

Key Ideas

1. **Willpower is like a muscle: It gets tired when stressed.** -----
The more we exert our will, the weaker it gets. Restraining desires, pushing yourself to do things, and even decision-making can tire out your willpower.
2. **The brain often runs on 'zombie mode'/'autopilot' to save energy** -----
Unconscious habits, both good and sinful, are automatic routines that we passively allow to happen because they take less work and less stress.
3. **Care for your body → Care for your brain → Boost willpower** -----
Study after study shows that when we take care of our body via diet, exercise, sleep, and relaxation, we will relieve stress and boost self-control.
4. **Care for your thoughts → Rewire your brain → Boost willpower** -----
You can rewire bad zombie habits into good habits through repeated, focused attention... HOWEVER, only by focusing on Jesus will we find a full escape from the stress zombies within that want to destroy us, because only Jesus brings full forgiveness of all our sin.

Questions: to ponder and discuss

- 1 Read Key Ideas #1, as well as 1 Kings 19:4-8, Mark 6:30-32, and Mark 14:38. Should we be more compassionate with people who may be “acting up” because of depleted resources in their body?
- 2 Read Key Idea #2, as well as Psalm 139:23-24 and Jeremiah 17:9-10. Do you have some unconscious habits that you wish you would be able to stop doing? Have you ever thought about why you keep doing them?
- 3 Read Key Idea #3, as well as Romans 6:13, Romans 12:1, and 1 Corinthians 9:27. Should we view diet, exercise, sleep, and relaxation as spiritual disciplines? How can we avoid being too judgmental and legalistic about this?
- 4 Read Key Idea #4, as well as Luke 11:33-36 and Hebrews 12:1-3. Why does focusing the mind on Jesus bring the fullest of personal change? What difference does Jesus bring that nothing/no one else does?

Key Scriptures

1 Kings 19:4-8; Mark 6:30-32; 14:38
Psalm 139:23-24; Jeremiah 17:9-10;
Romans 7:15-23; Galatians 5:17-19
Romans 6:13, 19; 12:1; Mark 4:38;
1 Corinthians 9:24-27;
Proverbs 23:20-21
Luke 11:33-36; Hebrews 12:1-3;
Philippians 4:8; Matthew 11:28-30; John 8:12

Raising the Dead with Grace: The cross alone brings complete freedom from stress.

Take It Home:

Key Quotes

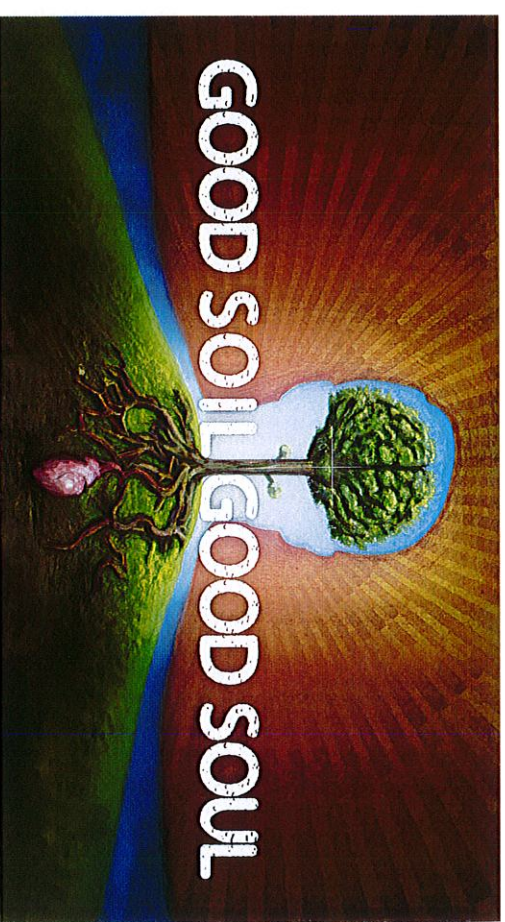
- † "Just making decisions for a while can diminish your self-control. This explains why you can be so tired after a day's work and yet you sat at a desk all day and didn't do any physical labor."
- † "If the brain needs physical energy, and willpower is like a muscle, this means that taking good care of our body's energy supply can be a spiritual discipline because you are providing an optimal amount of energy for your will to use."
- † "Here's why we should take Jesus up on His offer (Matthew 1:28-30). Scientists have identified the number one enemy of willpower: Stress. Stress depletes your willpower like nothing else. Well, guess who is the only One who can set us free from all stress, because he's the only One that sets us free from all guilt and all shame, because he's the only One who has wiped away all of our sins and he's the only One who gives us complete forgiveness... Everyone else holds something against you, everyone else will lay a heavy burden of guilt for something that you have done or something you will do – including yourself, you will refuse to forgive yourself, but Jesus will never hold anything against you. He alone is worthy of all our attention."

Book Recommendations:

- *The Power of Habit* by Charles Duhigg
- *Willpower: Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength* by Roy F. Baumeister and John Tierney
- *The Brain that Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science* by Norman Doidge, M.D.

Exercise:

Take a 15-30 minute walk each day around your neighborhood or at a local park. Walk at a brisk pace but not strenuous. Have a light conversation with God as you walk, thanking him for the blessings that come to your mind. Pray for the people that pop into your thoughts. At the end of each day, think back to see if there were any positive effects from this exercise.



Session 3:

Raising Zombies to Life

Habits, Willpower, and the Brain

Notes: