

## **“Mind Wars” - week 2**

### **Winning the Battle of the Mind**

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Proverbs 23:7

God wants us to really start thinking about *what* we're thinking about. When intrusive thoughts bombard and assault our minds, we're told in Ephesians 6:11 that our enemy the devil is a schemer - literally a strategist and an opportunist. He can't create *anything*, but he certainly leverages our weaknesses against us (through our flesh - carnality - a carnal mind and carnal, natural, primal, worldly thinking).

On any given day, we can be doing any common, calm, natural routine and then get an intrusive thought in our minds that comes out of nowhere. It can be dark or malevolent in nature and have no obvious trigger, but suddenly there's a weird thought like, *“You're going to fail. You're not going to make it. It's too good to be true.”* These are intrusive thoughts that, by design, the enemy wants to insert into our minds.

They intrude and invade our space uninvited, and in a moment, we go from bliss, excitement, listening to worship music, testimonies, or an amazing experience to having the enemy come into that moment of celebration where we are vulnerable. These dark thoughts aren't always about ourselves, but could be about someone or something else - *“I can't believe they said that to me! Just where do they get off? Who do they think they are, anyway?”*

What we want to do is develop the God-given, grace-gifted ability of recognizing these intrusive thoughts that produce in us a carnal response (like when we're driving in traffic!). Things can intrude into our thoughts and come out of our mouths. They happen so quickly that they're there before we have time to stop them. Or - our spouse may say something that triggers us - something from the depths of the past - and we respond like a twelve year old.

Thoughts flood our minds and something comes out of our mouth, and we step back and say, *“Where did that come from? I'm a child of God. I'm a believer, filled with the Holy Ghost and power. I read the “red” and pray for the power. I believe God!”*

And, yet, out of us something dark, primal, *and carnal* comes out and then what do we do? We spend the next two days beating ourselves up and flogging ourselves and saying, *"I can't believe that came out of me!"* Once that happens, who comes in? - the accuser of the brethren steps in. The one who accuses us before the throne of God day and night, twenty four-seven.

Not all of the thoughts we have in our head are *ours*. It's a *mind war* - the battlefield of the *mind*. As the head goes, so goes the body. As the shepherd goes, so goes the sheep. As the mind goes, so goes the heart. We need to live with a renewed mind. There is a War being waged against your *mind*! Joyce Meyer called it, *"The Battle of the Mind!"*

*"When a person is going through a hard time, his mind wants to give up. Satan knows that if he can defeat us in our mind, he can defeat us in our experience."* - Joyce Meyer, "The Battlefield of the Mind"

It's the little foxes that kill the vine, not the storm with thunder and lightning, wind and rain. It's the *little foxes* where, in a moment, one thing gets said that hits just the right nerve, and all of a sudden everything changes.

Proverbs 23:7 *"For as a man thinks in his heart, so is he."*

Romans 12:2 NKJV

*"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."* [NLT says - *"...by changing the way you think"*]

### **You are the gatekeeper of your mind**

No one else will do it for you. Our Helper, the Holy Spirit can stand there where the bridge is out and wave flags at us all day long, but we still have to decide to press the brake before we drive our car off the broken bridge. We don't have to think that thought or keep it. Thoughts come - sometimes we can't help it - they're just there. They're intrusive, but we don't have to hold, nurse, or *rehearse* them. We can either nurse them, rehearse them - or curse them - *stop* them!

## The Carnal Mind

The Carnal Mind is the default mode of the human experience. It engages and takes over when we are not submitted to 1] the Lordship of Christ, 2] the leadership of the Holy Spirit, and 3] the renewing of the mind by the Word of God. Over time, for those mature disciples of Jesus - people who love Jesus with their whole heart, mind, soul and strength - those who pursue God - who want him - who hunger after him - who love the Bible and are being sanctified, growing and learning - when things come up, they may *start* to go into default mode - into the carnal mind - but something in them says, *"Stop it!"*

They hear it and it arrests them in the moment, and their recover time is shorter from those things. With a renewed mind, as they grow and are consistent, recovery becomes almost instantaneous. As they grow in Christ and are becoming fully-devoted disciples and followers of Jesus, recovery time from a slip or miss or stumble gets shorter and shorter.

As our minds are renewed constantly by the washing of the pure water of the Word, when we blow it - miss the mark - go back to that default mode - then *no* time passes. Instead of running and hiding from God like Adam after they sinned, we actually run *to* God like Jacob at the river Jabbok, and we grab him by the leg and say, *"I won't let You go till You bless me."*

*"You need to sit with God in your sin. Instead of begging, you sit with God and you let God love you while you're wallowing in the mire. Let God wash over you. To do that, we must fully trust Him, because all of our first human response is to hide from Him like Adam did - Adam, who had walked and talked with God in the garden."* - John Mark Comer - book, "Practicing the Way"

How amazing would it be for us to realize we just defaulted into human experience and now we're going to sit with our Abba Father in this because we love him, trust him, and know that he loves *us* - all of us - the good, bad, and ugly. Say, *"Here I am, God. Here I am again and I receive Your love."* That will eradicate ninety percent of what we wrestle with in this battlefield of the mind - to sit with him and let him love us just the way we are.

And then we get up and we don't stay there. He'll meet us where we are, but Jesus loves us so much that he won't leave us there. Like the old hymn, *Just as I am*, we invite him in and say, *"Here I am - warts and all - bumps, bruises, dents, cracks - I present myself to You."* Sit in that and let him love you in that place.

2 Corinthians 11:3 ESV

*"But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning [subtle, skillful, trickery], your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ."*

This was Paul talking to followers of Jesus - to the Church. Part of the problem is that we are always striving for self-confidence, when we know that what we need to be leaning into - receiving - embracing - is Christ-confidence. Not confident in ourselves, but confident in him and as we are, he gives us the power to recognize and to move *through* this.

Romans 8:5-8 ESV

*"For those who live according to the flesh [physical, unconsecrated, primal nature] set their minds [to continually desire] on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God."*

We cannot praise God - worship - be all-in with Jesus - and continually desire and entertain dark, intrusive thoughts. If we, as believers, think that we are able to be blessed and yet live with continual, dark, malevolent desires - where we entertain - rehearse - nurse those because they're our own private little thing - that God will then bless our life - he *won't*.

We are not bless-able - blessable. To live like that is no-man's land in the Kingdom. The word "bless" just means to be happy. Don't we want to be blessed - *happy*? The middle ground is the carnal Christian, with a carnal mind - that loves God from a distance, but is still keeping one foot in the darkest places and to continue entertaining that desire. All that does is make room for more intrusive thinking - *"Told you that you wouldn't make it!"*

The carnal mindset - continueing to dwell in it - sets you up for on-going failure, or *death*. Remember: You become what you behold. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he. What are you beholding? This carnal mind will kill you. That's the enemy's intent. So what do we *do* about this?

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NKJV

*"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments [mind] and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge [mind] of God, bringing every thought [mind] into captivity [mind] to the obedience of Christ."*

A stronghold is anything in your life that's got a strong hold on you. As soldiers in God's kingdom, we've been given *ability*, and have been equipped, trained and released into the kingdom of God. We were drafted and armed the moment we said yes to Jesus, and as his followers, we know there is a war to be fought - we live in a *world* at war. The battlefield of the mind is real, and we've been equipped, as God's Word transforms us, and then he releases us to use the weapons of our warfare.

How do we do that? We bring captive the intrusive thought - even out loud - when it comes in, we stop and say, *"No! Not today. Not on my watch. Get thee behind me Satan!"* We say something that reminds us of the authority we've been given, and the equipment that we have to fight the good fight of faith. We all have to remind ourselves of that. God has given us the ability to take our thoughts captive.

Imagine a thought that intrudes into our space - we recognize it and identify it - then we capture it and arrest it. The word "rebuke" means to arrest or to stop. So, we can rebuke that thought in the name of Jesus. *"No. Not today, Satan. I rebuke that - stop it - arrest it in the name of Jesus. It will not have mastery over me. I have the mind of Christ. I'm his son - I'm his daughter - and have been given authority to arrest and capture those thoughts."*

We bring every thought into the obedience of Christ as we submit those to Jesus. We say, *"Lord, I don't know where that thought came from, but the perfect love of Jesus that works in us - the Gospel - casts out all fear, which involves torment sent by the enemy."* The Gospel isn't just to think, but it's *active* - all the time - and the Gospel in us - Jesus in us - eradicates that - cancels and nullifies that assignment on us, by the love of God - the Word of God - as we capture the thoughts.

*"Scripture does not order the carnal mind to be sanctified, but mortified and crucified - dealt with as a wild beast. Where the carnal mind rules, the soul is dead to God. The regenerate have both a spiritual and a carnal mind. The un-regenerate only a carnal mind."* Our flesh is to be crucified with Jesus. This never stops. The accuser of the brethren stands before the throne of God day and night...

## Prayer

*Father, Thank You for Your Word. Give us grace to recognize and identify those intrusive thoughts, and by the power of the Holy Spirit - the authority we've been given to arrest, rebuke, and capture those thoughts, and to not allow them to occupy our brain space - our mind space - our heart space - our soul space. Father, give us the wisdom to recognize them instantly, so it's no longer a three-day recovery, but a five-minute recovery.*

*Holy Spirit, help us to identify those intrusive thoughts that we constantly deal with. Reveal them so we can then submit them to Your authority, and so we might experience the freedom that You bring to demolish strongholds, because the weapons we have in You are mighty to tear them down. Father, we give You our thoughts. Lord, renew our minds by Your Spirit and Your power working in us. Thank You. We love You and honor You.*

*In Jesus' name. Amen*