Series Road Map: Possible title: In My Head

Series Overview: Students are experiencing all time high anxiety and depression, but few people are talking about issues in a healthy way. We’re talking about how to get out of our heads and into God’s plan for a better life. We’re talking about 1-Being transformed, 2-Anxiety, 3-Depression/Suicide, 4-Soul Health, and 5-Spiritual Warfare.

Week Overview: We are made to fight a spiritual battle, and God has given us the tools to fight with His armor. We cannot fight a spiritual battle with physical tools…so how do we fight? Dress for the occasion [battle] and remember that God is fight for you!

Outline:

Grab the Room (Intro): Story about a time that something was incomplete

Tension (what’s the struggle): We are in a spiritual battle

Text: Ephesians 6:12-18

THP: Suit UP

Supporting Points:

-Know who you’re fighting

-Dress for the Occasion.

-Remember who’s on your team

Application (call to action):

-Charge to keep clothing yourself with the armor of God and remember that God is with you

Message Series: Mental Health

Message Title: Holy Spirit Power

Key: [Media] Scripture Slides

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Intro

Well tonight, we are closing out this series called In My Head. And I hope you’ve been having some awesome conversations about this. And even though this series is ending, I don’t want you to stop talking about this. There is too much to at stake to not break the stigma of mental health, and your generation can be the first generation to have open and helpful conversations about how you’re REALLY doing…

So, as we jump into tonight’s message, let’s pray.

Have you ever gotten to the end of a puzzle, and realized you were missing that ONE piece? It’s infuriating, and it’s incomplete. Or, have you ever gotten to the end of a good movie only to have the dvd skip because you found out it was scratched…and you’re now just left wanting to know what happened?

Story about a time where something was incomplete: [maybe it’s a story of a time a video game system/light wasn’t working but you found out it was unplugged, when you went on a trip and forgot the most important thing, a time when your phone wasn’t working but I wasn’t charged, shoes for a basketball game, etc…]

Sometimes, you can have all the tools or pieces in place, but without the last tool, it’s incomplete. This message is going to feel like that missing piece. Over the past month, we’ve given you so many tools to fight against mental health, and let me tell you, they are all important.

But tonight, I want to share one last piece that I wish someone would have shared with me when I was a teenager.

TENSION

Often, when we talk about mental health, we leave out one important aspect. We can talk about changing thought patterns, finding hope of a better future, and inner healing…but rarely do we talk about the Holy Spirit’s power in all of this.

As much as we are in a physical world, and chemical imbalances are a real thing, there is a spiritual battle going on right now. There is a spiritual battle happening in your mind and in your heart. While physical abnormalities, trauma, external stressors, painful experiences, and other things can negatively impact our mental health, we have an enemy, the devil who is really good at getting in our heads.

But it feels so much like our own thoughts…it doesn’t feel like I’m listening to a dark scary voice; it feels like my own thoughts that are fighting against me. I’m not saying that every negative thought you have or any disorder or mental unhealth you experience is from the devil, but if we don’t acknowledge this, we’ll constantly be unprepared to fight the battle that can only be fought in the spiritual.

What hurts me is that so many people, both adults and teenagers believe lies and are stuck in anxiety, depression, addiction, and so many more things. They are not believing these things or are stuck because they did something wrong… they are actually doing everything they can to fight these battles, but without supernatural spiritual help, they are fighting a battle that cannot be won on their own power. They are missing that one final piece that makes it all come together.

So many of you are fighting mental battles that cannot be won on your own power. Sure, we can get better and we can improve by counseling, medicine, and community, but without the help of the Holy Spirit, we are defenseless against the enemy’s schemes.

So what do we do to fight these battles in our head?

Truth

First we need to know who we are fighting. We can’t enter into a battle if you don’t know who you are fighting… We live in a physical world, but there is a very real spiritual enemy who is trying to attack us and there is nothing more that he would love to do than to take us down…

Ephesians 6:12 says “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

There is something deeper going on. And so many times, this struggle against flesh and blood feels like our own internal struggle in our mind and heart, and we feel like we’re battling our own thoughts or we’re thinking about all of the negative things people say about us.

Over the last week…or even today, what have your thoughts focused on? Have you been harsh on yourself? Do you think it’s possible that those thoughts are not from God? And maybe it’s possible that the enemy has tried to feed you lies for you to focus on to distract you from the truth.

[Personal story about when you believed lies about yourself, your character, mental health, doubts of calling, etc that have felt like your own thoughts but you later discovered the enemy was polluting your thoughts or feeding you lies]

So how do we fight this? Suit up. Each day, we suit up and dress for the occasion depending on what we are going to do that day. When you go out to eat and hang out with your friends, you dress for the occasion. When you have that first day of school and you know you are going to take a million pictures with all of your best friends to post later, you dress for the occasion. When you are going to the beach or going to the lake, you dress for the occasion. You prepare yourself for what you’re about to experience.

What does the way you’re suiting up spiritually say about the occasion you’re about to experience? Maybe a quick prayer on the way to school is helpful for that moment, but will you still be ready coming 11am? Does the way you get ready spiritually each day say that you are getting ready for battle or does it forget that a battle even exists? If you knew that you had a spiritual enemy who was trying to feed your mind with lies, how are you fighting it with Truth?

What if you spent as much time suiting up spiritually each morning as you do getting physically ready…I know you would be way more prepared to fight the challenges each day brings.

Students, I think it is no surprise that mental health issues, anxiety, depression, and addiction are at an all time high for my generation and for your generation. The enemy doesn’t have to try all that hard because we are so vulnerable to attack! We consume so much negative media, we judge ourselves on appearance and talent, and we wonder why we have the struggles we do!

While we may be getting physically ready for different occasions, we are spiritually naked and vulnerable to the attacks of Satan. This isn’t meant to scare you because the good news is that we have a God who is more powerful than the schemes of Satan…but this is a wake up call to pay attention to what you’re putting in your head and how you’re choosing to fight!

Paul, one of the followers of Jesus was well aware of the spiritual battle that happens in the world. He casted out demons, healed people with the power of God, and changed futures because of the Truth of God. He killed Christians before he became one…if anyone knew of the battle that Christians face, it was Paul…so here’s what he wrote to help us fight this battle and how to dress for the occasion.

Ephesians 6:13-18 Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.

God has given you this armor to fight this spiritual battle in your brain. No amount of self-help, feel good thinking, or self-care can make up for the tools that God has given us to help us have a spiritually and mentally healthy life….Paul says to Suit up with the armor of God!

With the belt of Truth, Paul says focus on what is true!

With the breastplate of righteousness, he says focus on right living and remember the righteousness that you have been given because of the forgiveness of your sins!

Remember that your feet can be steady and your stance can be unshakeable with the peace that comes from the good news of God! The world doesn’t have this type of peace. In a crisis, the world panics. In a fight, the world can’t see perspective. When things are growing dim, the world struggles with peace…but not with God. Because the good news of Jesus is that one day, all things will pass, and there is a better future for you! You don’t have to be anxious in your thought life because no matter what you’re going through, the good news of Jesus is that He will redeem ALL things, and He has a good future for you!

Paul says to remember your faith…don’t give up belief in God that he is with you. Because when the enemy throws flaming arrows at you, God is with you, and he can keep them from piercing your heart! We forget that God is with us, and too many of us have arrows that have pierced us and introduced lies to us because we didn’t dress for the occasion.

Paul says take the helmet of salvation, which protects your head and your mind…and put it on! No soldier walks into battle without armor for his head, and without salvation, without a helmet, we are so vulnerable to Satan… Listen, most of the armor of God is defensive, and that’s important. If we suit up, we can deflect the attacks of the enemy before they pierce us, and we can go on unhurt…If we let God do the protecting, we are surrounded by His armor.

But God doesn’t just want us to play defense…he wants us to take back some ground. The sword of the Spirit, the Bible, is your weapon to take back ground and go on the offense in this battle. Some of you need to take back some ground in your life because you’re stuck playing defense in this mental battle that you’re just trying to not lose any more ground…you’re trying to hold onto the hope that you have so that life doesn’t get trickier. You’re trying to manage your anxiety so that it doesn’t get worse. You’ve given up on your futures and your dreams because you aren’t good enough or talented enough…

It’s time for you to take back some ground, and go on the offense against the lies of the enemy. It’s time for you to get out of playing defense, and it’s time for you to take back what has been stolen from you. It’s time for you to step up to take spiritual ground that God has given you!

And let me tell you, you’re not in this battle alone…you’re not 1 v 1, you against Satan in this spiritual battle…you need to Remember who’s on your team.

The last piece of Paul’s instructions were to “pray in the spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.” Pray in the Spirit. That means that God’s Holy Spirit is with you on all occasions. He is with you through valleys and mountaintop experiences. He’s with you when you feel anxious and when you have no cares in the world. He’s with you when you feel like you need to give in to addictions….and He wants to help.

Let me finish with one last story… One you may not be as familiar with. Let me set the scene. In II Kings 6, Israel, God’s people are at war with Syria. Syria is doing everything they can to defeat the Israelites, but God is speaking to Elisha, his prophet. God tells Elisha of all of the attacks the enemy is going to take on Israel, so Israel is always one step ahead of Syria. Wouldn’t’ that be awesome to always be one step ahead of your enemies?

Well, The King of Syria didn’t like this… The King of Syria tries to take out the one man who is messing up their attacks, so he learns that Elisha is traveling, and the king sends an army to capture Elisha. A whole army for one man. Not quite a fair fight if you ask me…

One morning, Elisha and his servant wake up, and the entire city is surrounded with soldiers…it looked like the game was over. Elisha was surrounded, and there is no way that he can win this battle on his own. The servant who was with him is freaking out, and says “what should we do?!” Put yourself in this story. Imagine you are with Elisha, and you went to bed on a mission, and you woke up with an entire army surrounding the city you were in…What would you think? What would you feel? Without even imagining us in the story, some of us feel surrounded by bad things even right now.

Listen, Elisha calmly replies to the servant “Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them. Then Elisha prayed and said, “O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see.” So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.”

There were angels all around Elisha the whole time…to the servant, it looked like all was lost and he was surrounded…but the whole time, Elisha was surrounded by God. The WHOLE time, God there with Elisha and he was closer than his enemies. After this, God struck the enemies with blindness, and Elisha escaped unhurt. Imagine what that what that would have felt like to be there in person!

What does this mean for us today? See, It may feel like you are surrounded by the enemy, and it may feel like there is no way out…It may feel like you’re always surrounded by struggle, you’ll always be surrounded by a unhealthy mind, you’ll always be surrounded by negativity… but the Truth is, you are surrounded by God. No matter what you’re going through. Right here, in this room, God is surrounding you. At school, God is surrounding you. At home, God is surrounding you…God is always with you, and His power is available to you if you would just recognize that He has never left you, even in your darkest times…

So, my prayer is that your EYES would be OPENED to the Truth that God is with you, and that you can fight this spiritual battle. You are not alone. God is with you. We are with you…and when it seems like hope is lost, remind yourself that you can fight this spiritual battle because God has given you the strength to fight, and he is surrounding you.

Inspiration

The biggest thing is to remember that God is on your team, and He is fighting your battles for you and with you.

Because when Jesus died on the cross, He died so that you could have life and have it to the full. Jesus didn’t want you to wait until you die on earth for you to experience a piece of heaven. Jesus died so that you could have eternal life and experience connection with God at all times.

You may not kick the medication. You may need counseling, community, and accountability the rest of your of your life. But without God, you are not giving yourself the best fighting chance to receive victory. Victory may not look like your anxiety going away completely, but it may look like you growing stronger and stronger each day, more prepared to fight against anxiety because you suit up, and you keep suiting up.

The depression may not go away entirely, but the light breaking through your darkness gets brighter every day. The addiction you experience may not go away entirely but the hold it has on you loosens with each day you fight and as you suit up, you remember that God is with you…you are not fighting these battles alone. It may feel like you are entirely surrounded by whatever darkness is in your world…but you are entirely surrounded by the light of God guiding you into your next and helping you fight your battles.

So where do we go from here? Suit up…each morning, clothe yourself with the armor of God and remember that God is with you!

So, what’s your next move? Will you continue to travel alone? Or, will you let the power of God surround you and fight for you… Will you step into the fight? Because this is not a battle won on the sidelines…

If you are declaring that you will fight against mental health, and you want to recognize that God is with you, would you sing this out! Let’s sing this out, and let’s take back the ground that the enemy has taken!

[Response song…surrounded]