



Taking Thoughts Captive

We Are In A Battle

Have you ever had thoughts that consume your mind? Thoughts you can't get rid of no matter how hard you try? Maybe it's an inner voice that is constantly condemning or critical; maybe it's a loop of lustful thoughts on repeat in your mind; or maybe it's painful memories from a past hurt that you can't seem to shake. Whether you are aware of it or not, you are engaged in a battle. A study of Scripture reveals that it is not a battle of flesh and blood but a spiritual battle (Eph 6:12) against the devil and his forces of evil. The Scriptures describe Satan as an accuser who speaks only his native language of lies (Rev 12:10, John 8:44). He hates the children of God and is focused on preventing them from living in freedom and truth. How does he do this? By speaking little nagging half-truths, by pressing on our insecurities, convincing us our fears are real, and by using our doubts, past pains, and worries against us.

Think of your mind like a garden. God desires to fill it with fruitful and life giving plantings, plantings that bring not just beauty but health and strength for you and those around you. But every lie and leaning of the enemy is like a weed in that garden. They may seem small and inconsequential at first, but what do weeds do given time? They leach nutrients away from all the useful plants, take up space where good things could have grown, and choke out any surviving plants until they can no longer be fruitful. They cause chaos and death.

The Enemy Uses Different Types Of Thoughts To Prevent Your Flourishing

1. Sin: lust, anger, revenge, bitterness, jealousy/envy, pride, greed, obsession. These are just a few of the unholy thought patterns that Satan would love to have us fix our minds on. The more we entertain and feed the thoughts, the more they consume our mind, and shape our actions.
2. Lies: "I'm not good enough," "No one could ever love me," "I always fail at this." Satan presses our insecurities, trying to make them out to be bigger or more consequential than they are. Eventually, we lose sight of the full picture and can no longer see the person God made us to be!
3. Past: When we go through a painful experience (abuse, grief, heartbreak, trauma) doors are opened to fears and wounds that can be triggered by experiences later in life. If not dealt with, those wounds can lead to unforgiveness, feelings of worthlessness, inability to trust, or even self-deprecation.

Is This A Battle We Can Win?

Satan would love to use these thoughts to build strongholds in our minds that increasingly hold us captive until we feel we could never escape from or stop the thoughts. The Good News is that Scripture says we do not have to remain captive! Jesus has given us the weapons to overcome these malicious strongholds!



"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." 2 Cor. 10: 3-5

In our Savior Jesus Christ, we have victory over the schemes of the enemy! In Luke, Jesus himself declares that he has come "to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19). In Jesus' name, we can have freedom from the thoughts, insecurities, and past fears that plague us. We can learn to surrender our mind to Christ. Instead of believing the lies and giving them control over us, we can learn to take the thoughts captive and make them obedient to Christ!

How We Fight Back

1. **Announce:** This is the step of recognizing who or what is behind your deception/wrong way of thinking (John 8:43-45). 2 Corinthians 4 says that the enemy blinds us from seeing the light of God, which is the truth. So, ask the Lord to reveal any incorrect thinking and to open your eyes to lies, sin, or unhealthy thought patterns so that you can see them for what they are! Then, "announce" the lies you believe to God -- this is an act of confession.
 - **ACTION:** Write a list of specific lies, sins, or thoughts you've been wrestling with. Putting words to the thoughts helps us to recognize their untruth and take them captive in the future. John 8:32 says "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free." If you are feeling doubt that this process will work in bringing you freedom, consider making that a point on your list too.
2. **Renounce:** In step one, we announced the lies we believed about ourselves. Now we renounce their power over us. This is an act of repentance -- a turning away from sin. By renouncing lies and sin, we say that we stand in agreement with God that the thoughts are sinful or untrue. This means we no longer give the lie credit or choose to entertain it. Instead, we smash it with comparison to God's truths! If you are dealing with past pain or insecurities, this is a way of inviting God into that specific area or memory to bring healing and peace.
 - **ACTION:** Take your earlier list of lies. Purposefully uproot each weed by doing what 2 Cor 10:5 says: taking each thought captive and making it obedient to Christ. Read the lie aloud, renounce its power over you, and ask God to be Lord over that area of your life. If there is a sin connected with your lie, repent of it, and anything you've allowed to grow between you and God.
3. **Pronounce:** This last step is important! As you have just uprooted the tangled weeds of lies in your mind, you now have soil standing empty. The enemy would love to come back and fill it with more lies (Matt 12:44-45), but instead we are going to plant God's truth where the weeds once were (2 Cor 3:17).
 - **ACTION:** Look at your list of broken lies, then spend some time in prayer asking God to tell you truth instead. When Jesus was facing temptation from the enemy in the desert, he answered each temptation with specific and potent scripture (Luke 4). Search the Scriptures for truths that speak the mind of God to the enemy's strongholds in your life. Ask God for specific promises to cling to when you are tempted to believe the old lies. Then, write a new list of the truths God wants you to plant to fill the place where you uprooted previous lies.



Winning The War

Just like seedlings need water, sun, and good nutrients, so the newly planted truths in your mind need cultivating. There are many ways to do this: meditate on the truths that God has given you. Write them on cards, set them places you will see them often, and commit them to memory. Flee from temptation. Know where you are vulnerable, or what triggers old feelings (lust/insecurity/old memories/etc.). Then make decisions and habits that will help you stay away from those environments while you are retraining your mind to think correctly. This is a lifestyle change. Make the deliberate choice to deny the flesh and feed the spirit. Romans 12:2 says “do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Satan may try to rear his head and remind you of the old lies or thought patterns, but you are no longer a slave to those thoughts! You do not have to entertain them! Just recognize them for what they are, rebuke the enemy, and set your mind on righteous things (practical suggestions: play worship music, recite scripture, pray with a friend). The more you do battle in your mind, continuing to take captive the lies and make them obedient to the truth, the more your mind will begin to look like Christ, and the quicker you will be at recognizing lies for lies and choosing the freedom of the truth! (1 Cor 2:16, 2 Cor 5:17).

When we pray for freedom of our mind and the power to take our thoughts captive, we can expect God to come through. He promises to answer and bring freedom (Is 30:18, Psalm 18, Jeremiah 33:3, 1 Peter 5:10). Welcome to the world of freedom where you are no longer a captive but, instead, a CAPTOR of lies!

Relevant Scriptures

2 Corinthians 10:3-5	“...We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”
Ephesians 6:12	“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood...”
Luke 4:18-19	“The Spirit of the Lord is on me ... to set the oppressed free...”

Questions for Discussion

- Which type of the three weeds do you wrestle with the most? In what type of situation or atmosphere do you most struggle with those thoughts?
- Which of the three steps feels the scariest/hardest to you?
- Explain why it would be important to replace lies with truths from Scripture.
- How do you feel after walking through these steps? What do you think God wants to say to you about those feelings?
- What is one habit you will commit to in order to maintain your garden of truth and continuing to resist the old ways of thinking?

Recommended Reading

Battlefield of the Mind by Joyce Meyer
Breaking Free by Beth Moore

