



**STUDY GUIDE**

**LIFE  
WITHOUT THE  
N MMB**

**DR. GREG GIFFORD**

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# HOW TO USE THIS CURRICULUM

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## Study Guide

The study guide provides a place for students to expand their knowledge and understanding as they are challenged by the content of this curriculum. This can become a valuable tool as they find themselves needing personal encouragement or equipping to help others. The guide presents three questions for each episode and space to record their answers and take additional notes during discussion.

The student's copy without answers is found at the end of this guide starting at page 26. The lessons with answers should act as a teacher's or facilitator's guide. Print out several copies of the second section for all students and the teacher can just print one copy for himself of the entire guide.

## Videos and Questions

Each lesson has several questions the students should answer after watching the videos. Then engage the students in discussion using the teacher's guide with answers.

## Conclusion

Use whatever time remains to answer questions, make announcements, and to close in prayer.

# DISCUSSION TIPS

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The strength of this curriculum depends on the engagement of the students with the ideas presented. Use the following discussion tips to help you lead fruitful discussion:

- Discussion is effective when a majority of students are involved. Manage students as necessary to draw out those who are quieter and keep the more vocal from dominating the conversation.
- Create an environment where students feel safe to share their thoughts and experiences without judgment or ridicule.
- While you need to be aware of your time, do not cut short a discussion that seems especially engaging to the students. Invest your time where the students respond best.
- Have a plan but be flexible enough to allow the students to guide the discussion. In this way you will learn what aspects they are most interested in.
- Use the students' answers to the questions, especially if they changed their answers, to launch discussion.
- Use the main ideas provided as prompts for discussion. Ask whether students agree with certain statements in the video. Encourage thoughtful explanations.
- Ask questions that require thoughtful answers.
- Avoid leading questions; the goal of discussion is not to receive correct answers, but to lead students to think about their answers

## Sample Schedule

Below is a sample schedule based on one and a half hour of class time. Exact timing will vary with segment lengths and success of discussion.

6:00–6:10	Open, introduction, and prayer
6:10–6:35	Watch video lesson, encourage students to think about and answer the questions while watching
6:35–6:55	Have students complete answering all questions on their own
6:55–7:20	Discuss each question as a class
7:20–7:30	Wrap-up, answer questions, make announcements, close in prayer

# EPISODE 1

## THE EPIDEMIC

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We are facing an epidemic. Mental illnesses are everywhere. An astounding number of both children and adults have been diagnosed with mental illnesses and many are prescribed psychotropic medication. The symptoms-based therapeutic leads to arbitrary and unverifiable illnesses. This secular therapeutic is not helping. At best, it patches symptoms, but it offers no hope for healing. The Bible offers better answers than the secular therapeutic. Who or what will be our authority: the secular therapeutic or God's Word?

**1. How have you or someone you know been affected by a mental illness diagnosis and/or psychotropics?**

Discuss answers, particularly focusing on how widespread the issues are. Examples may also demonstrate the inability of the secular therapeutic to solve the root problems.

**2. How does a symptoms-based diagnostic lead to arbitrary and unverifiable illnesses?**

There is no empirical verification whether someone is truly ill. The diagnosis is based on self-described symptoms, not medical tests or evaluations. The diagnosis is unverifiable.

**3. How do the changes to the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) demonstrate the arbitrary nature of the secular therapeutic?**

The changes have stigmatized normal behavior and destigmatized abnormal behavior. The fact that the DSM has changed to include or exclude these “illnesses” and “disorders” without any medical testing to validate the decision shows that the entire system is arbitrary and unverifiable.

**4. Have you ever thought of the Bible as an alternative to secular therapy? Why or why not?**

Discuss answers. Many people think of secular psychiatry as a professional field of medicine and thus it is separate from theological matters. However, as this episode has shown, the secular therapeutic does not require a medical examination or empirical analysis of any kind. Furthermore, we ought to see the Bible as relevant to every area of our lives rather than compartmentalizing church and spiritual matters from the rest of life.

**5. Read Colossians 2:2–3.**

**a. Where are wisdom and knowledge found?**

In Christ

**b. How does this verse help you to think about the Bible as relevant to the mental health epidemic?**

If all treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Christ, then we cannot separate any endeavor from the pursuit of Christ. The wisdom to deal with mental issues (not to mention the hope of healing) ultimately relies on the wisdom and knowledge hidden in Christ. God has given us the Bible for this express purpose—to know Christ.

# EPISODE 2

## HOW DID WE GET HERE?

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The mental health emphasis can be traced back to the work of Clifford Whittingham Beers. His own personal struggle with depression landed him in an asylum against his will. Once he was released, he began fighting to protect the rights of those institutionalized, and he began championing preventative care. He began to speak about the mind in medicalized terms and called for the treatment of nervous and mental diseases through neurology and psychiatry. From this point onward, the distinction between the mind and the brain was blurred. Where people previously went to their pastors for soul care, now there was a burgeoning field of professional “soul healers,” some of whom don’t even believe there is an immaterial soul.

**1. How does knowing the history of the secular therapeutic help you to think about its current state?**

Discuss answers. Even a brief understanding of the history reveals the blurring and blending of the mind and the brain. It also exposes the materialistic and naturalistic worldviews underlying the secular therapeutic. While currently the truth is shrouded in medical terminology and pseudo-science, the history helps to cut through the modern illusion.

**2. In what ways was Beers' influence most impactful regarding the rise of the mental health industry?**

Perhaps the greatest impact came from using medical terminology to describe the mind. This medicalization of the immaterial mind provided the basis for the entire industry of medical treatment for mental issues. His partnering of neurology and psychiatry furthered this medicalization of the mind.

**3. What is so dangerous about blending the mind and the brain? How have you seen this?**

The brain is a physical organ that can be seen, touched, tested, and treated medically. The mind is an immaterial part of a person. It cannot be seen, touched, or medically evaluated. Blending the two confuses the issue and leads to physiological treatments for immaterial problems. This may mask symptoms, but it fails to solve the root problems.

**4. How might clarifying terms (i.e., distinguishing between mind and brain) help Christians to navigate these issues?**

Clarifying definitions is always helpful. In this case, it helps to differentiate between physiological and immaterial. Physical issues may warrant a physical medical evaluation. But physiological medicine cannot solve immaterial issues. The Bible is the best source for dealing with immaterial soul issues.

**5. Read Hebrews 13:17**

**a. Whose role is it to care for souls?**

Pastors/elders/spiritual leaders

**b. What command is given to the flock?**

To obey and submit to spiritual leaders

**c. Why must elders take seriously the role of shepherding the souls of their flocks?**

They will give an account for how they cared for the souls of their flocks.

**d. Why should a pastor not simply listen and refer someone to a professional psychiatrist?**

The pastor is responsible for the care of that individual's soul. To refer by default is to neglect the responsibility given to him by God. Additionally, referring the individual to a psychiatrist does not absolve the pastor of the responsibility; in fact, they will have to give account for that referral. The pastor must take seriously his task to watch over the souls of his flock.



# EPISODE 3

## MIND VS. BRAIN

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In a world that champions mental health and an industry that is quick to diagnose mental illnesses, it is imperative that we understand what the mind is. In casual conversation, terms like “mind,” “brain,” “heart,” and “soul” are often tossed around imprecisely and somewhat interchangeably. In the prevalence of psychiatric treatment, there has been ambiguity between the material brain and the immaterial mind. The secular therapeutic has misunderstood the very nature of the mind. When we look to the Bible to define terms, it is clear that the mind is the immaterial part of the inner man that is the seat of cognition.

**1. How have you heard the terms mind and brain used interchangeably or in a way that contributes to the confusion?**

Discuss answers. Some examples could include idioms such as: to pick one's brain, to brainwash, wrap my brain around something, my brain is fried, etc. In these, the term "brain" is used when it is really the mind in view. Alternatively, the mind is often used with an implication of a material understanding, especially within the mental health conversation.

**2. Why might it be important to take care in how these terms are used in everyday life?**

Precision of language can be important in many ways. While it is tempting to shrug off our casual usage, it is imprecise language, in part, that has brought us to this point. If we want to make a biblical case against the culture of mental illness, we must also reject the cultural messaging in favor of biblical definitions.

**3. How did this discussion help you to think about how the Bible talks about the mind?**

Discuss answers. This survey demonstrates that throughout the Bible, the mind is the immaterial part of the inner man where cognition resides. It is connected to thoughts and volition. In the Old Testament, the heart and mind were seen as the same thing, but in the New Testament there is more distinction between the two. Regardless, the heart (used in the sense of affections and desires) and mind are immaterial and part of the inner man.

**4. How does the biblical definition of mind help you to think about the secular therapeutic?**

If the mind is immaterial, then no medication is going to change your mind. In this way, the secular therapeutic cannot solve the problem. The mind doesn't need health, it needs transformation.

**5. Read 2 Corinthians 4:16–18**

**a. What is true of the outer self?**

It is wasting away.

**b. For Christians, what is true of the inner self?**

It is being renewed.

**c. What does the Christian look to?**

Not the things that are seen, but the things that are unseen

**d. What contrast did Paul draw between the seen and unseen?**

Things that are seen are transient (passing; temporary). Things that are unseen are eternal.

**e. How does this contrast confirm the role of the pastors (as opposed to secular therapeutic) in caring for souls?**

The mind is eternal. It cannot be sick or ill in the sense that the outer self (i.e., our physical bodies, including the brain) can be. The body is wasting away—we expect the body to get sick. But the mind is eternal, and as such it needs spiritual renewal, not physical healing. The renewing of one's mind comes through the Word of God and the work of His Spirit. It is a spiritual matter and thus is entrusted to a spiritual leader (i.e., the pastors/elders).

# EPISODE 4

## WHO'S REALLY IN CHARGE— THE BODY OR THE MIND?

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While there is a distinction between the brain and the mind, there is also a relationship between them. The brain is the physical organ while the mind is the immaterial self. The brain is the filter through which your mind expresses itself. The physical brain causes physical life, development, and physiological cravings. The physical brain can become sick or damaged and thereby affect the expression of the mind. But the brain cannot cause the mind to respond in a certain way.

The mind is the driver of your action. The brain does not cause your thoughts. The outer man is driven by the inner man—the mind is the driver.

**1. Why is the field of mental health not actually helping?**

The entire field is based on a faulty understanding of people. Because it doesn't maintain an accurate distinction between the mind and the brain, it cannot diagnose correctly and thus it cannot treat the root issue. It can only treat physical symptoms without offering hope for the immaterial self.

**2. How does understanding the difference between the inner and outer self (as well as the mind and the brain) impact your perspective on secular psychiatry?**

Discuss answers. Many have bought into the secular narrative or never really thought about it. As we understand the mind more biblically, it should become more clear that secular psychiatry cannot help the root issues, and thus reliance on the field is harmful.

**3. How has this lecture helped you to understand the relationship between the mind and the brain?**

This can be a very confusing topic because it is clear that there is a distinction and a relationship, but it is never clearly delineated in Scripture and because the mind is immaterial, we cannot simply look and see the connection. However, it is helpful to think of the brain as the physical organ and the mind as the immaterial seat of cognition. The mind is driving, but the brain is the filter through which the mind is expressed.

**4. Why is it important to recognize what the body can and cannot do?**

It is important to understand what the body can do because it affects us and those around us. We can acknowledge the body's role in life, growth, physiological cravings, and sickness. We can use this understanding to care for our bodies well. It is also important to understand what our bodies can't do so we do not excuse sinful actions or attitudes because of our bodies. Our bodies can present challenges and can affect our minds, but our bodies cannot cause the inner person to act.

**5. Read Galatians 5:24–25**

**a. Who is the subject of the sentence?**

Christians—those who belong to Christ

**b. What have they done?**

Crucified the flesh with its passions and desires

**c. How do they live?**

By the Spirit, in step with the Spirit

**d. What does the "let us" imply?**

"Let us" is an imperative. Paul is instructing and encouraging Christians to keep in step with the Spirit. This implies an ongoing choice to walk obediently.

**e. If Paul is issuing this imperative, what does that imply about our ability to carry it out?**

Paul expects that it is possible for a Christian to choose to walk in the Spirit as opposed to the flesh.

**f. How does this suggest that the mind is the driver of our inner self?**

This passage suggests that our flesh does not control us. Rather, we can choose to walk in obedience to the Spirit. This suggests that though the brain/body may influence us, it does not make us do anything. The inner self, the mind which is being renewed, is the driver of our actions.

# EPISODE 5

## THERAPY CANNOT SAVE YOU

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The mind is immaterial, the eternal part of who you are where cognition resides. The mind is distinct from the physical organ of the brain, and yet there is a relationship between the two. Another important distinction is clearly seen in understanding the role of salvation in affecting the mind. The unbeliever's mind is blinded, futile, darkened, defiled, veiled. He cannot understand the things of God. But when a person turns to the Lord, God rehabilitates the mind. He removes the veil and the new believer can see the glory of Christ. The believer's mind is described as being renewed, being transformed. Therapy cannot save you; an unsaved therapist cannot help with issues of the mind when theirs is blinded, futile, and defiled. Salvation is key to understanding the mind.

**1. How is salvation's effect on the mind crucial in our understanding of mental health?**

It is critical to consider the effect of salvation because a pre-conversion mind cannot function correctly. It is at salvation that God renews the mind and gives it the capacity to function correctly. Salvation is the key component to mental health, and the secular movement leaves it out altogether.

**2. How has this discussion changed your perspective on who is best equipped to deal with mental issues?**

Many people are tempted to think of secular psychiatrists as experts in the field. However, a biblical understanding of the mind reveals that unbelieving psychiatrists are actually ill-equipped to handle mental issues because their own minds are not functioning properly. They are themselves blinded and defiled. It is the pastors and spiritual leaders, then, who have the mind of Christ and can help apply biblical wisdom to mental issues.

**3. What role does biblical counseling play in the mental health of a non-believer?**

Ultimately, counseling a non-believer is evangelism. The ultimate answer to their issues is Christ. There may be room for imparting wisdom and encouraging moral choices, but the root issue is a defiled mind, which cannot be healed apart from salvation.

**4. How does Dr. Gifford's statement, "Christians are the only people on earth with a mind that functions like it should," impact the way you think about the topic?**

This is a bold statement, and it is likely a new thought for many. When we look at all the Bible has to say on the matter, though, it is clear that the unbelieving mind is limited, broken. It is only through the renewing of our minds at salvation that Christians' minds are given the capacity to function rightly. That ought to be both an encouragement and a challenge to us.

**5. Read Ephesians 4:17–24**

**a. How are Christians not to walk?**

As the Gentiles do

**b. What results from futile, darkened minds and hardened hearts?**

They give themselves to every kind of impurity. Immorality is inevitable for an unregenerate heart and mind.

**c. What should characterize the life of a Christian?**

The believer is to put off the old self and be renewed in the spirit of the mind, putting on the new self. The Christian is characterized by the likeness of God in righteousness and holiness.

**d. What is the difference between the "Gentiles" and the "you" in this passage?**

The difference is salvation.

**e. Consider the command "you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do . . ." given in verse 17. How might this command apply to the idea of seeking "professional" help from the mental health "experts"?**

The Christian is commanded to no longer walk as Gentiles. Our minds have been renewed, so we should act with renewed minds. If we willingly seek out unbelievers to help us with issues of the mind, we are willingly subjecting ourselves to the way Gentiles walk, in the futility of their minds. Why would we, who have been renewed, seek help from those still in bondage?

# EPISODE 6

## WHAT'S WRONG WITH "MENTAL HEALTH"?

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Language matters. Precise terminology brings clarity while imprecise wording only confuses the issue. The Christian should jettison the term "mental health" because it does not describe a biblical understanding of the mind. Biblically speaking, the mind needs to be transformed. Using the medicalized term distracts from the transformative work of God in your life. To function as it should, the mind needs renewal. For the Christian, the term "mental health" is not helpful. In fact, it is biblically inaccurate. Rather than accepting the secular therapeutic's terminology, the Christian should use biblical language to clearly point to the biblical remedy.

**1. How does the Christian's goal or desire for the mind differ from the APA's standard of mental health?**

The APA defines mental health as a state of mind characterized by emotional well-being, good behavioral adjustment, relative freedom from anxiety and disabling symptoms, and a capacity to establish constructive relationships and cope with the ordinary demands and stresses of life. The biblical desire for the mind is that it be transformed by God. The Christian seeks mind renewal. The secular therapeutic wants a mind that feels good, but the Christian wants a mind that has been changed by God.

**2. Do you agree with Dr. Gifford's conclusion that we should jettison the term "mental illness"? Why or why not?**

Discuss answers. This is a bold position and there may be some reluctant to take such a stance. However, it is important to start with a biblical perspective. Trying to justify the use of the term may demonstrate a secular (or syncretistic) perspective. It may help to discuss our goal as Christians. Our goal is not that a person would have a mind that feels good and copes well (i.e., the secular definition of mental health); our goal is that people would be transformed and experience renewal of the mind.

**3. What does it mean that the Christian's mind is being renewed?**

To be renewed means to be restored back to mint condition. The Christian's mind is being conformed back into the perfect image of God. The renewed mind is reflecting Christ more clearly.

**4. Biblically speaking, who does the renewal? How does this idea contradict with the secular approach to "mental health"?**

Biblically speaking, it is God who restores the mind. It is through the Spirit of God that a Christian's mind is being renewed. We are not the ones doing the restoring, God is. In the secular therapeutic, you are the actor. There are many self-care methodologies prescribed to help improve one's "mental health," but they assume that the individual has the capacity to bring "healing" to their mind. The secular therapeutic elevates man while the biblical view elevates God.

**5. Read Romans 16:17–19**

**a. Against what is Paul warning?**

Those who teach contrary to biblical doctrine

**b. How do they deceive the naïve?**

By smooth talk and flattery

**c. What does Paul want for the Romans beyond their obedience?**

Paul commends their obedience, but his desire is that they would be wise as to what is good and be entirely innocent of evil. In other words, he desires that they would not dabble, compromise, nor in any way be engaged (even peripherally) in what is evil.

**d. How might this passage challenge the Christian who is sympathetic to the secular therapeutic or its terminology?**

These false teachers that Paul warns against are using slippery language that lead astray the naïve. As Christians, we should go out of our way to avoid aiding false teachers or their message. We should strive to avoid every appearance of evil and to separate ourselves from evil as far as possible. Why, then, would we willingly choose to use an approach that is contrary to the Bible—the secular therapeutic is built on an antibiblical worldview—or to adopt their slippery language?



# EPISODE 7

## DO PILLS HURT OR HELP?

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We are facing a “mental health” epidemic. One in ten people are on psychotropics. But if the mind is not the brain and the real solution is the renewing of the mind, how should Christians think about psychotropics? First, it is important to understand that medication cannot treat the mind. Psychotropics may treat the brain—though how they work is still largely unknown—but it can never treat the immaterial mind. The Christian must use wisdom, along with wise godly counsel, in navigating the question of whether psychotropics are warranted or helpful. Ultimately, a Christian can (not necessarily should) use psychotropics if they are obtained legally and used with God-honoring motivation.

**1. How have you seen psychotropics help and/or hurt?**

Discuss answers. There are stories of people who believe their psychotropics have helped, but there are just as many where the medication doesn't help or causes more problems.

**2. How does a biblical understanding of the mind and brain inform your perspective on psychotropics?**

When we understand the biblical relationship between the mind and the brain, we recognize that psychotropics can never treat the mind, but only the brain. Thus, while there may be a time that psychotropics may offer a benefit, it is never a solution on its own. It can only mask symptoms, not bring the necessary transformation of the mind.

**3. How should we address this topic with other Christians?**

We should enter these conversations with compassion. Many have been impacted, and emotions and experiences can affect how others react to the topic. We should not make a law where there isn't one, but we should seek to clarify the language and the brain-mind relationship, pointing toward the true solution, who is Christ.

**4. Are there times when psychotropics are necessary?**

Discuss answers. We should be careful about calling them necessary. Ultimately, the issues that psychotropics claim to address are immaterial issues of the mind. These are problems that need to be addressed through transformation and mind renewal, not meds. However, psychotropics can be a helpful temporary tool when used with God-honoring motivations along with a correct understanding of what it treats. There may be scenarios where psychotropics are acceptable and, perhaps, helpful.

**5. Read 2 Corinthians 4:16–18**

**a. What is the tone of this passage?**

This passage has a hopeful tone, as evidenced by the opening phrase: "So we do not lose heart."

**b. What reality is contrasted here?**

Our outer self is wasting away but our inner self is being renewed.

**c. What does it imply that Paul refers to "this light momentary affliction"?**

There is the implication here that not all is perfect. The Christian will have struggles and afflictions in this life. There will be troubles with our mortal bodies and with the broken world.

**d. How does Paul think of these afflictions?**

They are light and temporary. They are not overwhelming or all-encompassing. Furthermore, they lead to eternal glory.

**e. Where are Christians to be focused?**

On the things unseen (i.e., the kingdom of God; spiritual things).

**f. When it comes to the question of psychotropics, how does this perspective of affliction and eternal perspective inform the Christian's response?**

Psychotropics are transient, the renewing of our minds has eternal results. Affliction is momentary, but our future glory is eternal. If we truly practiced this mindset, we would look to Christ to renew our minds in light of eternity rather than psychotropics to mask our temporary afflictions.

# EPISODE 8

## THE MYTH OF MENTAL ILLNESS

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In emphasizing the distinction between the mind and the brain, there are certain questions that inevitably arise. Is this a brain issue or a mind issue? One such question is the question of insanity. Is insanity a condition of the mind or of the brain? The Bible actually has a category for the insane. There are examples throughout the Bible where someone was mad (or pretended to be) or “out of their mind.” A person is insane when his perceptions do not match reality. Since the mind is the driver of the brain, the mind is where thoughts come from, insanity starts in the mind. It's time to end the myth of mental illness. Not to say that what is being called a mental illness doesn't exist, but rather that they are not truly illnesses of the mind.

**1. How would you define or describe insanity? Have you encountered examples of people you might call insane or out of their mind?**

Discuss answers. Though many may not have a specific definition, most people recognize what it means to be insane. Ultimately, insanity is when perceptions don't align with reality.

**2. How is the mental health category unhelpful?**

It provides treatment, but no cure. It provides a label, but no hope. The mental health category has caused people to think wrongly about their mind and what afflicts it. An immaterial mind cannot contract a pathological illness.

**3. What is the difference between emotional pushback and exegetical pushback?**

Emotional pushback is argument or disagreement based on experiences or emotions. Exegetical pushback comes from reasoning based in the text of the Bible. Anecdotal evidence is not sufficient to dislodge teaching drawn from the Bible. However, an argument drawn from the biblical text warrants a discussion and, perhaps, a reconsidering of the initial conclusion.

**4. Why is it important to use biblical terminology?**

Using biblical terminology helps us to have biblical thinking on the issue. Biblical thinking leads us to biblical solutions. Biblical terminology brings biblical clarity, for our own understanding and for purposes of communication.

**5. Read Philippians 4:4–9**

**a. What commands are given?**

Rejoice, bring requests to God, think on things that are worthy of praise, practice the things you've learned

**b. What prohibition is named?**

Do not be anxious

**c. How does one get peace, according to this passage?**

By entrusting cares to the Lord in prayer and by practicing what has been learned (i.e., obedience to Christ)

**d. What is the solution for anxiety?**

Take the concerns to God in prayer. There is also the focus on gratitude.

**e. What describes the thoughts Christians should focus on?**

True, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, praiseworthy

**f. How does this passage confirm Dr. Gifford's teaching that the immaterial mind is the seat of thoughts and needs to be treated biblically?**

Many so-called mental illnesses can be tied to a lack of peace. This passage teaches that peace comes from God—and will guard our hearts and minds—when we are trading our anxieties for joy and thanksgiving, when we are choosing to dwell on virtuous thoughts and to act in obedience to God. These are spiritual (i.e., immaterial) treatments for the troubled mind.

# **EPISODE 9**

## **IS ADDICTION REALLY A DISEASE?**

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Can your brain cause you to choose something? If the mind is distinct from the brain and the mind is the driver, the seat of cognition and thought, then it is in the mind that choices are made. The brain is not responsible for making a choice, the mind is. So, drug or alcohol abuse is not ultimately a physiological problem. Though there may be physiological results, that original choice to participate in drugs or alcohol came from the mind. This biblical understanding is important because the solution for these problems is not physiological rehabilitation, but a renewal of the mind.

**1. What is the difference between “substance abuse” and “addicted to a substance”?**

Using the term “substance abuse” implies that the person is morally culpable for their use of the substance. On the other hand, someone who is “addicted” to a substance is absolved of responsibility. That person is simply a victim of a disease or disorder that causes them to partake in the substances. The distinction is very important because the first implication is consistent with a biblical perspective and the second is not.

**2. What is a biblical view of addiction? What might be a better (i.e., more biblical) way to talk about it?**

Biblically speaking, there can be addictions in the sense of physiological cravings. However, addiction cannot make a person do something. The choice to indulge comes from the mind. Since the modern culture uses “addiction” to imply an uncontrollable impulse, even a disease, it would be more precise from a biblical perspective to speak of “physiological cravings” than “addictions.”

**3. Why did Dr. Gifford make a point to consider the first moment someone decides to drink, do drugs, etc.? How was that helpful?**

The secularists confuse the issue by pointing to the physiological effects of substance abuse as if it were a cause. Whether intentional or not, this is misleading. It is clarifying to focus on the first moment because there is not yet any physiological damage caused by the substances. In that moment, it is easy to see the distinction between the brain and the mind. The thought to imbibe started in the mind. There may be physiological damage done by prolonged substance abuse, but the mind is still the driver. The difference is that there is now a physiological hurdle in addition to the spiritual one in order to overcome the temptation.

**4. How does the biblical perspective offer hope to someone struggling with “addiction,” especially to the Christian?**

The biblical perspective gives hope because the Christian is not enslaved to sin. Even if his or her body has become dependent on drugs or alcohol, God always provides a way of escape. Secular recovery centers cannot provide the ultimate solution; the solution is repentance at the level of the mind, change brought about by God’s grace through His Spirit.

**5. Read Romans 6:12–14 (Note: Dr. Gifford covered verses 1–6 in the lecture, but if appropriate, you may wish to read 1–14 for context and review.)**

**a. What kind of sentence is verse 12, and what does that imply?**

It is an imperative sentence, which means it is a call to action. This implies that the Christian can and should accomplish this instruction.

**b. What does Paul instruct the Christian to not do?**

Christians should not let sin reign in their mortal bodies and should not present their members as instruments for unrighteousness. In other words, Christians are to refuse to allow their fleshly desires to control them. This is closely tied to the earlier statement that the old self was crucified with Christ so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

**c. What are Christians called to do instead?**

Act like you’ve been brought from death to life; present your members as instruments for righteousness. In other words, Christians are to live in the Spirit rather than the flesh. Christians should seek to do what is righteous.

**d. What is the relationship between the Christian and sin?**

Sin has no dominion over the Christian. The Christian is no longer enslaved to sin.

**e. How does this help us to think about the distinction between disease, disorder, and disobedience?**

When we sin, we have chosen to do so. We are not enslaved to sin; we are not enslaved to our flesh or its passions. Substance abuse is not a disease or disorder; it is disobedience. So-called "addiction" is a physiological result of that disobedience. The solution is repentance and transformation that comes only through the renewal of the mind.

# EPISODE 10

## HEALTHY BRAINS, RENEWED MINDS

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Just because “mental health” is not a helpful category doesn’t mean we should neglect the care of both mind and brain. God has entrusted us with a body, a brain, and we are called to be good stewards of what God has entrusted us. Sleep, healthy eating, exercise, and engaging in regular rest are essential for cultivating a healthy brain (the material organ). When it comes to the mind, a “healthy” mind is one that is being renewed.

Healthy habits for the mind include Bible engagement, disciplining thoughts, church attendance, prayer, repentance, and giving.



**1. How does the idea of stewardship help the goal of a healthy body to be more manageable and less intimidating?**

The world's messaging regarding an ideal or healthy body can be intimidating (or even unattainable) for the average person. Seeking the world's idea of "healthy" can be stressful and exhausting. It is freeing to understand the biblical perspective of stewardship. Our bodies are a gift from God and we should therefore take care of them as God's creation. We should practice healthy habits and seek to steward well what has been entrusted to us. But this does not demand the same outward appearance as the culture of vanity promotes.

**2. What are some unhealthy habits you have developed? How can you work to change those?**

Discuss answers. Answers may include things like eating junk food, being too sedentary, etc. But it may also include being too devoted to working out, eating too scarcely, taking too many or unnatural supplements, etc. Whether we don't care for our bodies well or we turn our pursuit of "health" into an idol, both are examples of poor stewardship. Bad habits are best overcome by intentionally replacing them with the desired habit, but it is a change of mind that will result in a lasting change of attitude toward your body.

**3. How is stewarding both your mind and brain well an act of worship?**

God has given us a mind and a body. Both are His creations. When we think biblically, the way we treat our physical bodies becomes an act of worship to our Creator. Similarly, when we are cultivating healthy habits of the mind, we are worshipping God through our devotion and obedience. As we pursue mind renewal, we are seeking to bring honor and glory to God.

**4. Why is church attendance so important to a mind that is being renewed?**

It is easy to see how Bible engagement is absolutely necessary for mind renewal because God works through His Word. But God created people as relational beings. He has given us the local body of believers to encourage, admonish, and instruct us. We need accountability. We need the wisdom that comes from an abundance of counselors (Proverbs 11:14). We need to submit to the authority of local elders, to find a community to walk in discipleship with, to find a place to give and serve faithfully. Hebrews warns us not to neglect the assembling together (Hebrews 10:24–25), and the "one anothers" in Scripture can only be done alongside other believers.

**5. Read Acts 2:42–47**

**a. What is the context surrounding this passage?**

This passage is a summary statement about the group of believers who were the beginning of the Christian church. At Pentecost, the Spirit empowered the apostles, just as Jesus had promised. Peter preached a sermon and about 3,000 souls were saved. It is this group of thousands, as well as those being added to their number, that this passage is describing.

**b. How would you describe the energy or mood of this group?**

They seem to be joyous, generous, and passionate about their newfound faith. This was by no means an apathetic or culture-Christian congregation.

**c. How do you see Dr. Gifford's healthy habits of the mind exemplified in this group?**

They were devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching (engagement with the Bible). They were attending temple together, etc. (church attendance). They were devoted to prayers (prayer). They were selling their possessions to meet the needs of others (giving). It may be harder to find repentance and guarding thoughts. Repentance is found in the preceding context (Acts 2:37–38). Though they are not explicitly described as disciplining their thoughts, they are clearly doing so by their devotion to God's Word and obedience to it.

**d. Many Christians experience a time of concentrated fervor when they are first converted, but then the excitement dies away somewhat. If you have experienced this fluctuation of passion, is there a common factor in the times of “spiritual high” as opposed to the “spiritual slumps”?**

Discuss answers. Generally, times of fervent devotion are accompanied by saturation in the Word, a robust prayer life, and generosity and service toward others. In other words, the more intentionally we cultivate the healthy habits of the mind, the more ardent our devotion to Christ.

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# STUDENTS GUIDE

## Episode 1—The Epidemic

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We are facing an epidemic. Mental illnesses are everywhere. An astounding number of both children and adults have been diagnosed with mental illnesses and many are prescribed psychotropic medication. The symptoms-based therapeutic leads to arbitrary and unverifiable illnesses. This secular therapeutic is not helping. At best, it patches symptoms, but it offers no hope for healing. The Bible offers better answers than the secular therapeutic. Who or what will be our authority: the secular therapeutic or God's Word?

- 1. How have you or someone you know been affected by a mental illness diagnosis and/or psychotropics?**
- 2. How does a symptoms-based diagnostic lead to arbitrary and unverifiable illnesses?**
- 3. How do the changes to the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) demonstrate the arbitrary nature of the secular therapeutic?**
- 4. Have you ever thought of the Bible as an alternative to secular therapy? Why or why not?**
- 5. Read Colossians 2:2–3.**
  - a. Where are wisdom and knowledge found?**
  - b. How does this verse help you to think about the Bible as relevant to the mental health epidemic?**

## Episode 2—How Did We Get Here?

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The mental health emphasis can be traced back to the work of Clifford Whittingham Beers. His own personal struggle with depression landed him in an asylum against his will. Once he was released, he began fighting to protect the rights of those institutionalized, and he began championing preventative care. He began to speak about the mind in medicalized terms and called for the treatment of nervous and mental diseases through neurology and psychiatry. From this point onward, the distinction between the mind and the brain was blurred. Where people previously went to their pastors for soul care, now there was a burgeoning field of professional “soul healers,” some of whom don’t even believe there is an immaterial soul.

- 1. How does knowing the history of the secular therapeutic help you to think about its current state?**
- 2. In what ways was Beers’ influence most impactful regarding the rise of the mental health industry?**
- 3. What is so dangerous about blending the mind and the brain? How have you seen this?**
- 4. How might clarifying terms (i.e., distinguishing between mind and brain) help Christians to navigate these issues?**
- 5. Read Hebrews 13:17**
  - a. Whose role is it to care for souls?**
  - b. What command is given to the flock?**
  - c. Why must elders take seriously the role of shepherding the souls of their flocks?**
  - d. Why should a pastor not simply listen and refer someone to a professional psychiatrist?**

## Episode 3—Mind vs. Brain

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In a world that champions mental health and an industry that is quick to diagnose mental illnesses, it is imperative that we understand what the mind is. In casual conversation, terms like “mind,” “brain,” “heart,” and “soul” are often tossed around imprecisely and somewhat interchangeably. In the prevalence of psychiatric treatment, there has been ambiguity between the material brain and the immaterial mind. The secular therapeutic has misunderstood the very nature of the mind. When we look to the Bible to define terms, it is clear that the mind is the immaterial part of the inner man that is the seat of cognition.

- 1. How have you heard the terms mind and brain used interchangeably or in a way that contributes to the confusion?**
- 2. Why might it be important to take care in how these terms are used in everyday life?**
- 3. How did this discussion help you to think about how the Bible talks about the mind?**
- 4. How does the biblical definition of mind help you to think about the secular therapeutic?**
- 5. Read 2 Corinthians 4:16–18**
  - a. What is true of the outer self?**
  - b. For Christians, what is true of the inner self?**
  - c. What does the Christian look to?**
  - d. What contrast did Paul draw between the seen and unseen?**
  - e. How does this contrast confirm the role of the pastors (as opposed to secular therapeutic) in caring for souls?**

## Episode 4—Who's Really in Charge—The Body or The Mind? —

While there is a distinction between the brain and the mind, there is also a relationship between them. The brain is the physical organ while the mind is the immaterial self. The brain is the filter through which your mind expresses itself. The physical brain causes physical life, development, and physiological cravings. The physical brain can become sick or damaged and thereby affect the expression of the mind. But the brain cannot cause the mind to respond in a certain way. The mind is the driver of your action. The brain does not cause your thoughts. The outer man is driven by the inner man—the mind is the driver.

- 1. Why is the field of mental health not actually helping?**
- 2. How does understanding the difference between the inner and outer self (as well as the mind and the brain) impact your perspective on secular psychiatry?**
- 3. How has this lecture helped you to understand the relationship between the mind and the brain?**
- 4. Why is it important to recognize what the body can and cannot do?**
- 5. Read Galatians 5:24–25**
  - a. Who is the subject of the sentence?**
  - b. What have they done?**
  - c. How do they live?**
  - d. What does the “let us” imply?**
  - e. If Paul is issuing this imperative, what does that imply about our ability to carry it out?**
  - f. How does this suggest that the mind is the driver of our inner self?**

## Episode 5—Therapy Cannot Save You

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The mind is immaterial, the eternal part of who you are where cognition resides. The mind is distinct from the physical organ of the brain, and yet there is a relationship between the two. Another important distinction is clearly seen in understanding the role of salvation in affecting the mind. The unbeliever's mind is blinded, futile, darkened, defiled, veiled. He cannot understand the things of God. But when a person turns to the Lord, God rehabilitates the mind. He removes the veil and the new believer can see the glory of Christ. The believer's mind is described as being renewed, being transformed. Therapy cannot save you; an unsaved therapist cannot help with issues of the mind when theirs is blinded, futile, and defiled. Salvation is key to understanding the mind.

- 1. How is salvation's effect on the mind crucial in our understanding of mental health?**
- 2. How has this discussion changed your perspective on who is best equipped to deal with mental issues?**
- 3. What role does biblical counseling play in the mental health of a non-believer?**

**How does Dr. Gifford's statement, "Christians are the only people on earth with a mind that functions like it should," impact the way you think about the topic?**

- 5. Read Ephesians 4:17–24**
  - a. How are Christians not to walk?**
  - b. What results from futile, darkened minds and hardened hearts?**
  - c. What should characterize the life of a Christian?**
  - d. What is the difference between the "Gentiles" and the "you" in this passage?**
  - e. Consider the command "you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do . . . " given in verse 17. How might this command apply to the idea of seeking "professional" help from the mental health "experts"?**



## Episode 6—What’s Wrong with “Mental Health”?

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Language matters. Precise terminology brings clarity while imprecise wording only confuses the issue. The Christian should jettison the term “mental health” because it does not describe a biblical understanding of the mind. Biblically speaking, the mind needs to be transformed. Using the medicalized term distracts from the transformative work of God in your life. To function as it should, the mind needs renewal. For the Christian, the term “mental health” is not helpful. In fact, it is biblically inaccurate. Rather than accepting the secular therapeutic’s terminology, the Christian should use biblical language to clearly point to the biblical remedy.

- 1. How does the Christian’s goal or desire for the mind differ from the APA’s standard of mental health?**
- 2. Do you agree with Dr. Gifford’s conclusion that we should jettison the term “mental illness”? Why or why not?**
- 3. What does it mean that the Christian’s mind is being renewed?**
- 4. Biblically speaking, who does the renewal? How does this idea contradict with the secular approach to “mental health”?**
- 5. Read Romans 16:17–19**
  - a. Against what is Paul warning?**
  - b. How do they deceive the naïve?**
  - c. What does Paul want for the Romans beyond their obedience?**
  - d. How might this passage challenge the Christian who is sympathetic to the secular therapeutic or its terminology?**

## Episode 7—Do Pills Hurt or Help?

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We are facing a “mental health” epidemic. One in ten people are on psychotropics. But if the mind is not the brain and the real solution is the renewing of the mind, how should Christians think about psychotropics? First, it is important to understand that medication cannot treat the mind. Psychotropics may treat the brain—though how they work is still largely unknown—but it can never treat the immaterial mind. The Christian must use wisdom, along with wise godly counsel, in navigating the question of whether psychotropics are warranted or helpful. Ultimately, a Christian can (not necessarily should) use psychotropics if they are obtained legally and used with God-honoring motivation.

- 1. How have you seen psychotropics help and/or hurt?**
- 2. How does a biblical understanding of the mind and brain inform your perspective on psychotropics?**
- 3. How should we address this topic with other Christians?**
- 4. Are there times when psychotropics are necessary?**
- 5. Read 2 Corinthians 4:16–18**
  - a. What is the tone of this passage?**
  - b. What reality is contrasted here?**
  - c. What does it imply that Paul refers to “this light momentary affliction”?**
  - d. How does Paul think of these afflictions?**
  - e. Where are Christians to be focused?**
  - f. When it comes to the question of psychotropics, how does this perspective of affliction and eternal perspective inform the Christian’s response?**

## Episode 8—The Myth of Mental Illness

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In emphasizing the distinction between the mind and the brain, there are certain questions that inevitably arise. Is this a brain issue or a mind issue? One such question is the question of insanity. Is insanity a condition of the mind or of the brain? The Bible actually has a category for the insane. There are examples throughout the Bible where someone was mad (or pretended to be) or “out of their mind.” A person is insane when his perceptions do not match reality. Since the mind is the driver of the brain, the mind is where thoughts come from, insanity starts in the mind. It's time to end the myth of mental illness. Not to say that what is being called a mental illness doesn't exist, but rather that they are not truly illnesses of the mind.

- 1. How would you define or describe insanity? Have you encountered examples of people you might call insane or out of their mind?**
  
- 2. How is the mental health category unhelpful?**
  
- 3. What is the difference between emotional pushback and exegetical pushback?**
  
- 4. Why is it important to use biblical terminology?**
  
- 5. Read Philippians 4:4–9**
  - a. What commands are given?**
  
  - b. What prohibition is named?**
  
  - c. How does one get peace, according to this passage?**
  
  - d. What is the solution for anxiety?**
  
  - e. What describes the thoughts Christians should focus on?**
  
  - f. How does this passage confirm Dr. Gifford's teaching that the immaterial mind is the seat of thoughts and needs to be treated biblically?**

## Episode 9—Is Addiction Really a Disease?

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Can your brain cause you to choose something? If the mind is distinct from the brain and the mind is the driver, the seat of cognition and thought, then it is in the mind that choices are made. The brain is not responsible for making a choice, the mind is. So, drug or alcohol abuse is not ultimately a physiological problem. Though there may be physiological results, that original choice to participate in drugs or alcohol came from the mind. This biblical understanding is important because the solution for these problems is not physiological rehabilitation, but a renewal of the mind.

- 1. What is the difference between “substance abuse” and “addicted to a substance”?**
- 2. What is a biblical view of addiction? What might be a better (i.e., more biblical) way to talk about it?**
- 3. Why did Dr. Gifford make a point to consider the first moment someone decides to drink, do drugs, etc.? How was that helpful?**
- 4. How does the biblical perspective offer hope to someone struggling with “addiction,” especially to the Christian?**
- 5. Read Romans 6:12–14 (Note: Dr. Gifford covered verses 1–6 in the lecture, but if appropriate, you may wish to read 1–14 for context and review.)**
  - a. What kind of sentence is verse 12, and what does that imply?**
  - b. What does Paul instruct the Christian to not do?**
  - c. What are Christians called to do instead?**
  - d. What is the relationship between the Christian and sin?**
  - e. How does this help us to think about the distinction between disease, disorder, and disobedience?**

## Episode 10—Healthy Brains, Renewed Minds

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Just because “mental health” is not a helpful category doesn’t mean we should neglect the care of both mind and brain. God has entrusted us with a body, a brain, and we are called to be good stewards of what God has entrusted us. Sleep, healthy eating, exercise, and engaging in regular rest are essential for cultivating a healthy brain (the material organ). When it comes to the mind, a “healthy” mind is one that is being renewed. Healthy habits for the mind include Bible engagement, disciplining thoughts, church attendance, prayer, repentance, and giving.

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