

Truth: Test of Biblical Thinking

Peace of Mind

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Thank you so much for that good special number. Kids, you ready to go? Well, there wasn't even an answer to that, they just took right off out the door. Look how happy they are. Don't they look happy, folks, tonight? They're exactly how we ought to be, because they have no burdens, they have no concerns, no cares. Well, maybe they do, but I don't know what they would be. But anyway, glad you're here tonight.

Yes, Bob, okay, is there a problem? Let's see, how about that? I mashed the button, how did it turn back on? Are we on? Are we not on? Are we on now? Okay, yes, okay, good, good. I'm muted. Now am I back on? Okay, you know what? Can I just share something with you congregation? I hate technology. I hate it. The last practical technology ever developed in this country was the pause and serve feature on a coffee maker. After that, after that, nothing has helped us in any way, shape, or form. You say, "Pastor, you're an old curmudgeon." No, not quite. I'm a curmudgeon, maybe not that old.

Anyway, we've got to discuss this a couple things. Now, tonight we're going to continue our "Peace of Mind" series. I'm very happy about this series because I know it has been helping a number of folks. I want to say welcome to the folks that are watching or listening in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, and a special hi to the Brazard family. The Brazard family, I met them, them and some other folks from their church drove three hours to come to, in one way three hours I think it was, to come to the big building dedication on that Sunday. And they had after the evening service, so a week ago after the evening service, they had a huge potluck, as we would call it in Baptist circles, a pot providence supper and Mrs. Brazard brought an Irish stew that was absolutely delicious. And so I'm just telling you, I think we should do that tonight, but none of you brought any. So we won't.

Let me do this. Let me do this. So over here, I want to do a brief moment of review. Over here is some of the things we've covered. Now, the reason I go over and over this and the reason I'm giving you handouts is because you need to review this. If you're struggling in the area of depression or in the area of anxiety, you need to review these notes on a regular basis; not all at once, but maybe one little section each day in order to build the discipline that comes mentally from doing the things that we've said. So, my way of quick review, in our first lesson, we said that as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. So our thoughts down here produce our emotions and our emotions drive our behavior. As a

man thinketh in his heart, so is he, and because of that, 2 Corinthians 10 verse 5 says that we have to capture our thoughts, bring our thoughts into captivity of Christ, we need to refuse any thought that exalts itself against a knowledge of God. In other words, any thought that you have that doesn't include God in the equation, you need to refuse that kind of thinking. There are certain things, folks, look at me, there are certain things you just don't think about. Well, "Pastor Monte, but I can't help but think about it." You can help it, okay? A passing thought is different from an ongoing rumination, and this is what I'm trying to say. I'm not telling you to forget. Okay, you can't really tell people to forget. I mean, after a certain age they do it automatically, I'm there, but you can't really tell people to forget. I'm not telling you to forget, but I am saying don't ruminate on something over and over and over again.

So there are certain thoughts to refuse, other things to reframe. To reframe. Learn how to take thoughts that, again, don't have God in the equation, change them around, reframe them, and then think thoughts that way. We talked all about that.

Then one of our sessions, we talked about the control and time paradigm, okay? So, if we're gonna capture our thoughts, we're gonna refuse some things, we need to be judging our own thinking, okay? I said this, we need to think about our thinking and so, under the area of control, here's what we said, there are certain things over which you have no control. It was mentioned a moment ago that now that we have time change, it's really dark tonight and people could say, "Oh Pastor Monte, it's really dark tonight and I don't like it when it gets dark," and we could get all wound up about it. Okay, go ahead if you want to. You can't control it, okay? You can't control it unless we vote someone in who puts us on central time. That's the only control we have. You cannot control it, okay? The weather, the weather, you cannot control the weather. To get wound up about things you cannot control, that is silly, and Jesus taught, of course, against that. We also said there are some things over which we have full control. That is where we ought to exercise our time, including our thinking, because we are the only ones who have full control over that.

The third idea under control is this, that there are some things over which you have some control, but not all control. How many know that's most of life? Most of life's thinking, "Okay, okay, I will only concern myself with the things over which I have full control." This one principle's really helped me because I used to worry too much about outcome. I used to worry too much about outcome. I would have a counseling session coming up and I would think about the problem these people were having and I would get stewing about it and I would... what, what is your problem?

("Apparently there are people without handouts. Could you please make an announcement?")

How did you know that, Robbie? Are you clairvoyant? Okay. Okay, if you need a handout, get a handout from Robbie. Robbie is our happy hand-em-out Robbie. There we go.

So back to this control thing. So the thing that helped me, if I have a counseling appointment, here's what I do, I do my best to know what the scripture is, to have an idea of what I'm going to say. Any preparation I can possibly do, I do my best, but I leave the results to God or I leave the results to those... By the way, the same thing is true about preaching. Some preachers get all obsessed, "Oh, I wonder if people are gonna like the message. I wonder if people are gonna respond to the message." Listen, I can't control that but what I can do is I can do my very best in the preparation and leave the outcome to God.

So that's a control paradigm. Something similar is the time paradigm. This helps some people to think about it. So how am I gonna judge my thoughts, okay? I am not going to think about anything negative that happened in the past. I'm refusing that. "Well, Pastor Monte, you know, you gotta think about it." No, why? You can't change it. It happened in the past. It is water under the bridge. If you, "Well, Pastor, you know what I did is just so awful." Okay, you will always be a victim if you constantly ruminate over things of the past. You will always be a victim and there are an awful lot of people who want that but the Bible says no Christian should want that because we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

And so understand that we don't think about negative things of the past. What about the future? This is the one that gets me worried, all concerned. "What's gonna happen tomorrow? What's gonna happen the next day? What's gonna happen 10 years from now? Where will we be?" Can I tell you something? Who knows? And you have no control over it. So don't think about the future. I'm not saying don't put money in your 401k, do that, and stuff like that, but I'm saying don't ruminate over the future, okay? Don't worry about that. What should we do? Spend time in the present. Don't ruin the present moment by thinking about the past that you can't change and the future you can't control because Jesus said sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. If you want to worry about something, worry about the things happening today.

Those are ways we can capture our thoughts, judge them and decide what to do with them. Then we talked about this, love what you have for everybody's all wound up about getting something new. You know the best way to not worry about that and be in competition, someone called me this afternoon, another pastor said, "Don't you think the American style of life is a rat race?" It can be a real rat race, a rat race of acquisition, dissatisfaction, greater dreams, and acquisition. Those things are all true. If you love what you have, you take all of the anxiety out of the materialism of this society, and you can listen to that online for a review.

And then we talked about this. I love this one, the art of indifference. The art of indifference. There are some things, folks, that just don't matter. Jesus gave us a list of those things in Matthew chapter 6, you'll recall. You can look at that, pardon me, online. But there are some things that don't matter. Don't get all wound up about things that don't matter. "That, Pastor Monte, everything matters." Okay, if everything matters, nothing matters, okay? If everything's important, nothing is important. So recognize that. People get, they drill down on things. "Well, you know, Pastor, there have been scientific studies

done about the interior colors of a room and how that affects your mood" You know what? I'm not worried about it. I can rise above whatever color the room has to be, okay, because I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. I will not be crippled by baby blue and if you're crippled by baby blue, you might just be a snowflake, and we wouldn't want that.

Now, in your Bible, Philippians chapter 4 with me, please, in your Bible, Philippians chapter 4. So we found out that peace of mind, and now I'm looking at the outline, peace of mind is not a passive experience, okay? This is so funny. So many Christians are like this, "God, may the double peace descend upon my life, and I will be as calm, cool, and collected as if I had taken Xanax." God is not a heavenly Xanax. So God says part of the responsibility rests upon you. The good news is the instruction is right in scripture.

Philippians chapter 4, look at verse 5, "Let your moderation," remember that means self-control, "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful." Now, that means filled with care or anxious, but remember the idea is to be filled overflowing with care. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." And then what happens? Look at it. And then, "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Now does everybody see there is a matter of self-control. that is controlling your thinking. There is a matter of refusing thoughts, being careful for nothing. There is a matter of in everything by prayer, giving that to God, and we talked at length in one session about how that works with prayer. There is the idea of embracing my situation thankfully with a thankful heart. And once I've done all of those things, then the peace of God comes.

Does everybody see that? Do you see that? So if you're all wound up, it's because you're disobeying the Bible. Let me just say that again. If you're all wound up, it's because you're disobeying the Bible. Well, now, now, now, I understand that there are some people who have a medical condition, a chemical imbalance in the brain. I understand that, okay? Listen carefully to me: I would never, ever, ever tell you to get off your medicine. I will never do that. Do you know why? "Why not, Pastor Monte?" Because I am not a medical doctor. Did you know, can I let you in on a little secret, this is gonna be hard for some of you to believe, I don't know everything. I know I come across that way and it has caused me many, many problems in my life, but I do not, I don't know everything. So I understand that there are some people that do have a chemical imbalance in the brain. I understand that medications do help some people. But also, even if you're on a medication, you're still bound as a Christian to be in obedience to the word of God, okay, and so this is part of that, this is part of it.

Now, having said that, the promise, verse number 7, of the peace of God, I want you to go down to verse number 8, pardon me, verse number 9, verse number 9. Verse number 7 says, "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Look at verse number 9, "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do." Do, do you see that? You gotta do something. Does everybody see that? You have to do something. You cannot just sit there

and hope for peace to descend upon you. You have to do something and look what happens at the end of verse 9, "and the God of peace," isn't that amazing? The God of peace "shall be with you," after you do these things.

What am I supposed to do? Well, look if you will at verse number 8. Okay, pause for a minute before we go there. Verse number 8 is an agenda for my thinking. My thinking can be tested as to whether it is healthy or unhealthy, biblical or unbiblical, as I look at verse number 8. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Now notice something, the assumption of verse number 8 is that you have the ability to focus your concentration to think upon these things and then Paul gives us a list of things. You say, "Pastor, are you going to cover them all tonight?" No, I don't need to, but I am going to cover the very first one. Look at the verse. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true."

Now look this way, everyone look this way. You might jot this down, it might be in the notes, it might not, I can't remember. A rule of thumb about what you're thinking about. Listen carefully: if it has not happened, it is not true. You should write that down. A general rule of thumb, and we're talking about our thought life, our thinking, and what we focus on, Paul said to focus on things that are, listen, verifiably true. "Oh, Pastor Monte, I'm absolutely certain of such and such." How do you know? "Well, because I'm just certain. I have a way of knowing these things." Baloney. When you think about things you assume, and I'm gonna get into it and break it down in detail, or when you think about, when you're constantly thinking about something that is not verifiably true, it opens the door to all manner of mental anguish.

Let's talk about this. Qualifying my thoughts, I'm at that point of the outline. Number one, beware of intuition. Beware of intuition, that is reading into things and ruminating on your intuitive conclusions. Okay, let's ask a question in the audience. How many would say, "Pastor Monte, I am intuitive"? Raise your hand, "I am." Come on, you're all acting like you're about to get clobbered if you raise your hand, okay? If you are, just put your hand up. Okay, you're an intuitive person. Intuitive people believe that they can read between the lines and know what's happening or know what people are thinking. An intuitive person can fill in the blank just by catching vibes off of an individual. There's a problem with that. It's not true. "Well, Pastor Monte, sometimes I'm right." Okay, you may be, but you're supposed to think on things that are true. You don't build a whole thought-life thinking on things that are intuitive. Intuitive people tend to believe their intuitive conclusions as truth, even without much real evidence. "I can't prove it, but I know that I'm not wrong about this." I just hate stuff like that because you can't deal with something that didn't happen, isn't true, or may not really be true, and yet some people spend an awful lot of time assuming that their impressions are true, that they... You know, every one of us, listen, we are against fortune tellers. We're against them. We're against the crystal ball thing. We're against tea leaves. We're against tarot cards. You know why? Because we're just against it because the Bible says to be, especially the Old Testament. Why do you use your brain the same way? "Well, Pastor Monte, because I've

been given this ability to see beyond." No, you haven't and sometimes you make these grand assumptions about things that are not even true, and it gets you really wound up.

Intuitive people overemphasize intangible signals from others, often interpreting them as negative. "I have a feeling he doesn't like me anymore." I used to know somebody that years ago came to this church and the famous statement would always be this, "Well, Pastor Monte, So-and-so is upset with me." How do you know? "They gave me a dirty look." Okay, okay, how ridiculous? Number one, that person could have had gas. I'm just being honest, there are many reasons that the look on that person's face could have been something other than pleasant at that moment and we don't want to discuss all those, but to read into it and decide that someone's "upset with me" over their "dirty look," that is causing trouble where there may and likely fundamentally is none. Do you know that some people just struggle with how they look when they're not paying attention to how they hold their face? Do you know that? Do this sometime. Go to the mirror, go to the mirror and just relax your face and stare at you. Ask yourself if it looks happy. If it doesn't, realize you need to paint a smile across your face so the rest of the world finds it pleasant. But let's just move on, let's move on.

Okay, so intuitive people overemphasize the intangibles. Intuitive people often act in error based on intuition alone. "I sense there's something between us." This just wears me out when this happens. "Pastor Monte," that someone makes an appointment, "Pastor Monte, I sense there's something between us and I just want to get it right," and I'm thinking, "I don't know what happened?" My mind is racing. By the way, every husband in this room knows exactly what I'm talking about. Your wife has seen something's wrong, and I'm thinking, "Okay, what was wrong? What was wrong? I woke up this morning. I went to work. It seemed like everything was fine. I didn't even speak to her, so that was probably good. What was wrong?" And our minds, as husbands, our minds are just like a car that won't start. We're trying so hard. There's nothing wrong, there's nothing, there's nothing. "Well, Pastor Monte, but you know what? He was just kind of, he was kind of cold." You know why? Because he's an idiot and he tends to be that way, okay? But when we read into something too much, we sometimes act on it. That would be a little thing, but sometimes people cause big problems doing this. The problem with ruminating over intuition is that intuition, by its very nature, listen to me, is not verifiably true. Does everybody get this? Okay, so stop it, so stop it.

Number two, beware of prognostication. Prognostication, predicting outcomes and forecasting the future. Intuitive people often prognosticate. They predict the future based on their supposedly hyperly sensitive insights. Prognostication takes intuition a step further by predicting outcomes and ruminating on them as if they had already happened. Okay, this is so typical. By the way, pastors do this a lot. "Pastors?" Oh yes. Do you know why? Because pastors are always waiting for the other shoe to fall. Can I let you in on a little secret? It's just a little secret: 90% of the phone calls I get during the week are not to tell me that they won the Publisher's Clearing House and they're tithing 20% to the church. Usually not. Do you know what? A lot of it, a lot, not all of it, but a lot of it is great negativity. So pastors always live with this concern when the phone rings and what's happening and is the other shoe going to fall. We need to stop that. I gave this

whole session, by the way, to a group of, I don't know, maybe 150, 200 pastors back in the spring, and when I talked about this, they all nodded in agreement that they were all guilty of this. We often do this.

Prognostication predicts outcomes. Example, for pastors, the Smith family missed two Sundays at church, they must be upset, they're leaving the church, okay? No, "But Pastor Monte, they got angry at the sermon." No, no, do you know what? No. No, it may not be that at all and for me to assume that in my mind and to predict an outcome, they're leaving the church, is to think upon something that is not true because they didn't tell you that. Okay, "Well, Pastor Monte, So-and-so, I could just tell So-and-so was just really mad at me." Well, did they tell you that? "Well, no, they didn't have to tell me that. I could just tell." Okay, stop just telling. "Well, but Pastor, you know, shouldn't you be sensitive about some of this stuff?" I don't think so. Okay, I would love it, this would give me great peace if I could be this way, if the only way I knew that you were mad at me was if you came up, grabbed me by the shirt collar, pushed me up against a wall – by the way, don't try it – pushed me up against a wall, got in my face and said, "I'm really frustrated with you!" Then, wouldn't it be great if that was the only time I ever picked up on any of that? That would be great, okay? And every husband in this room is already living there. But anyway, let's move on.

And so, prognostication, "He grimaced during my sermon. I must have hit a nerve. He's angry. He'll probably leave the church." Now, I never have told Gary this. I've never told you this, Gary. I've never told you this. I've never told you this. Okay, so months ago, many months ago, many, many months ago, I was preaching on a Wednesday night and now Bonnie, does he ever just look like he's mad at the world? Every once in a while, but not all the time. Okay, okay. And I was preaching on something, and, Gary, you just had this out of sorts look. You know, just a little but you were, by the way. But I thought, well, "He's mad." I was actually preaching, I just mentioned something about I'm not a Calvinist or something, and then I looked at him, and I thought, "Well, Gary's no Calvinist, but boy, Gary looks mad." So then I kept doing it. Okay, because let me tell you something, if you want me to get stuck on one particular thing during my preaching, look like you're angry about it, okay? I'm not gonna back away from it. I'm gonna keep right on top of it.

So I was preaching on this. "Well, Gary's just frustrated." Gary, you were doing this. You were doing this number and I've done this in church before, too. You were doing this number, and you were looking at me. I thought, "Well, something's up." And then right afterwards, I just noticed that you went to speak to Pastor Morris. Uh-huh. Okay, now you're laughing, Gary. You probably might even remember when this was. Again, I'm not gonna say anything about it beyond that, but you wouldn't. And so later I went to Pastor Morris and I said, "Gary's really mad, isn't he?" And Pastor Morris looked at me and said, "No. What are you talking about, preacher?" "Well, of course, Morris, come on, I know because my sermon was so brilliant it was irritating." And Pastor Morris looked at me and said, "No." Pastor Morris actually looked at me like I was a crazy man and he said, "No, that's not it at all." Do you know why? Okay, that's the danger of intuition. And intuition prognosticates a negative outcome when there is no negative outcome and

sometimes we who prognosticate, we tend to think about every possibility forecasting the future and it produces anxiety. Jesus in Matthew 6:24 talked about this, too much thought about the morrow or tomorrow Jesus said don't take thought of these things. Why? It can produce fear and anxiety. You cannot control it. Expectation, a desire for a positive result produces tension about ultimate fulfillment or anxiety. "I hope I win. I hope she likes me." Even those kind of thinking. Prognosticating, trying to look for outcomes. The problem with ruminating over prognostication is simply this: if it hasn't happened, it isn't true, therefore outside of the purview of Christian thinking. Stop trying to predict the future.

The holidays are coming up. Aren't you excited? All the reli's are going to get together and you've got in your mind right now how wonderful it's going to be. You're going to cook the perfect turkey. It's going to be lovely. All of the side dishes are going to turn out. Nothing is going to burn. Everyone, that weird uncle that nobody likes, everyone is going to show up on time. Everyone's going to be happy. The children are going to be dancing around with sugar plums in their head with glee around. this Christmas tree and everybody's going to listen as you read the Christmas story and it's going to be absolutely, it is going to be Norman Rockwell, ripped from the pages of Norman Rockwell except for one thing: it is not going to be that at all. "Pastor Monte, how do you know?" Because it never is. Sometimes we get a high expectation and we put it so high and so unreasonable that when it doesn't come to pass, we fall apart.

Prognostication, don't predict either for the positive or for the negative. Let me give you a third thing. A third thing, because Paul said, think on things that are true, number three, beware of speculation. Oh, I'm really good at this one. Speculation. What is that? That is what-if thinking. What-if thinking. Speculative thinking considers all of the what-ifs of life. It examines possible scenarios and scenarios consequential to the possible scenarios. I'm really good at this. Someone said to me one time, I was concerned about something, and I was saying, "Now if this happens, I'll do this, and if this happens, I'll do this, and if he says this, then I'm gonna say this, and if this..." and it kept going on, and another person stopped me in the middle of it and said this, said, "Preacher," and they were completely right, they said, "Preacher, you build bridges where there are no rivers." You know the old saying we'll cross the bridge when we come to it, assuming there's a river? You built, and I do, I am a sucker for insurance, life insurance. I'm always thinking I'm going to keel over at an unexpected moment and because of all of this what-if thinking, it creates anxiety.

Speculative thinking believes it is preparing for every possible contingency. I love listening to the Ben Shapiro show. I won't lie about it. I enjoy listening to the Ben Shapiro show. Ben Shapiro advertises for some kind of Patriot foods. "Pastor Monte, what are Patriot foods?" Five gallon, impermeable, food grade, hermetically sealed pails containing 75 freeze-dried meals that if one would just add a touch of boiling water, it will provide you 75 meals, and if you keep that container closed, those meals will remain edible, fresh, yea, delicious for 25 years. You know what I'm thinking while I'm listening to Ben? "Wow. That would really do great for me. I'd be covered then." I mean, right now, if all the electricity goes out, I'm going to starve. Do you know how long it would

take this to starve? I'm gonna outlast most of you in the auditorium. And Ben is talking about how great this Patriot food supply is, and I'm thinking, "Wow, I should have that. I should have not just one bucket, I should have two or three. And what if I want to feed my neighbors, the ones I like? What if I...?" I'm just kidding, I'm like, "Come on, what if I want to feed my neighbor? Well then I should have more of this." And I'm thinking, "What if, what if, what if, what if, what if?" Do you know what? Stop it. Stop it. I'm not against having a pail of that if you want it, if it gives you peace of mind. I'm not against you having a pail of that but stop thinking about all the what-ifs. There are people who obsess, and I have been there. When I'm preaching this, I'm very relatable when I preach this because I have been right there, okay? There are people who spend their whole life thinking, "What if this? What if that? What if something happens tomorrow?" Be very careful about that. The problem with speculative thinking is it's not true because you know why? If it hasn't happened, it isn't true, okay? So stop the speculation.

Then number four, beware of perception. Beware of perception. Disciplined thinking is like tuning an analog radio, we tune out the static in order to hear the music. Now, I love this illustration. So today, you just mash buttons and everything tunes itself. Do you ever notice that? It's horrible. It's horrible. Pastor Ronnie puts it right on the station. It's horrible. Do you know why? Because those of us who remember the good old days, analog, we would remember how static would come on the radio, and so you would gently tune that dial. And remember how that dial was a little bit stiff? That dial was stiff because you were moving it very incrementally. And how many remember as you would, there would be static, and so you would turn the dial ever so incrementally, and as you turned that dial, the music became clearer and clearer, do you remember this, until finally you had nailed the station. If you went a little too far, you went into static the other way. So you nailed the station, you knew exactly where to..." How many remember that incredible feeling of success? Okay, you don't get that anymore. Technology has robbed you of this. Here's what I'm trying to do: I want us to tune out the static that is keeping us from knowing peace and from having minds that are clear of these things.

So let's consider this one, let's consider this one, perception. What is it? Perception is my interpretation of the past and present. "Come on, Pastor Monte, I know I'm right about these things." No, you don't. Do you know perception, perception differs among people. Perception differs. Years ago, we were having a wedding here at this church. This pulpit wasn't here and the platform had been taken down. They had all the wedding paraphernalia up here and someone was sitting in the auditorium hours before the wedding began. And then I walked over to that person, that person is not in this room, they are no longer here, they are long gone, so quit trying to figure it out. I walked over to that person, and the person said, "Pastor, did you see the snake?" I said, "The snake?" He said, "Yes, the snake." I said, "Is there a snake in here?" He said, "Yes, it's huge." I said, "How huge?" I mean, we're about to have a wedding. I said, "How huge?" He said, "Probably 20 feet long." 20 feet long, and he said, "It was this big around." And he said, "While I was sitting here, it slithered up, it came from over here, it slithered up on the," this really happened, folks. I do not make things like this up. "It slithered over on the platform." He said, "It got right in the middle of the platform near where that kneeling bench, and the candles, or the sand, or the knots, or whatever it is that symbolizes your

love forever, it was right near that." And he said, "That thing flashed its head around," and he said, "Its head was the face of Satan." Now this really happened in this auditorium. As a pastor, how do you respond to that? I just said, "Where did it go?" I wanted to make sure it went to Pastor Walt's office and not mine. And so these were actually the days before Pastor Walt... As he said it, it just went away, okay?

Now can I say something? I could have never shaken that man from what he thought he saw, but his perception proved on that, not that only occasion, but on many occasions, his perception proved to be different from the perception of other people. Can you give yourself a little bit of room for error in regard to how you perceive things? Exaggerated perception produces suspicious mind or paranoia. Example, "He gave me a funny look, therefore he's furious with me," or, "I know from the tone of her voice that she wasn't happy with me, okay?" Exaggerated perception.

Errors in perception often stem from differences in personality. Folks, oh, this is so important. I don't have time to do this whole thing, but I can do a few, some of it. Okay, so, notice I've given you four personality types. Does everybody see those? This paradigm, I think, is from Harvard University. There's the power personality, the precise personality, the pleaser, and the party. Okay, every person, they say, is a combination of two of these, one dominant, one recessive. Okay, so, for example, my friend who went to Harvard University who taught me this, my friend, he's known me for 30 years. I said to him, I said, "Brian," I said, "what personality am I?" He said, "Monte, you're an easy read." He said, "You are a power party." What does that mean? Okay, here's what it means. It means I like to be in control, but I only like it if I'm having fun. Nailed. Nailed. Do you know, I won't stick with something I don't find fun. I just won't. Do you know why? Because it's not fun, dummy. "Pastor Monte, what about just putting your nose to the grindstone and pushing through?" Not if it's not fun. I'm not interested. Sometimes I'll go preaching somewhere, Kelly will say, "How was the meeting?" And I'll say, "Oh, it was fun. I had a great time." I never say, "Oh, it was very productive, and we were blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." I never do that. I just say, "Oh, it was fine, I had a great time." Or, "Oh, it was miserable." And by the way, if it was miserable, guess what? I'll never go back. Do you know why? Because it wasn't fun, okay? And a power person likes to be in charge, and then I'm motivated by a good time.

So you could have all kinds of persons. Who are the precise people? Okay, they often are the mathematical people. They're the scientific people. The precise people are the people that go on vacation but have to have an agenda. They have a three-ring binder with everything printed out for each day and the papers are slid into plastic page protectors just in case people start having too much fun and they spill all over it, okay? That is the precise personality. Music people are often that way. Okay, the precise personality.

The pleaser personality. Who is that? That's the person who's not happy unless everybody else is happy. They're uncomfortable if you're not comfortable. That's the pleaser person. Remember, you have two of these. One dominant, one recession.

And then the party personality. Somebody just discovered themselves back over in that corner. The party personality, that of course is the guy that's motivated by good times.

So what is Kelly? Kelly, my wife Kelly, she's a pleaser party. She likes to have a good time like I do. We only do things that we find fun. We quit if it's not fun. But she likes to please. Now here's the problem with my personality type. Oh, sorry. Here's the problem with my personality type. My personality type doesn't understand why you're not having a good time. My personality type does not understand why you're not laughing because I think I'm really funny. That's my personality. In fact, if you're just studiously taking notes, but you never crack a smile, my personality type perceives you as judging. You're judging, okay? That is really, honestly, that's true. The big picture personality which I have, that kind of, "You know, let's, hey, I've got a great idea. Here's an idea, let's just go do this." And then some precise person says, "Pastor Monte, we need to break this down into exact steps, and how are you going to do this, and how are you gonna do that? And if we get into this, how are we gonna get out of it? Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." And I wanna scream, "Who cares? Let's just do it and see what happens," because that's fun, isn't it? Sure.

But what I've learned by this, what I've learned by this, okay, is that I sometimes perceive people by my personality. Does everyone follow where I am here? And so when I do that, my perception is off because not everybody is like me, and just because someone is not like me doesn't mean they hate me, it just means they have a different personality. And nobody's personality is better than anyone else's, per se. Everything is just different. And so when I perceive something, I have to understand I am perceiving things through the lens of my personality and my experience.

Truth is objective. Perception is very subjective. Avoid forming strong opinions based on perception. Strong opinions require hard evidence. Learn to give people the benefit of the doubt. Boy, I've had to do that. That's good policy. So if someone doesn't respond the way I would respond because they're a different personality, give them the benefit of the doubt. Remember, the human mind is prone toward negative perception. We really are. We're really prone. "Pastor Monte, how do you know?" Okay, okay. Ladies, ladies, listen to this. If 10 people today walk up to you and say, "I love your blouse," 10 people do that, and one person walks up to you and says, "That's a nice blouse, does it come in your size?" Okay. Ten people liked it. One person made that remark. Who are you going to remember? You're going to remember the one person, because our perceptors tend to focus on the negatives, not on the positives. We need to understand that and do a reversal in regard to that.

And then perception is just that, it's one man's way of seeing things. The trouble is perception is not always true. Now I love this, I love this. Seneca, who was he? Who was he? He was a stoic philosopher of the first century. His kid brother, no no, his older brother, is actually mentioned in the book of Acts. Did you know that? Did you know that when Paul was captured by this Jewish mob and brought before the magistrate, Gallio, and the Jews were saying, "Hey, this man's stirring it all up and he's causing all kinds of trouble," remember when he looked at that crowd and he said, "Now, wait a minute,

folks." He said, "If this is a question about laws, your laws, or about names and about your religion," he made this statement, he said, "I care for none of these things." Does anyone remember that? Okay, that was the older brother of Seneca. And Seneca, who was a Stoic philosopher, had written letters to his brother, and so when he said this in the Bible, "I care for none of these things," he was practicing the ancient philosophy of Stoicism. And Seneca said this, and I think you should mark it down, he said this, "He suffers more than necessary who suffers before it is necessary." Isn't that good? Isn't that good? And so what should I think upon, okay? Whatsoever things are, help me church, true and push the other aside. It will change everything if you'll do it.

Father, thank you for your word. I pray you'll bless this thought. Help us, Lord, to understand these precepts and be changed as you work in our lives. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.