

Taking Thoughts Captive

by Michelle Freeman

References: *Breaking Free* by Beth Moore, and *Battlefield of the Mind* by Joyce Meyer

We are in a Battle

Have you ever had thoughts that consume your mind? Thoughts that you wish weren't there but can't seem to 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 that keep replaying. Maybe it's condemning memories from a painful past that you can't seem to shake.

Whether you are aware of it or not, we are engaged in a battle. A study of Scripture would reveal 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 (Rev12:10, John 8:44). He hates the children of God. He is called the Father of lies and all that is false, and he loves to keep us from living in freedom and truth. How does he do this? By speaking little nagging half-truths, by pressing our insecurities and assuring us they are real, by using our fears, doubts, past pains, and worries against us, until eventually the garden of our minds are filled with a tangle of thought-weeds that control us!

There are several types of weeds that can control our thoughts.

1. Sinful thoughts: lust, anger, revenge, unforgiveness, bitterness, jealousy/envy, greed, obsession. These are just a few of the unholy thought patterns that Satan would love to have us fix our minds upon. The more we entertain and feed the thoughts, the more they consume our mind
2. Lies that come from insecurities, fear, or weakness: Things like "I'm not good enough", "No one could ever love me", "I always fail at this". When Satan presses these insecurities, we end up dwelling on our faults until we can no longer see the person God made us to be! Satan tries to make these faults out to be bigger than they are, so that we lose perspective.
3. Crippling thoughts from past painful experiences: When we go through a painful experience (abuse, grief, loss, trauma) doors are opened to specific fears and wounds, that can be triggered by experiences later in life. If not dealt with, those wounds can result in bitterness, unforgiveness, feelings of worthlessness, inability to trust, or even self-deprecation.

We have Victory in Jesus!

Satan would love to use these thought weeds to build strongholds in our minds that hold us captive until we feel we can not escape from or stop the thoughts: they control us. The Good News is that Scripture says we do not have to remain captive! Jesus has given us the weapons to overcome these 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, thus giving them control, we can learn to take the thoughts captive and make them obedient to Christ!

Steps to Freedom

1. Recognizing the root of the weed: Recognize 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, the truth. Ask the Lord to reveal incorrect thinking and to open your eyes to lies so that you can see them for what they are!
2. Repent/Reject the lie: Stand in agreement with God that the thoughts are sinful or untrue. Repent of any personal sin, or anything you have allowed to grow between you and God. If you are dealing with past pain or insecurities, invite God into that specific area or memory. Invite him to bring healing and peace. Accept God’s forgiveness.
3. Uproot specific weeds (lies): Put a label to the specific lies or thoughts you’ve been wrestling with. It helps to make a list. Putting a specific title 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.” Partner with God to break the power of these lies. Purposefully uproot each weed by doing what 2 Cor 10:5 says: taking each thought captive and making it obedient to Christ. This means you no longer give the lie credit or choose to entertain it. Instead, you smash it with comparison to God’s truths!
4. Replace the weeds with the seeds of truth: This last step is important! As you have just uprooted the tangled weeds of lies in your mind, you 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 truths where the weeds once were (2 Cor 3:17). 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 your specific stronghold. Ask God for specific promises to cling to when you are tempted to believe the old lies.

5. Maintaining a garden of truth: Just like seedlings need water, sun, and good nutrients, so the newly planted truths in your mind need cultivating. Meditate on the truths that God has given you! Write them on cards, set them physically before you, commit them to memory. Flee from temptation. Avoid as many forms of deception as possible. Know where you are vulnerable, or what triggers old feelings (lust/insecurity/old memories etc.) and make decisions to stay away from those environments while you are retraining your mind. Satan may try to rear his head and remind you of the old lies or thought patterns, but you are no longer a slave! You do not have to entertain them! Recognize them for what they are (lies), rebuke the enemy, and set your mind on righteous things (practical suggestions: play worship music, recite scripture, pray with a friend). 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.” This is a life-style change. Make the deliberate choice to deny the flesh and feed the spirit. The more you do battle in your mind, taking lies captive and making them obedient to truth, the more your mind will begin to look like Christ. You will more quickly recognize the lies for what they are and embrace the freedom of truth! (1Cor 2:16, 2 Cor 5:17).

When we pray for freedom in our mind and the power to take thoughts captive, we can expect God to come through. He promises to answer and bring freedom (Is 30:18, Psalm 18, Jeremiah 33:3). We can cling to the promises of God and expect him to finish what He has started (1 Peter 5:10). Welcome to the world of freedom, and of no longer being a captive but a CAPTOR of lies!

Relevant Scriptures

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Ephesians 6:12

Luke 4:18-19

Questions for Discussion

- Which of the three weeds do you wrestle with the most? In what situation or atmosphere do you most struggle with those thoughts?
- Which of the five steps feels the scariest/hardest to you?
- Explain why it is important to replace lies with truth from Scripture.
- List specific scriptures that combat the lies you have been wrestling with.
- After walking through these steps, do you feel a greater sense of freedom?
- What will be important action steps in maintaining your garden of truth and resisting the old ways of thinking?

Recommended Reading:

“Battlefield of the Mind” by Joyce Meyer

“Breaking Free” by Beth Moore