Series Road Map: 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 all get stuck sometimes, but what happens when this isn’t just a one time thing, but we have unhealthy and old patterns. How do we get unstuck? We form a new path. We need to take every thought captive, and to form a new path, we need to know where to go. Read God’s Word and pray to know how to form a new path for your life.

**Outline:**

**Grab the Room (Intro):** Personal story about hiking

**Tension (what’s the struggle):** We can get stuck in old/unhealthy patterns

**Text:** Romans 12:2; 2 Cor 10:3-5

**THP:** Form a new path

**Supporting Points:** Take every thought captive; to turn the pages of your life, turn the pages of God’s Word

**Application (call to action):**

-Receive the mind of Christ by reading what was in Christ’s mind.

-Pray

Message Series: Mental Health

Message Title: Be Transformed

Key: [Media] Scripture Slides

**Intro**

What’s up! We are starting a new series called In My Head and it’s all about mental health. We realize that students are experiencing anxiety at an all time high, depression feels like an epidemic, and our internal lives can feel out of control.

We want to start conversations about how we’re really doing. If there is something I’ve learned from being a pastor for this long, it’s the fact that everybody is going through something. No matter what the highlight reels on Instagram say, people’s lives are not perfect.

And one trend that is common among students today is in regards to mental health. So, if you lean in, these conversations will change your life? Are you ready?

But instead of talking about mental health, I want to start by talking about dirt...[pause for a second] How many of you like going outside, going on a hike, or just being out in nature? [Talk about a hiking story whether you like it or hate it…if you have a picture, this would be a fun opportunity to share a picture of you hiking a mountain, out in nature, etc.]

Something my family always did for vacation growing up is we would always go to North Carolina or Gatlinburg, TN so that we could get out in nature and walk around.

We would go to these massive waterfalls, but it took awhile for us to get there. We would pull up in our car, and then we’d see a wooden sign that said “x” amount of miles until the waterfall. So, where did we start? The dirt path…We didn’t even think about it. It was a road well-traveled, so we went on it. We knew it led somewhere.

Then of course, one of my brothers runs ahead, maybe mom trails behind, someone else wanders a little…but not too far. But we all stuck to the path.

How did these paths get here? Well, the path didn’t get there because one person walked to the waterfall that way. It didn’t happen because 20 people walked there…nope, there was a pattern that grew and grew over time because that road was traveled 1000’s of times until it was clearly marked.

The path started off with just patches of dirt, but eventually, the pattern formed and other people followed that pattern in the ground marking the trail…until eventually, this just seemed like the natural pathway to follow.

TENSION

You may not know this, but there are pathways in your brain. And instead of dirt paths, these are pathways that are hardwired into your brain that have been formed because of thought patterns you have made over and over again.

Maybe one pathway that has been formed is that any time you get angry, you have to act out, raise your voice, get tense, and maybe even throw something. Maybe one pathway you have is when someone insults you, you get defensive and you throw back cutting remarks without even thinking about it…it’s just instinct. Maybe when you feel overwhelmed, anxiety is the pathway that formed in your brain and you shut down or even have physical symptoms that result.

Maybe you feel stuck where you are, and you wonder why you keep acting the same way and you can’t seem to break the cycles of your actions. You feel stuck in your depression, anxiety, anger, or whatever else and you don’t know how to get out.

I know it can feel this way because I too, can revert back to my unhealthy patterns of thinking if I let myself. I can sometimes let anxiety take over me, and I know what it’s like to feel overwhelmed by the weight of your circumstances…I don’t want anxiety. I don’t even want to feel overwhelmed. But, the reality is, the path most traveled in my brain is anxiety, and if I’m not careful, that is the path I will continually travel.

But the thing about a path is it’s just one way of getting to a destination. Just because it’s the path most traveled doesn’t mean it’s the only way to get there. **If you’re tired of putting yourself in the same old situations, stop traveling the same old paths. If you’re tired of the patterns of your life, stop the pattern of your life…and form a new pattern.**

TRUTH

The thing about a path is that at any time, you can step off the path well-traveled, and you can make a new path! Now, at first, you might just trample some grass. Soon, you’ll see some patches of dirt. And eventually, you will see a new dirt path, and the old path will start to fade away…this can happen with your brain, as well!

Scripture even talk about this in Romans 12:2. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and open it up. Romans was written by a guy named Paul. Before he came to follow Jesus, he was called Saul. He was a Pharisee, and he actually hated people who followed Christ. He hated them so much so that he actually put many people to death…this was an intense dude, and you did not want to come across him.

But one day, he saw Jesus, and it changed his life. He went from killing Christians to helping people become Christians. He went from hating others instinctually to loving others. He went from tearing down God’s Words to actually writing God’s Words...let’s read what he writes in God’s word. He had some very different paths that formed in his life because he followed Jesus.

Paul writes: “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

He says, “HEY! There is a new way to do things! Just because the pattern of the world says one thing, it doesn’t mean you have to follow it…and you can actually form new paths! THP: Form a new path. When you feel old patterns rise up, remember to form a new path by the renewing of your mind. When you are following the old and worn patterns of the world, FORM A NEW PATH!

The pattern of the world is hate, envy, pride, anxiety, depression, and so on…everything good comes from God. Just because the world is showing you a road well-traveled, it doesn’t mean it’s a road worth traveling.

But you have to “renew your mind.” What does it mean to renew your mind? It means that you have to challenge your old way of thinking, and you have to literally think and process things differently in light of God’s truth! You don’t revert back to your old way of thinking, but you have to renew your mind, form new paths, so that you can know the good things that God has for you! And he shares that God has some good plans for your life! Do you believe that? If not, it’s true…He loves you, and wants the best life ever for you.

Paul knew that your thoughts control you, but you can also control your thoughts. And if you control your thoughts, you’re not just instinctually following the same old paths; there is a new path… a better path! Form a new path!

Paul goes on to say in 2 Cor 10:3-5 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. Meaning, the world’s way of doing things is not Christ’s way of doing things.

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. There are strongholds in our lives…whether it’s fear, anger, and depression…and these can only be changed with the weapons God has given us.

 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. Every thought that comes into our brain has to be taken captive, examined, and made obedient to Christ…meaning, if it doesn’t bring you life and it doesn’t come from God, it needs to go!

But how good are we at taken every thought captive? It’s researched that we think 60-80,000 thoughts per day. That’s 2500-3300 thoughts per hour…how many of those thoughts do you think you genuinely examine each day?

It’s no wonder why these negative pathways in our brains are formed…because we have 60-80,000 thoughts grounding them into our brains even deeper. There are so many negative thoughts floating around in your brain…what are you doing to take those thoughts captive and flush them from your thoughts?

Imagine it like this: say I were to take this muddy water. *Ask a student, “would you drink this?” Why not?... right, because it’s gross.*

But say I were to filter the water. I would take the dirt captive and then only what is pure would be left…let’s check it out.

**[brita/filter on stage to filter water… and pour muddy water into brita]** The muddy water gets poured into the filter. And when it comes out, it’s pure. Every impurity has been taken captive by the filter, and you’re only left with what is pure. Do you actively filter your thoughts? Do they look a lot more like this?... (point to muddy water) or this (point to clear water).

[maybe even pour a glass of water at the end and drink for effect]

Guys, Jesus did not die on the cross for our sins so that we could live the same way the world does. He made a way for us to make us new!

We have access to the almighty God to filter our thoughts, to form new paths in our brains, and we can have the mind of Christ!

To have Christ’s mind, to see how He thinks, responds, holds onto peace, and loves others we have to get in Christ’s mind.

Application

So there are two things you can do to start receiving the mind of Christ…to see how Jesus thought and the patterns He lived.

**1: Receive the mind of Christ by reading what was in Christ’s mind.**

We don’t have to guess how Jesus thought or what path we should take. We don’t have to read His mind by a guessing game but we can read what was in Christ’s mind because His Spirit inspired this book, the Bible so that we could know His thoughts!

God has already clearly marked out the road we can follow. We don’t need to be confused by any directions. For 1000’s of years, God has already made known to us the road less-traveled in His Holy Word, the Bible. And His Word has held the test of time to transform us and guide us in times when we don’t know how to fix ourselves and fix how we think…because let me tell you: no amount of self-help can transform you from the inside out. It might help for a little, but it won’t solve the underlying issues.

Personal story of how scripture has transformed you.

When I was in college, I was just starting to feel connected to God because I started to see Him not just as Savior of my life, but He was beginning to be the Lord of my life. He wasn’t just there to keep me from my sins, but He was there to be Lord of my life. In order for God to be Lord of your life, He needs to have final say over every part of your life, including your thoughts and feelings.

And I remember I started feeling really alone because my friends kind of abandoned me in a really tough season. I found myself in a different city, in a tough time, and my friends weren’t there for me how they used to be… [talk about how your thoughts/feelings were]. My mind told me “you’re alone. You don’t have anyone with you. People are always going to ditch you…”. And these thoughts entered my mind because these were thoughts most traveled in my heart and mind.

But the phrase that got me through that season was this in Deuteronomy 31:6 where God says “Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you.

Because of God’s Truth that He would never leave me nor forsake me, it allowed for me to make a new path in my heart and mind that allowed me to be transformed and experience peace and control my thoughts.

So many of you feel stuck where you are, and you’re wondering how you can get out. You might have had a really bad chapter of your life, and it feels like it’s on repeat, and you don’t know how to get to the next part. You don’t have to be stuck in your old paths just because you’re familiar with them. You don’t have to buy the lie that you’ll always end up with the bad boyfriend, the family that lets you down, the one left out, the one who screws up, the one who is too dirty to be loved by God, the one too far gone…don’t buy those lies anymore! God made a way for you to have a new life!

**Listen, to turn the pages of your life, you need to turn the pages of God’s Word.**  You don’t just magically get better on your own, but you can get through whatever you’re experiencing, and you can be made new if you let God transform you. And when you read the scriptures, let the scripture read you…meaning, let it speak to you, tell you where you’re off, and let it inspire you to be made new!

To be transformed and have the mind of Christ, you need to read what was inspired by His spirit.

And I think the other best way to experience Christ’s mind and control your thoughts is

2: Pray

When Jesus left, He didn’t want us to be confused and without direction. In fact, He wanted us to be on fire for Him and He never wanted us to be stuck in our own ways. So, while Jesus modeled the way to travel, the Holy Spirit gives us the power to live this out!

Jesus actually said “it is better that I leave so that the Helper may be with you.” You’re going to need some help in being made new.

See, Jesus’s Gospel, His good news was not a do better, try harder, work your way into better behavior and right thinking. He constantly told His followers to “draw near to me, and I will draw near to you.” When we pray, our spirits draw near to God, and we connect with God’s Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is a guide and a helper. Maybe you feel lost sometimes or you don’t even know what way is the right way to go to make new pathways. But, the Holy Spirit helps guide you on how to travel.

So many times, we think prayer is to change God’s mind to get on our agenda…like if we just pray enough, God will do what I want Him to do. Which, I know many times, because I have asked God in prayer, He has given me things that I asked for.

But, prayer doesn’t always change God, but it can always change you. When we’re praying not to just give God a list of to-dos, but we’re praying so that we connect with Him, He inspires us in a way that only prayer can, and it moves us in way that only God’s Spirit can do.

Inspiration

So, wherever you are tonight, God wants to help. You don’t have to make yourself better on your own or get yourself unstuck…but God has given us the tools to become like Him, to have Christ’s mind, and to be transformed.

God doesn’t just want to make you better, He wants to make you new. Jesus didn’t just die on the cross so that you could get into heaven. Jesus died on the cross so that you can experience a piece of Heaven on earth that results from becoming like Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

You can get unstuck from the patterns that you have right now! It may take some time for them to make you new because a pattern isn’t a pattern if you did something one time…but if you choose each day, to form a new path in your mind and in your Spirit, you will receive the mind of Christ…which gives you peace and self-control. It makes you more loving and more patient. It makes you love yourself more and it keeps you from shame and guilt.

Life doesn’t have to always look the same for you…but it doesn’t magically happen on its own. So God made a way for us to break the pattern of our lives, to break the patterns of sin in our family, to break the patterns of unhealth in or friend groups, to break the pattern of thoughts that are keeping us from enjoying life! God made a way, and it is available to you…

Many of you need the pages turned in your lives. Will you turn the pages of God’s word?

Many of you need to be transformed in your mind. Will you take your thoughts captive, filter them through scripture, and receive Christ’s mind through prayer?

What would your life look like if you were truly made new?

Your life will follow a pattern…what type of pattern will your life follow? One of the world? Or one that is new, a better path?

**Form a new path**, and receive the better life that God offers.

Let’s pray.