



<b>Series:</b> Animate	<b>Reference:</b> 2 Corinthians 10:5 & Various Passages	<b>Title:</b> Wrap Up	<b>Date:</b> 11.12.17
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Website Writeup:</b></p> <p>We wrap up this series by looking at our need &amp; ability to take captive every thought to Christ which is not reflective of himself. Instead of just 'letting life happen', we need to think about how we think, and live instead by faith as we submit ourselves to Jesus. A faith which holds onto the substantial reality of Christ &amp; the conviction of his transforming power in us.</p>			

## Color changes in text indicate slide changes

### -SLIDE PERSON: PLEASE RECORD THE SERMON-

(Thanks to Greg Boyd & Woodland Hills Church, we've used many of his words, ideas, and the Animate booklet from their series by the same name - in all the Animate series there are just too many of Greg's words to footnote - thank you Greg! Imitation is flattery brother!)

(Begin with opening statements about Animate series...)

*2 Cor 10:5 - 5 We demolish arguments (mental strongholds) and every pretension (reasoning process) that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

That's the essence of discipleship, breaking away from strongholds or false reasoning, submitting our intellect, emotion & reasoning power to Jesus. Discipleship is in essence following, which is defined as listening & doing; following through on what you hear. Tanner, once said, "I'm a great listener!," as he stood by me with his hand to his ear. I told him what I needed him to do, he promptly laughed, said no way, and walked off. Of course he was joking. We intuitively know that's not listening. Listening is to hear & obey. It's not to listen to all the other voices contradictory to the one voice you've said you'll follow. Rather, we demolish mental strongholds & reasoning processes which are contradictory to Jesus taking all thought captive to Him & in doing so we're transformed.

Our imagination defines so much, if not all of our lives - 24/7 images & feelings flood our minds which motivate us to one course of action or another. Our public world is a reflection of our private world - nothing happens outwardly without first happening inwardly. Ask an architect who has to imagine a house before building it. Ask any couple who is in a cyclical habit of fighting - they imagine the answer they're going to get from their spouse before anything even happens, and begin the conversation on the defensive as they always have - and in some way are partly responsible for the response they get which is the one they expected. Our imaginations take us to some places dark, and some places light. You don't have an affair without first imagining it. You don't plan a backpacking trip without first imagining how it will be out there. Yet, although our imagination forms us so greatly we rarely talk about this inner life; this internal ability to image things which then become reality in our lives.



We tend to be an external people - we don't take time to think about what we think about. We think about accomplishing external things, tasks, projects, getting things done. Busyness is our unspoken mantra; if we're not busy, we're unproductive. There's no greater sin for the Mainliner than to be outwardly unproductive.

Contemplative Spiritual Formation & cataphatic prayer seems unproductive to us, although there are two things we can say: (1) we're all being formed spiritually, it's just a question of how. (2) Spiritual formation, informed by the Scriptures & in partnership with the Holy Spirit, makes for solid production in all other areas of life. But few sit & think about their thinking & look inwardly (not 'naval-gazing' but mature introspection). Socrates said, *'The unexamined life isn't worth living'*. True. To not know why you do what you do, to blindly follow the next fad or popular argument, to not know why you respond to life the way you do is unhealthy & not what God would intend. God calls us to think about our thinking. And if we don't, we're being formed in wrong ways. Some good questions to ask ourselves are: why do I get so angry about this? Why does this make me so sad? Why do I keep doing this when it is so bad for me? You might find there's healing to be found if you bring those questions before Jesus in your Inner Sanctum.

If we're going to practice 2 Corinthians 10:5 we have to recover our ability to identify mental strongholds & to take every thought captive to Christ - to be aware of our thoughts & making them conform to truth. What's true? What's not true? About God, me & others? Where do I find Truth? Firstly, we find truth about God generally in nature - we can look around our world & notice some things true about God. Romans 1:20 says this about General Revelation, *'since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - his eternal power & divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.'* God is a creative beautiful being since and artist always is reflected in his work. Sometimes just getting out in nature can do wonders for the lost soul - it's hard to be a sex addict on a backpacking trip!

General revelation however doesn't give us enough. Which is why we have Special Revelation, truth communicated through supernatural means. Scripture is God's special revelation to us. History is His Story, and in that history he's communicated to us via his Word. We see special revelation in the person of Jesus. And we find it through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in community. There's such a thing as orthodoxy, or right thinking. And in a day when the authority of Scripture is being questioned, this may be the most important thing we have to come to conclusions on.

Lindley wrote a great blog once outlining how she sits with Scripture, reads, let's the Holy Spirit transform thoughts & images in her mind as she journals these things for future reference. There's something essential & profound about the simple act of sitting quietly with the Lord, reading Scripture, allowing God to speak & owning it in our minds. And as we do so we demolish arguments (mental strongholds) and every pretension (reasoning process) that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. Sometimes those thoughts have



to be wrestled to the ground, sometimes they just give up willingly in light of divine Truth.

Sometimes, God will challenge the thoughts or images in your heart which are not yet conformed to his Truth. Sometimes that's a struggle, but I've always found that if I press forward in faith & trust, God brings clarity later. For instance, many of us are allowing society right now to define sexuality for us at an alarming rate without thought of what God says about it. Making grave mistakes without thought of the consequences. Defining what we deem as truth only by ours or even worse, someone else's experiences.

At times God brings things to mind which you don't expect. Some very personal & seemingly insignificant things which are actually very significant, life changing, or signify something much deeper in you than you realize. And if you can get to the root of them, it may be very healing.

For instance; one song which has been indelibly stamped on my memory is Don McLean's, *American Pie*. In thinking about this sermon that song came to mind. It comes up for me at different points in my life & during those times I will listen to it over & over again. They're usually times of change & uneasiness. I started thinking why does this song come up when I go through these times? And such a sad song too? It always leaves me with a sense of loneliness, emptiness & loss. Listen to a few stanzas.

I met a girl who sang the blues  
 And I asked her for some happy news  
 But she just smiled and turned away  
 I went down to the sacred store  
 Where I'd heard the music years before  
 But the man there said the music wouldn't play

And in the streets, the children screamed  
 The lovers cried and the poets dreamed  
 But not a word was spoken  
 The church bells all were broken

And the three men I admire most  
 The Father, Son and the Holy Ghost  
 They caught the last train for the coast  
 The day the music died

The song begins by referencing the death of Buddy Holly in the statement '*the day the music died*' - he died about 8 years before I was born. His death in this song images that innocence & optimism which Don McLean felt had died in America. *American Pie* was released in 1972 & was top of the charts for a long time. When I was a kid it was very big. It was seared into me. And with my move to NJ from Texas, and later on to Philadelphia, that was really how I felt - my innocence & optimism had died with those moves. Being born at the end of the tumultuous 1960's, a 7 year old Texan boy moving



to Italian suburbs of NYC, then to the waspish Main Line - it was lonely & frightening - everything seemed to fail me. I went from Bible-belt to 'Fuhgetaboutit' to 'Like, Oh my God!' in a span of 14 years. It really felt like the Father, Son & the Holy Ghost took the last train for the coast.

A sense of loss, aloneness & upheaval, of things failing me took over & *American Pie* reflected those feelings in me. And with every major turn in life that song comes up in me with a sense of loneliness & foreboding. I was a young kid being affected by things I didn't understand; the 60's throwing off all convention embracing for the first time the possibility of a godless society. My brain latched onto those images & words in that song because it was important - my brain was trying to tell me something. It wasn't until I was 21 that I sensed a renewed solidity & closeness with God once more. It was when I started allowing others to speak truth into my life once more - biblical truth - that I started to feel the ground beneath me come together. Hearing Jesus was prophesied to come, to be the sacrificial lamb who would take away my sin, and open up the way of reconciliation to God, created solidity in me. As I examined my life, I realized God was there all the time, although I had thought he wasn't. The Trinity, Father, Son & Holy Spirit had never gotten on the train. I knew my need; knew that I was not able to save myself, I felt the loneliness of the world; I was ecclesiastical. Jesus allowed me to feel these feelings & identified them in that song with very clear imagery because without the mirror of my loneliness I wouldn't recognize how much God loved me. A part of the song is right, in one sense I am alone. No one can experience what I experience. Yet, I'm never fully alone, God was inside all those experiences with me. That journey of self-examination brought healing to me, and that song does not evoke the emotion it used to any longer.

I was praying with someone recently. As we did, I got an image of God standing with this person during a very difficult time in their childhood. An image came of them being cradled in the arms of God as he guarded them from the arrows flying at them. It was a matter of healing for them that God hadn't left & had protected them - he didn't take the train for the coast - he's been there all the time! Life just needs to be examined, it's scary turning inward, but we'll find as we take all these thoughts & memories captive to Christ, we'll be transformed & find freedom.

Being able to think about my thinking, to go back & look at how I was formed in my thinking, the images & feelings in my brain, and to conform them to Truth is healing. God doesn't leave. God's with me all the time. God's with you.

Even in the littlest of things - if we spend time to think about our thinking we will realize there's healing to be had - God speaks through these images, times, feelings & impressions. Jesus connects with us through very concrete images.

In meeting with Jesus in this imaginative spirituality, one question may arise for you: Is it just me? Is it just my imagination? When I find that place it's nice, but it feels like it's just me - am I encountering the real Jesus? You may ask, is it wrong that if in my



imagination I'm enjoying who I am in Christ & contemplating truth from Scripture - even if it's just me in my imagination?

I think we can look at imaginative spirituality as a continuum. On the left is a self-directed spirituality. On the right is a spirit-directed spirituality - There've been spiritual directors, such as St Ignatius of Loyola, who were very intentional about using their minds to connect with spirituality via right thinking. Others, such as St Teresa of Avila, were having more supernatural visions. Both extremes, and anything in the middle are biblical & of God, so long as they fall within the confines of Scripture, so we don't need to worry about what is of us & what is of God so much. However, I don't think any one of us reside in only one extreme - we tend to move back & forth between the two. Maybe one side is more comfortable for us, but we'll experience them all if we're truly pursuing God (Kim comfortable on the left, but heard God's voice clearly in Indonesia).

And it usually happens together. For instance, in a recent prayer time, we started out talking quite a bit. We read Scripture & proclaimed truth. It was very self-directed. Although over time, as we began to let those Truths take hold, we found ourselves taken along on a very distinct spiritual journey with the Holy Spirit.

The Bible tells us what to think, which tells us we're responsible with what we think, which tells us we have control over what we think. And with the Truth of Scripture we tear down strongholds & bring every thought captive to Christ. But even when being very self-directed, we realize it isn't just us working. **1 Corinthians 12:3** says **no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. So it's never just us working, it's Jesus working in us; Philippians 2:12-13** says, *'...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup>for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.'* **2 Corinthians 3:18** says, <sup>18</sup> **And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. We behold, but the transformation comes from the Lord. A follower of Jesus needs to trust the power of the Holy Spirit in them.**

**Philippians 4:7-8** says our hearts & minds will be guarded in Christ & our responsibility is to think on whatever is true, noble, right, lovely, admirable & praiseworthy. **Romans 12:2** says **we will be transformed by the renewing of our minds - which means we submit ourselves intentionally to Jesus who then transforms us.**

So if this self-directed imaginative spirituality is the only way you connect with Jesus, this is biblically true & transforming. But remember this, being transformed by the renewing of our mind, literally means over & over again - it's cyclical. Less of a straight line upward, and more of a coiling towards the character of Christ - some things made new, it gets old, its made new again. Remember the imagination is always going, always **setting direction of your life.** So the question is, will we control that process or will it control us? The way you make old things new will determine your future - we review the past & make it new in order to make it a preview of the future, which sets the direction



of your life. But most of us don't think about this, we just let life happen. We think all the garbage we indulge in won't affect us, but it does.

For instance, in a difficult marriage you may review the past & only make that a preview for the future (explain - what's likely to happen when they meet again?). The same is true in a peaceful marriage (explain). 'As you think, so you are', isn't pop psychology, it's a very biblical principle. That whole process of reviewing & previewing is one aspect of the biblical understanding of faith - according to your faith be it unto you. *Here's faith, Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance (hypostasis - substantial reality) of things hoped for, the evidence (elegkos - conviction or assurance) of things not seen.* Therefore, we could also say it like this, Now faith is the substantial image (hypostasis) of things we expect, the conviction (elegkos) of things not seen.

So we could look at our marriage examples like this...we preview & we have a hypostasis or a substantial image, which we make as a preview for our future, or an elegkos, conviction or assurance of how the future will be (two slides of marriages). You've heard people talk like this, "It always happens!" Or, "She always does that!" My father would always respond to my saying such things with, "You don't know that!" He was right. I needed to make new thoughts so that I could have a better preview for the future. But often we don't, we practice more of the garbage in garbage out principle. We need to image what is good, or to think on what is good, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, etc. bringing our substantial reality in line with God's kingdom & it will help to define our future. It's an issue of faith.

What faith do you have? What's the hypostasis (the substantial image) in your head? What's the elegkos (conviction/assurance) in your heart? What's your faith concerning life, purpose, Jesus, marriage, self-image, others? Everything? Are my thoughts consistent with the Lordship of Jesus Christ? Whatever isn't consistent with kingdom truth needs to be replaced. Whatever isn't consistent with who Jesus is, ourselves & others in light of truth needs to go. We're new creations in Christ, the old has gone, the new has come. We're heirs according to the promise, friends with & children of God. Sealed with the Holy Spirit, loved & bound in grace. No longer slaves to sin, but slaves to righteousness. Holy people, a kingdom of priests. You're the temple of the Holy Spirit. Etcetera, etcetera, etcetera - but if we just agree with that informationally, but don't have faith - true hypostasis & true elegkos about it, transformation will elude us. Is that how you review & preview yourself? To take every thought captive to Jesus Christ is to take everything we think, image & feel to him allowing him to renew our minds by his truth. Every thought about God. Every thought about ourselves. Every thought about this world. Every thought about others. What if we memorized & meditated on one verse a week for the next year from that list I gave last week - how would life change?

So if all you experience in your walk is this self-directed imaginative spirituality then great! God empowers us to take charge of our thoughts as his Spirit empowers & transforms us in the process - it isn't just you, but the Spirit of God working in you.



That's the one extreme, the second is the spiritually-directed imaginative spirituality. It's when we get things coming to us which we don't expect; images, visions, nudges, words, thoughts, direction which seem to come straight from the Holy Spirit in that Inner Sanctum (elaborate). The main word used for Vision in the Old Testament is the same as dream - so God comes to people in dreams or visions in our imagination. It's God directed, but you could shut it off if you wanted to - you're still a participant. And as I said earlier, this usually starts as self-directed imaginative spirituality & God seems to just move in & take over. It starts with me choosing to enter. It's self-directed, but after a while the Spirit of God takes over & it's Spirit directed; things happen that I know couldn't happen if I created them.

Both extremes & everything in the middle are biblically sound. We can yield to these things as long as they stay true to the special revelation of God in Jesus & his Word. This is why one of the greatest gifts God gives us is the local church which is indispensable in this process - it helps us stay in check. Our faith community calls us back to center if we stray too far - they encourage us when we're hearing from the Lord. And they're encouraged by what we hear & experience. We build each other up by relaying the things which God speaks to us in these times. There's freedom to explore & plumb the depths of Gods Word & Spirit together.

And in that spirit, since so many have had such a good time with this series, I want to forgo the sermon I was going to do next week and allow you guys the opportunity to share your stories. We will have an open mic between songs next week where you are free to share what you've experienced with Jesus in your Inner Sanctum. This may be an interaction with someone where you saw Jesus in them or the situation, a journal entry from your Lectio Divine book, or Animate booklet, just a particularly powerful personal prayer time, or discussion in your community group, or something you read which you feel reflects what we've explored - we just want to hear what Jesus is doing in & through your life. You may also decide to write a poem, or short story, or share a healing moment. So, be prayerfully considering what you may want to share this coming week. And if the mic gives you hives, email it to me & I will have someone read it out loud, and that can even be anonymous if you're more comfortable with that.

Here's a phrase & question you need to learn if you start to practice this stuff. Ready, it's really profound...**here it is...** "I'm not sure if this is God, or me, but...", and "Does that mean anything to you?" Because God's going to give you images or messages, words of encouragement & direction for others - you're going to need to take the risk of telling them that. So you say that phrase, then explain what you have, and then follow it up with the question.



## Community Group Questions

### Ice Breaker:

- Play this [State Farm Commercial](#) to open this conversation up.
- Have you ever made superlative statements only to contradict them later in life? Examples?

### Discussion:

1. What were your initial thoughts concerning the sermon, if any?
2. Restate the two major verses - [email these to your group beforehand, asking them to meditate in their Inner Sanctum on them & take notes as to what God says.](#)
  1. 2 Cor 10:5 - *We demolish arguments (mental strongholds) and every pretension (reasoning process) that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*
    1. What does this look like in your life?
    2. Is it happening? Or are you just 'letting life happen to you'?
    3. Have you ever had victory in this area which you feel comfortable sharing?
  2. Hebrews 11:1 - *Now faith is the substance (substantial reality) of things hoped for, the evidence (conviction or assurance) of things not seen.*
    1. What does it mean for you to live out of faith in relation to these verses?
    2. Do you practice what the sermon spoke of in *Reviewing* your thoughts on the past, *Renewing* them in light of Scriptural Truth, and setting a healthy *Preview* of the future in light of that?
    3. Or do you find yourself more in a cyclical pattern of negativity about God, yourself or others?
3. Jason stated the song, *American Pie*, was formative in identifying a sense of lostness in him when younger which God used to communicate his love & bring healing.
  1. Is there a song, poem, story, movie, piece of art, commercial, or image in your life which particularly moves you? - [email this question to your group before the meeting so they can be prepared to answer; ask them to bring examples if possible.](#)
  2. As you think about why that thing moves you so deeply, what do you think your heart (brain) is trying to tell you?
  3. What spiritual axioms come out of it, and how might the Holy Spirit be speaking to you through it?
  4. What healing might the Lord be trying to bring to you ([consider the promises found in the I AM verse list we've sent out in the past - have a copy on hand as reference](#))
4. In the sermon we said, we're all being formed spiritually either well or not. And that good spiritual formation, informed by the Scriptures in partnership with the Holy Spirit, makes for solidity in life in all areas.
  1. In light of that, when we hear Socrates say, "*The unexamined life is not worth living*" what does that mean as to our spiritual formation in the Inner Sanctum with Jesus?
  2. What habits need to be established?
  3. What do we do with our emotions & questions about God, ourselves & others?
  4. Where and how do we get solidity & direction for life?
5. Where do you naturally fall on the continuum between Self-Directed Spirituality & Spirit-Directed Spirituality? ([you may want to have a copy of the PDF Slides](#))
  1. How is Self-Directed Spirituality still in essence led by God? Can you recall verses from the sermon which teach this? ([you may want to look back through & familiarize yourself with other verses used in the sermon highlighting them before your group](#))
  2. How do we check ourselves when we are on the other extreme of Spirit-Directed Spirituality? (Hint: Scripture, Community & Church Tradition)