



## The Gospel According to Dopamine | Doug Wekenman | 7.26-27

### Weekly Study

#### SHARE

Welcome to week one of our new series, **Neurotheology**! Over the next three weeks, we'll explore how God designed our brains with chemicals like dopamine, oxytocin, and serotonin to help us enjoy Him and live with purpose. This series invites us to see the intersection of faith and neuroscience, not as opposites, but as a way to deepen our understanding of the abundant life Jesus promises.

This week, Pastor Doug walked us through a message called **"The Gospel According to Dopamine"**, unpacking why pleasure, purpose, and motivation matter to our spiritual walk. We were challenged to see dopamine not just as a feel-good chemical but as God's tool for cultivating purpose, discipline, and joy. As we open Scripture together, let's ask what it looks like to pursue the life Jesus died to give us.

- ☐ What is one small thing in your life that currently brings you joy or excitement, and why do you think it resonates with you?

#### GROW

##### Read 1 Peter 1:13-16

- ☐ What stands out to you about Peter's call to "prepare your minds for action" and live with self-control?

Peter reminds believers to stay alert, hopeful, and holy. He emphasizes mental readiness, pointing to how our thinking shapes our lives. This resonates with Pastor Doug's teaching that our brains, like temples of the Holy Spirit are meant to be stewarded for God's purposes. Self-control isn't about rules, it's about aligning our thoughts and actions with the fullness of life God intends.

- ☐ How might viewing dopamine as God's gift designed for motivation and purpose shift

## how you think about your daily habits and spiritual practices?

Pastor Doug encouraged us to see dopamine not as the enemy but as the fuel for pursuing God's story. When we choose disciplines like prayer or Scripture over quick-fix pleasures, we strengthen both our spiritual and mental "reward systems." True joy and purpose come from the long pursuit of God, not from fleeting highs.

- ☐ What does preparing your mind "for action" look like in your current season?

## MOVE

### Read James 1:2-4

James calls us to see challenges as opportunities for growth, reminding us that perseverance leads to maturity. Pastor Doug highlighted that pursuing difficult but meaningful choices—like prayer or forgiveness—creates lasting joy, not just temporary highs. God designed our brains to experience the reward of long-term faithfulness.

- ☐ Where do you sense God asking you to choose long-term growth over short-term comfort?

Our culture offers endless "fast dopamine," from constant scrolling to impulsive habits. These quick hits of pleasure leave us drained rather than fulfilled. Spiritual disciplines, on the other hand, reset our hearts toward God's lasting joy. They take effort but train our minds to find satisfaction in Him rather than in distractions.

- ☐ What spiritual practice could you start or restart this week to refocus your mind on Him? Maybe it looks like fasting in order to change certain patterns in your life.

Doug reminded us that self-control is not just human willpower but a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). When we practice obedience, even in small ways, God grows joy and freedom in us. Choosing His way often feels hard in the moment, but it always leads to life.

- ☐ How can your group help keep you accountable in that pursuit?

## PRAY

Pair up and pray specifically for strength to resist distractions and for courage to pursue "hard but good" paths that lead to life. Pray for God to **renew your mind and restore your joy.**

**Challenge:** Each day, choose one intentional discipline (like prayer before checking your phone) to redirect your focus from quick pleasures to God's lasting joy.