere faith without secret doubts... The man who trusts God, but with inward reservations is like the wave of the sea... that sort of person cannot hope to receive any help from the Lord." The pastor learned that "asking for wisdom" meant going to God's Word to find His perspective.

Illustrations and Examples

- **Ungodly counsel:** Seeking advice from someone trapped in sin is like relying on a broken tooth or dislocated foot—unreliable and harmful.
- **Restitution story (personal testimony):** The pastor confessed past theft to his employer, repaid more than he stole, asked forgiveness, and experienced reconciliation.
- **Young Man and the Pipe:** A young man confessed stealing a pipe, returned it with \$5, and asked forgiveness; the store owner offered him a job, valuing his honest character.
- **Football practice and misapplied meditation:** Trying to keep his mind on God "all day without interruption" proved impractical during complex tasks, leading to confusion. The lesson is not abstract constant focus but faithful redirection during spare-thought times.
- **Youth Group Music Experiment:** The pastor played instrumental versions of ten inappropriate songs, and the youth, who claimed they only listened to the words/melody, mouthed the lyrics. This showed that the entire musical package is absorbed.
- **The 19-Year-Old Boy's Albums:** A young man threw away 19 albums after a sermon. One was a patriotic album that built up patriotic emotion before

twisting into a message of rebellion, bigotry, and anarchy. The boy, saved after being arrested at a protest, recognized this music was destroying his mind.

- **The Missionary's Son:** A missionary in Colombia struggled with his son's destructive music. The pastor advised him to remove it. The father took responsibility, removed the music, and crucially, filled the void by changing his own schedule to become his son's best friend. A year later, the son was grateful.
- **The Pastor's Own Family:**
 - When his six-year-old daughter saw a *Playboy* magazine, he decided his yard would become the neighborhood playground so he could know his children's influences. His daughters' strong reactions to inappropriate TV content, though initially stinging his pride, showed him they were right about guarding their hearts.
 - When his nine-year-old daughter wanted a radio that only played rock music, he instead intentionally exposed his children to Christian music from artists with integrity. She soon was singing songs to Jesus.
 - All his children had cassette players to listen to worship music as they went to sleep, internalizing truths about their identity in God. Worldly music never became a point of conflict in his home.

Key Points

1. God promises prosperity and success when we meditate on and obey His Word (**Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1**).
2. Meditation is not vague contemplation; it is practical, repeated engagement with Scripture during spare-thought times.
3. Avoid ungodly counsel; seek input from those walking in obedience and integrity (**Psalm 1:1; Proverbs 25:19**).
4. Clear your conscience through honest confession and restitution; God often meets obedience with unexpected favor.
5. Thought-life battles occur primarily in spare-thought windows; plan for them with spiritual habits.
6. Problems of mind and emotions require practices that engage both—music is God's provision for Spirit-filled redirection (**Ephesians 5:18–19**).
7. Temptation is not sin; immediate, Spirit-led response through worship turns the heart toward God.

How to Live This Out in Today's Culture

- In an American context filled with constant stimuli and secular counsel:

- Structure your day with brief, intentional Scripture meditation moments at wake-up, meals/home time, commute, and bedtime.
- Curate a personal playlist of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs for transitions and idle moments.
- When tempted, start singing or reciting a hymn or Scripture-based chorus to engage heart and mind simultaneously.
- Seek counsel from mature believers who have repented and made restitution, not from peers who normalize sin.
- Practice restitution where appropriate: return what was taken, repay, and ask forgiveness; trust God with the outcomes.
- Discern between temptation and sin; respond swiftly with worship and the Word rather than ruminating.
- As the guardian of your home, have the courage to decide what is allowed, turning off the TV or proactively filling your home with God-honoring music.

Suggested Practices

- **Daily rhythm:**

- **Morning:** Read a short Scripture and pray briefly; memorize a verse to carry through the day.
- **Commute/transition:** Listen to worship music; sing along to reorient your heart.
- **Meals/home:** Share a verse, pray, and practice gratitude to frame thoughts.
- **Night:** Meditate on a psalm; close with a simple prayer of trust (cf. **Psalm 4**).

- **Hymn toolkit:**

- Identify three favorite hymns or worship songs to deploy during temptation or discouragement.
- Consider songs grounded in Scripture to reinforce God's truth.

Final Encouragement

- God invites you into a life shaped by His Word and Spirit where prosperity is defined by faithful obedience and transformed thinking.
- As you learn to think God's thoughts and sing God's songs in the spare-thought times, you will find practical power over temptation and renewed joy in walking with God. The process of spiritual growth is an active one, transforming us from the inside out and leading to real, lasting change.

