MARK & FRIENDS

Powerful Self-Talk from the Psalms: Replacing Fear with Biblical Truth

Thursday, November 12, 2026 | Ministry Package V5.1
Host: Donna Leland | Guest: Jon Gauger

Program Summary

Donna Leland welcomes Moody Radio broadcaster and author Jon Gauger to discuss Powerful Self-Talk from the Psalms: 40 Days to a Biblical Mindset. Jon explains that the inner conversation itself is normal, but its content can turn toward harsh self-condemnation or pride. Through stories about a lost iPad, a missing hard drive, a frightening encounter with a bear, and a difficult family gathering, he shows how memorized Scripture can redirect anxious thoughts and guide words and actions. The practical pattern is to stop, assess what is happening, identify the lie, and answer it with biblical truth. Jon encourages listeners to begin with one meaningful verse or even a phrase, ponder it, and keep returning to it. Trust can be practiced before emotions settle or circumstances improve.

Key Takeaways

- The question is not whether I talk to myself, but whether what I say agrees with God’s truth.
- Self-condemnation and self-centered pride both need correction by Scripture.
- Memorizing and pondering God’s Word gives me truth to recall in an unexpected difficulty.
- Stop, assess the situation, identify the lie, and answer it with Scripture.
- A familiar verse may need to be recalled repeatedly while fear and worry subside.
- Trusting God does not require pretending I feel happy or unafraid.
- Begin with one verse or phrase; steady practice matters more than memorizing quickly.
- Praise God before the answer arrives, and let His Word shape my speech as well as my thoughts.

Scripture References

- Psalm 42:5, 11; Psalm 43:5 - The opening question about a downcast soul echoes this repeated refrain.
- Psalm 25:15 - Keeping my eyes on the Lord and looking to Him for rescue from the net.
- Psalm 16:8 - Setting the Lord always before me and finding stability in His presence.
- James 1:2-3 - Trials, the testing of faith, and the development of perseverance.
- Psalm 56:3 - Choosing to trust God when I am afraid.
- Psalm 59:16 - Singing of God’s strength and lovingkindness amid trouble.

- Psalm 142:5 - Crying to the Lord as my refuge; Jon introduces this reference in the conversation.
- Psalm 17:3 - A resolve to keep my mouth from transgression.
- Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33 - Parallel accounts of Jesus' promise that His words will never pass away.

Quote of the Day

"The direct track is start memorizing and pondering Scripture for yourself." — Jon Gauger

Broadcast Notes

Host: Donna Leland. Guest: Jon Gauger. Featured book: Powerful Self-Talk from the Psalms: 40 Days to a Biblical Mindset. Jon describes how his daily walk became a time for Scripture memory and meditation. He emphasizes that the greater victory in the lost-iPad incident was learning to resist self-condemnation, even before the iPad was recovered. His examples illustrate personal experiences rather than a promise that every practical problem will resolve in the same way. The supplied transcript introduces Psalm 142:5 without including a quotation after that introduction; no missing spoken words have been added. Scripture quotations in the conversation retain the speakers' wording, which may differ from a reader's Bible translation.

Practical Applications

- Notice a recurring sentence in my inner conversation and ask whether it is true, humble, and consistent with Scripture.
- Choose Psalm 56:3, Psalm 16:8, or Psalm 25:15 as a starting point; read the surrounding passage for context.
- Write one verse on a card and place it where I will see it during a walk, commute, or daily task.
- When fear rises, pause and pray a simple "Lord, help," then recall the verse I am learning.
- Return to biblical truth patiently when anxious thoughts return; repetition is part of practice.
- Before a difficult conversation, ask God to guard my words and help me respond with grace.
- Thank God for His presence and character while I am still waiting for an answer.

Today's Challenge

Choose one verse from today's conversation. Read it in context, write it down, and practice recalling it throughout the day. When a fearful or condemning thought appears, stop and name it, then answer with the truth of that verse and a brief prayer of trust.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for speaking truth through Your Word. Help me notice the fearful, harsh, and prideful thoughts I rehearse. Teach me to set You before me, to keep my eyes on You, and to trust You when I am afraid. Give me patience as I memorize and ponder Scripture, even when progress feels slow. When worry returns, remind me to return to Your truth. Guard my mouth, shape my responses, and help me praise You before I see the answer. Let the words I speak to myself and to others honor Jesus. In His name, Amen.

About Today's Speaker

Jon Gauger

Moody Radio broadcaster, author, and ordained minister

Jon Gauger writes, produces, and hosts for Moody Radio. He is an author, audiobook narrator, and ordained minister. His book Powerful Self-Talk from the Psalms: 40 Days to a Biblical Mindset invites readers to let biblical truth shape their inner conversation.

Featured on Mark & Friends - Listen anytime under the Mark & Friends tab at GreatNewsRadio.org or WLUJ.org.

About Today's Host

Donna Leland

Host of today’s Thursday edition of Mark & Friends

Donna Leland has hosted music for Moody Radio since 1988. On today’s Mark & Friends, she guides a warm, practical conversation with Jon Gauger about Scripture, trust, and the thoughts that shape daily life.

Additional Ministry Resources

- Great News Radio Program Resource Library
- WLUJ
- Featured book - Harvest House Publishers
- Jon Gauger - author and devotional resources
- The Thursday Thought - website mentioned in the interview
- Moody Radio - Jon Gauger and Donna Leland biographies

Complete Proofread Transcript

Welcome to Mark and Friends. I'm your host Donna Leland. And today we're talking with a familiar voice.

His name is Jon Gauger. You hear him all over the Moody Broadcasting Network. You also hear him on the Today in the Word broadcast as well.

But he is also an author, and he has penned a book I think is quite interesting. It's called Powerful Self-Talk from the Psalms. Thank you so much, Jon, for joining us on Mark and Friends.

Well, what a blast, Donna, not to just hear your great voice on Today in the Word and so many other programs here, but now to connect in this way. So we're looking forward to the conversation. Absolutely, and I have always seen the Psalms as self-talk.

You know, why are you downcast, oh my soul? Why so disturbed within me? The psalmist is sometimes talking themselves off the ledge. So how do you interpret this self-talk? Is it wrong in and of itself? Why or why not? Yeah, well, self-talk is kind of the faucet you can't shut off. It's the stream of thoughts, the nonstop monologue that runs in your brain every waking minute of your life.

It's the stuff we tell ourselves without even thinking about it. You know, it doesn't even cost you a subscription, by the way. I've got to tell you a quick story up front, Donna.

One of our sleepovers with Ava and Emma, they're seven and nine. They're over at the house, and of course, we've got a smart speaker, and they love to fiddle with that thing. They're quite tech savvy, and they say, Alexa, you know, play this song.

And Alexa says, you know, with a monthly subscription, you can have access to, you know, 10 million songs. You know, you can have a free trial a month, and then it's billed at $9.99 a month. Would you like that? And they said, oh, absolutely, yes.

So, unbeknownst to me, these kids signed me up for a couple of months of free trial, and then I got billed. So, yeah, we have to pay for all of those streams, but we don't have to pay for the stream of self-talk. It just is.

Now, you asked, is it wrong, Donna? The existence of self-talk is not wrong, but the content of our self-talk can be. Self-talk can be harsh on the one hand, you idiot, you know, why'd you do that? Or prideful on the other, you know, maybe I'm, you know, doing okay. So, neither extreme is biblical, which is the problem we've got to address.

But in short, there are about 1,001 ways that we can allow our self-talk to go wrong. And I think the Psalms just are going to help so much in bringing us back to setting our mind on what we should. So, what was really what brought you to birth this book? Why did you realize you just had to write it? So, Donna, I walk a mile and a half each way from the train station to my little studio at Moody and back.

That's a lot of time to think. But I began to realize I needed to think better. You know, particularly at the end of the day, I'm doing that walk and there's a lot of review and little sour thinking, some self-bashing.

Why did I say that? Why was my email so blunt? How could I have not been as friendly or kind as I should have in that conversation? Too much negative thinking, too much worry and nagging anxiety. But how to change that? So, I started with not this idea of self-talk at all. I just decided to try to memorize scripture so that my mind wasn't dwelling on all this other garbage.

I thought, would that make a difference in my thinking? Well, it did because suddenly you have less time to think about all that other garbage because you're memorizing. So, my daily commute or if I'm at home, a daily walk, that is for one thing only. Yeah, I wish I could listen to podcasts and music.

I don't. I have to memorize because it takes me forever to memorize and forever to hang on to what I have memorized. But that was the birth of it because once you begin to memorize, you can't help but meditate on what you're learning, right? Yeah.

And as you're spending all that time trying to memorize, you can't help but unpack and think and chew and really review and dig deep and get almost possessed by the scriptures that you're working on. And then I began to see that this could have some power. I have a story that kind of illustrates it.

Can I share that story, Donna? Oh, yeah. So, I'm ordained as a minister, and I'm preaching on Psalm 25:15, which says, My eyes are continually toward the Lord, for He will rescue my feet from the net. And that was the text of the sermon one Sunday.

Do you know, Donna, 48 hours later, I'm on an airplane. I'm flying from Chicago to Colorado Springs to do an audio interview with a very famous author. And so, I've got everything packed into my backpack.

I've got the recorder, the digital recorder, the headphones, the microphone, the mic cable, you know, all that good stuff you've got to travel with. And, of course, I also have my trusty iPad, which has a keyboard with it. I treat it like a laptop.

And on that plane, and before I ever get on, in the two hours you have to arrive early, I'm working on a sermon. I'm working on a blog. I'm doing some freelance writing, having a great time, getting a lot done.

I get to the airport, reshuffle all the contents of that backpack. I show up at the guest place to do the interview. Get out the gear, and then I realize, the iPad isn't there.

Oh, no. I have left it at the airport in Colorado Springs. And, of course, you know, nobody would think that was a great thing.

And my instinct, to be honest, is to kind of curl up in a fetal position to do some self-loathing, you know, Donna. I say things like, you idiot. How could you do that? That's an expensive thing, that iPad.

But, you know, far more nerve-wracking and tensioning to me was all the work I'd now lost, you know, gone forever. And so, again, my immediate reaction was to just bash myself. Come on, Jon.

You've been at this for how many years? That is such a freshman mistake. That's so amateurish. That's disrespectful of God's resources.

You've lost this iPad. How could you? And then, Donna, I heard that verse go off in my head. My eyes are continually toward the Lord, for he will rescue my feet from the net.

So I said, Lord, I'd really like the iPad back. But more than that, I need you to rescue my feet from the net of self-loathing, of self-bashing. Yes, it was foolish.

But it's happened. And I cannot curl up in a ball. I have to move on and do this work and do it for you and do it with a smile.

I don't want to be owned by these horrible negative emotions. Lord, would you rescue my feet from the net of worry and anxiety. So, did that right the ship immediately, Donna? What would you guess? I would think that

those emotions had to have some time to settle in.

That's right. And to, you know, get smaller and, you know, just get less intense. You're so polite, Donna.

The truth of the matter is, my doubts and nags and worries and fears came back again and again and again. And you know what I did, Donna? I quoted that verse again and again and again. Every time one of those nagging thoughts came, I quoted that verse.

I'm sure I did it at least 50 times, maybe 100. Yeah. Well, the long and short of it is, I didn't feel yum, yum, happy, happy.

But I was managing. I was calm. And we're having dinner together at a restaurant.

And we get a phone call. Oh, this is the airport. We found your iPad.

You can come get it if you want. And that's a lovely, lovely thing to have happened. But I kid you not, Donna.

I kid you not. The much greater victory was not the iPad. It was the fact that this horrible situation, this awful wave of hideousness, I was able to overcome, not in my strength, but in speaking powerful self-talk from the Psalms.

It was quoting the Word to those evil condemning thoughts again and again that won the day. And I thought, wow, this really is real. I know that's a long answer to your question.

But that actually launched the book at that point. And I said, wow, there's something here. Yeah.

Oh, there's so much. And that's probably what you mean by switch gears. There's a critical skill of learning how to switch those gears.

And I think that illustration kind of helps us get something practical so that we can replicate that when we, you know, lose our phone or, you know, do other things that are missteps that we just want to sit there and beat ourselves up. Yeah. No, you said it well.

You mentioned switching gears. That's so true. You know, most of us have ridden bikes with gears.

Before we had e-bikes, we actually had to pedal with our own legs. And, you know, when you're first learning, you go, what's this? Oh, that's the gear shifter. What does it do? You know, it shifts the gears.

Well, how do I know what gear I want? And at first it takes all your concentration. But after a while, a very short while, guess what? You're going up and down hills. You're not even thinking about it.

You're talking with a friend. You're thinking about dinner. You're shifting gears.

Well, the same is true with regard to our self-talk. What do we got to do? Let's get this real practical. We have to learn to stop.

Let's envision that a crisis has just come, whatever it could be. I don't know, financial, health. You know, somebody just took a shot at you and you really feel crummy now.

A negative e-mail, a negative text, something disappointing. Stop, stop, stop. Assess the threat.

Assess the threat. What's really happening here? And then you have to identify the lie. There's usually a lie in some of this.

Oh, I guess I'm a jerk. I really blew it. There's no recovery.

Identify the lie. Call it for what it is and then speak the truth of Scripture against that lie. Classic example.

Here's a story, Donna. I was working on a video. I'd invested a lot of hours into this video.

And it was almost done and it was due this very day that this thing happened. So I powered up the computer and I'm ready to finish the last of it and get it set off. And the computer says, hard drive not found.

Hard drive not found. I'm like, what? This is the hard drive that has all the files on it, all the work on it, all the hours on it. It's just not even there.

It's like it disappeared. And there I was again, heart in my mouth, heart going a thousand miles an hour. Oh, Lord, this is a disaster.

And I'm starting to whine. And you know what came to mind? Psalm 16, verse 8. Psalm 16, 8 says, I have set the Lord always before me because he is at my right hand. I will not be shaken.

Oh, that's perfect. Psalm 16. I have said, I think about that.

This is about you. It is in the sense of you have to make that choice. I have set the Lord before me because he is at my right hand.

I'm cognizant of that. I'm going to think about that. I'm going to dwell on that.

Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. So I said, Lord, help. It was literally a one-word prayer.

Help. I got down on my knee. And it was a switching gears moment.

I said, I know what this is. This is something designed either to test me or to taunt me. But either way, I have set the Lord always before me because he is at my right hand.

I will not be shaken. Well, I got up off my knees and fiddled with that computer. And in God's kindness, in his provision, in a few minutes, that hard drive came back online.

We finished the video without incident. But I just feel like it was maybe God just testing me to say, hey, you're writing about this. Let's have another test about this.

I mean, that's James. Consider it pure joy when you face trials of many kinds. The testing of your faith develops perseverance.

So it's all coming together. Yeah, and I love that quote, Donna. See, self-talk is in the New Testament as well as the Old Testament.

Yeah, there's so much there. So help us, put us on the fast track to learning this biblical self-talk. Well, here's the answer, Donna.

You ready for this? Yeah. There is none. There is no fast track to learning biblical self-talk.

But there is a direct track. I'm not playing games here. The direct track is start memorizing and pondering Scripture for yourself.

You say my brain just doesn't work that way. You know what? Mine doesn't either. I think I might be the world's slowest memorizer.

But you know what? I don't care. I've learned to not care. Nobody's handing out prizes for first place.

There aren't trophies. For goodness sake, find a passage. This is it.

Find a verse. Find a passage. Find a scripture that made you go, wow, recently.

Wow. I'm going through this and look what God's Word says. You zero in there.

You find, like I say, it might just be one verse. You know what? It might even only be a phrase. I talk to people all the time.

I just can't memorize. But every one of us can quote a dozen slogans from commercials we've seen on TV. So we can at least learn a phrase and then go from there.

So the direct track, not the fast track, is start memorizing Scripture. Nobody can do that for you. No pastor, no sermon, no conference will do it for you.

My book will not do it for you. You must choose to memorize and ponder Scripture. But here's the thing.

There's no fast track. But there are immediate, and I mean immediate benefits to memorizing and calling to mind even one verse or one phrase of Scripture. I promise you if you'll just start.

And I think it's a lie of the enemy, too. I do, too. We've just convinced ourselves, I just can't do it.

You know, my brain is much slower than it was when I was a kid. It is. But so what? You know, jump in.

Jump in. See what God does. You jump in.

I guarantee you, you'll be thrilled at the progress you make. Little steps. Little steps.

Little verses. And move on. And that's your first task to overcoming negative self-talk.

I can't do it. That is negative self-talk. And it's a lie.

And so when you grab onto that, and you've got something to replace it with, then things can move forward. Jon, now what's one of your favorite self-talk passages from the Psalms? Well, I've got a bunch of them. I'm going to blow the reference if I don't look it up here.

I know it's Psalm 50-something. I'm flipping through. It's when I am afraid I will trust in you.

That's Psalm 56, verse 3. I don't know why. I don't know why, but I guess I'm prone to fear. You know, something goes wrong in the house, something breaks down, the car breaks down, you know, the whatever breaks down.

Yeah. I'm prone to fear. Maybe Diane and I are having a little bit of a disagreement.

I'm prone to fear. So I love that Psalm. Listen to this.

When I am afraid I will trust in you. And I just love the wording. The Bible is just unbelievably luscious.

It says, not if I'm afraid, but when. When. David is saying fear is normal.

Fear happens. Fear isn't the problem. But we don't have to feed it.

So it's not if I'm afraid, but when I am afraid I will trust in you. Can I share one more quick story along the line of this verse, Donna? Absolutely. We're up in a zoo in Wisconsin, and they had a black bear, and it was a

fabulous animal.

And you weren't feeding it, right? You weren't feeding it? No, no. Good on you. We're getting there.

I really wanted to take a picture of this bear. The thing is, Donna, it had, you know, a big thick chain link fence around it, and then, you know, another foot or so away, another chain link fence. It was actually probably three or four feet.

So it was double walled, and I can only imagine why. So when you're there with your camera trying to take a picture of this bear through two fences, what you end up doing is taking a picture of the fence with a fuzzy bear somewhere behind it. I'm kind of frustrated, and the zookeeper could see that I was trying to do this.

She says, what's going on? I said, well, I'm trying to take a picture of the bear, but with the two fences, I can't quite, you know. She says, well, I'll tell you what. Why don't you come here and join me behind the first fence? You get a better shot that way.

Okay. So this is great. So now, you know how chain link fences have those diamond shaped, you know, squares? And I shoved the lens of my camera right up against that fence.

Do you know, Donna, no sooner had I done that, when the bear came walking over, sauntering slowly, he came closer and closer and closer, and I'm clicking away, clicking away. He came right up to that fence. And then, without warning, he lets out this tremendous snort.

It scared the bejeepers out of me. I could feel the blast of that bear's breath on my hand. I could smell that bear's breath.

He needed a good toothbrushing. But I thought to myself, wow, this is terrifying. That's fear.

But David says, when I am afraid, not if. When I am afraid, I will trust in you. So, no, we don't feed the fears, just like we don't feed the bears.

But when we are afraid, we can and will trust in him. And we do it in part by quoting powerful self-talk from the Psalms. And we just say, Lord, I am afraid and admit it.

But then say, but God, I am going to trust in you. It's such a choice. This is a great example of David's self-talk in the Psalms that you bring out.

You said that this might be one of the strongest reasons why God calls David a man after his own heart. Elaborate on that. Well, you think about all the different times that David is quoting Scripture.

In the Psalms, David shows us over and over again proof that he believes God's word, obeys God's word, and trusts in God's deliverance. And as I pointed out, he makes these most wonderful statements, these verses we love to put on posters and such, before he finds the answer, before he gets delivered, before the threat is removed. While David is being hunted by Saul's men, he writes in Psalm 59, But I shall sing of your strength, and I shall joyfully sing of your lovingkindness in the morning.

He praised God for a rescue before it happened. In Psalm 142, he's hiding in a cave, feeling trapped. David cries out in verse 5, David's life, Donna, is an open textbook on what it means to stop treating God like Sunday religion and start living in the trust lane.

That's why I think he's a man after God's own heart. Now you've captured 40 days, you call it, to a biblical mindset in your book. Powerful self-talk from the Psalms.

And so you just cover all these Psalms and help us understand how to reset. Is that what I'm hearing? Yeah, it's just the idea of saying, this passage of Scripture, this Psalm, is more than a nice little verse. It's a key to helping me unlock anxiety or doubt or fear or pride, you know, or bitterness.

These are keys. And as we quote them, we find the power in Scripture. We were going to an extended family function.

I got to leave out a lot of details here. And there were a whole lot of us going to this family function who did not want to go to this family function because we were going to meet up with one person whom we all disliked. And this person was mouthy, opinionated, and I was so afraid that I was going to say something that I shouldn't.

And I said, guys, here's our theme verse for this trip. We're going to go 500 miles one way. And Psalm 17:3 is it.

My intent is that my mouth will not offend. You know, we got through with that whole trip. And in God's kindness, nobody said anything offensive.

It was a wonderful trip. And again, that's powerful self-talk from the Psalms. And we need that because there's so much noise and negativity coming at us that we're absorbing like we're a sponge, but it's not benefiting us and it's not helping us in any way.

We've been talking with Jon Gauger. He's the author of Powerful Self-Talk from the Psalms, 40 Days to a Biblical Mindset. Jon, how do people access your book? And what's some other contact information you can share? Well, I'd love for you to check it out.

And you'll find it anywhere books are sold, obviously at Amazon or Christian Books. You can get it there. Just search for Powerful Self-Talk from the Psalms.

And I'd love to have you visit us at our blog spot, ThursdayThought.com. Every Thursday, oddly enough, we crank out a really short devotional message, usually pretty encouraging, usually a story, and very short, very short. I'm part ADD, Donna, so I can't stand long things. So it's a very brief devotional.

ThursdayThought.com. You sign up, you never get junk mail of any kind. ThursdayThought.com. That sounds wonderful. Well, thanks again for being a part of Mark & Friends.

We appreciate your partnership in the ministry and setting us on this path of encouragement to memorize Scripture. Yeah, amen to that. Boy, the Word of God.

You know, heaven and earth will pass away, but Jesus said, My words will never pass away. So pick a verse, pick a psalm, pick any chapter, pick any passage, and get started today and watch what God does in your life. And thank you, dear listener, for listening to Mark & Friends, a ministry of Great News Media.