

A Sound Mind is a Controlled Mind

Read Time: 4 Minutes, 42 Seconds

I am an excellent storyteller. The kind of imagination that writes up worlds of tales of lives I've never known. The kind that can whip out an off-the-cuff bedtime story on the spot, fit with all the voices. But mostly, I wildly excel at telling stories of the internal kind—the ones that live only in my mind and benefit no one.

I can tell stories of the future that start every sentence with “what if...” and fill in every blank with every possible anxiety-inducing beginning, middle, and end.

I can travel back in time and write stories of what “he must have thought of me when I said _____” or “she must have thought I was _____ when I did _____,” assuming words and thoughts and feelings into others and never once asking permission for them to fact check my fictional accounts of their own narratives. These are the stories that leak shame into my bloodstream and make me question my place in any room, relationship, or even my own skin.

I can imagine the absolute worst happening to someone I love and physically feel the grief in my body, tears swelling, as though it actually happened. But it didn't.

Because that's what happens when we allow our minds to tell stories of things that aren't true; that aren't real. Our bodies flood with chemicals creating real feelings as our neurons go to work creating and locking in memory to a false reality we've authored. For all intents and purposes turning fiction into fact and as a result, coloring every future encounter through this falsified grid of a fantasized experience.

I'm good at it. You're probably good at it too. We're all good at it and we do it all of the time. It is the blessing/curse of the mind at work.

Proverbs 23:7 tells us that, "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." Proverbs 4:23 says, "Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life." The word *heart* here includes the mind, will, and emotions. The Bible tells us to watch over our soul because, as Science confirms, our thoughts shape the course of our lives. The stories we tell in our minds create our reality.

Several years ago, I adopted a mantra that became very necessary to keeping my mind from going wild with this well-honed skill in mental fabrication. I would tell myself regularly, many times a day: "Katie, you are not telling stories right now." Because I was tired of my body keeping score of things that weren't actually happening. It was exhausting and cruel and confusing and unkind. These stories were keeping me untethered from the present, unable to enjoy the moment, restricted from trusting the goodness of what I could actually see and feel and touch and know.

It's what happens when we step outside of the grace for today—the only grace that we have. I have learned that a sound mind is a controlled mind. Actually, the well-known verse in 2 Timothy 1:7 that tells us that "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind"—this term "*sound mind*" actually means "self-control." It is a practice; every day, every moment.

A mind that is stayed on Him and not every fluttering thought is a mind at peace (Isaiah 26:3). A sound mind allows us to dream with hope, to remember with gratitude, and to live with intention. I do not always get to control the story that is this life, but I do hold the pen of my thought-world. I can remind myself 1,000 a day to not let my thoughts wander to where they do not belong. My heart will thank me; my body and

soul will exhale a deep sigh of relief as they fall into the rhythms of peace. My nervous system can calm. My mind can stop the self-torture of assumption. Instead of fearing or regretting or wishing, I can live.

So, for you and I alike: be still you wandering thoughts. Use your great powers for good. Write your days with purpose; tell your stories with truth. We have been given the incredible gift of the mind of Christ and every time we take captive the thoughts that do not agree with our redeemed nature, we can avoid the lies of the tempter and the accuser that welcome a world of anxiety and fear and instead operate in power, love, and a sound mind. One thought at a time, we can stop living a story narrated by any other voice and instead live the one carefully crafted before the foundations of the world by the Author and the Finisher Himself.

The ultimate happily ever after is found in Him. We can trust His thoughts—thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give us a future and a hope (Jeremiah 29:11). Like David, remind your soul to hope in God. He is always leading your life in a good direction!

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