

Where the Mind Goes, the Man Follows

by Joyce Meyer

I have done a lot of teaching in the past twenty-five years, and I am convinced that one of the greatest areas in which we need help is the area of our thinking. No matter how many messages you and I hear about the mind, we can always benefit from hearing another one.

I believe that where the mind goes, the man follows. Jesus said in Luke 6:45, *...out of the abundance (overflow) of the heart his mouth speaks*. And in Proverbs 23:7 the Bible says, *...as he [a man] thinks in his heart, so is he...* In both of these scriptures, the word *heart* refers to the mind. In other words, our thoughts are the forerunners of both our words and actions. Whatever you and I allow into our inner life will eventually be seen in our outer life.

So in order to deal with wrong behavior, we need to deal with wrong thinking. My deep desire is to help us get our thinking lined up with His Word. As a result, the words of our mouths and the actions of our lives will get straightened out in the process. I believe the key to victory is learning how to think on the things that God wants us to think—to be renewed in our mind by the power of His Word—instead of thinking on whatever comes into our head.

A House Made of Thoughts

I have come to the realization that our thoughts have the power to either help us or hurt us. They can affect our health, our moods and our relationships. As a matter of fact, they affect nearly everything in our lives. When I first began to study the Word, I had many problems in my life. But a major transition took place in my spirit when I received a revelation about my thinking. I discovered that the primary reason my life was messed up was because my thinking was messed up.

The Lord showed me that all of us have an outer life and an inner life. Our outer life is the part of us that everybody sees, and our inner life is the part that nobody sees, except God and us. The inner life includes our thoughts, attitudes and motives. God knows every thought that you and I think. The Bible says that *...not a creature exists that is concealed from His sight, but all things are open and exposed, naked and defenseless to the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do* (Hebrews 4:13).

I like to think of our inner life as a house made of thoughts that is constantly being built. It is within these “walls” of our thinking that each of us lives. Every thought we accept is like another brick in the wall of the house we are building. If we accept negative, selfish, or other ungodly thoughts, our “house” will be a mess, and we will find ourselves walled in with the enemy. But when we choose to think positive, godly thoughts, the “house” in which we live will be a blessing, filled with the rewards of righteousness.

Our minds are just like computers—we can only get out of them what we put into them. When I first began walking with God, my mind needed major reprogramming. Much of my thinking was contrary to the Word, and it needed to be changed. Romans 12:2 says, *Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God...*

By the grace of God, I came to the understanding that if I wanted to have a better life, I needed to have better thinking. Little by little, God began to reveal to me different areas in my life where I had accepted Satan’s lies. The walls of deception I allowed the devil to develop in my mind needed to be demolished and rebuilt with the truth. With the power of God’s Spirit at work in me, the renovation process began.

Exposing the Enemy

Once we make the decision to change our thinking, you and I enter into an all-out war with the enemy, and the battlefield is our mind. Satan knows that if he can dominate our thinking, he can dominate our life. That is why he often attacks us early in the morning, before our feet ever hit the floor. He strategically bombards our mind with every negative and ungodly thought imaginable—all in an effort to set the stage for a day of misery and sorrow.

The Bible says that *...we are not [to be] ignorant of his [Satan's] devices* (2 Corinthians 2:11 KJV). Interestingly enough, the word *devices* is defined by *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* as "a mental perception or thought; an evil purpose." I have found that two of Satan's greatest devices he uses against us are worry and reasoning.

When I first began my walk with the Lord, I was a chief worrier. I worried about and tried to figure out everything. I had to have everything in a certain place in my mind. I had become addicted to worry and reasoning because it gave me a feeling of being in control. And when I was in control, I felt comfortable.

Every time I accepted one of Satan's lies, I gave place to him in my thinking (see Ephesians 4:27). Over the years, this allowed him to develop a stronghold in my mind. *Webster's II New College Dictionary* defines a *stronghold* as "a fortress; an area dominated or occupied by a special group." Mental strongholds can be built out of either good thoughts or bad thoughts. In my case, my thinking had become dominated by worry and reasoning. I discovered that the only way to destroy a stronghold of lies is with the truth.

Wielding the Sword

One of the greatest weapons that you and I have is the truth of God's Word. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 10:4,5, *For the weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood], but they are mighty before God for the overthrow and destruction of strongholds, [Inasmuch as we] refute arguments and theories and reasonings and every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God; and we lead every thought and purpose away captive into the obedience of Christ....* If we don't lead wrong thoughts away captive, the wrong thoughts will lead us away captive.

When Jesus faced the temptations of Satan in the desert, He spoke the Word and defeated the enemy (see Luke 4:1-13). That is what God was trying to teach me to do with the thoughts of worry and reasoning. He wanted me to know, believe and exalt His Word above the ideas of the enemy and my flesh. Jesus clearly stated in Matthew 6:25-34 that we are not to worry about anything because God is faithful to provide all that we need, when we need it. Proverbs 3:5,6 says, *Lean on, trust in, and be confident in the Lord with all your heart and mind and do not rely on your own insight or understanding. In all your ways know, recognize, and acknowledge Him, and He will direct and make straight and plain your paths.*

God opened my eyes to the truth of His Word. More and more, I began to trust what the Scripture said over what the enemy said. The more I meditated on scriptures like these, the more my thinking changed and the more freedom I received.

Having my mind renewed did not take place overnight. I have learned that problems that take years to develop usually take time for God to work out of us. God does sometimes change things in us instantly through prayer and the laying on of hands. But for the most part, it takes time. As we daily submit to God, *He* will faithfully cultivate the character of Christ in us (see 1 Thessalonians 5:23,24). Armed with the truth, we can begin to take back what the devil has stolen.

Maintaining Mental Freedom

Once we learn how to get free, we then need to learn how to stay free. It's not enough to just cast down the wrong thoughts; we have to choose to think the right thoughts. I found this to be true in my battle against worry and reasoning.

As soon as I learned that God didn't want me to worry or try to figure everything out, I made every effort not to give place to it. When wrong thoughts came into my head, I did my best to cast them down. I would say, "No, I am not going to think that!" For a moment, my mind would find freedom. However, before long, the thought would come back. Again, I would say, "No, I'm not going to think that!" But sooner or later, the same thought, or one just like it, would return. This cycle would go on and on, and sometimes, by the end of the day I was worn out.

One day I remember praying, "God, I can't go on like this day after day. As soon as I cast down these wrong thoughts, they come back. What am I supposed to do?" The Lord answered me, "It's very simple. **Just think about something else.** If you are thinking about something good, then the wrong thought has no place to get in. But if you sit around 'empty-headed,' then the evil thought is always going to jump right back into your mind" (see Matthew 12:43–45).

This was a life-changing revelation for me. I realized that I can't wait for something good to just fall into my mind. I need to *choose* my thoughts *on purpose*—I need to fix my mind on *...whatever is true, whatever is worthy of reverence and is honorable and seemly, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely and lovable, whatever is kind and winsome and gracious...* (Philippians 4:8). The Bible says in Deuteronomy 30:19 that life and death, blessings and curses, are set before us. If you and I do not choose thoughts that lead to life, the devil will choose thoughts for us that lead to death. But when we choose thoughts that lead to life, our lives will be blessed.

I believe this is a major key to victory. Romans 12:21 says that we *...overcome (master) evil with good.* I have found that writing a list of all the positive points about a situation or a person, along with writing down related scriptures, is a very helpful thing to do. After it's written, I carry it around and read it out loud every time I'm tempted to give place to wrong thinking. God has used this method to renew my mind in many areas. I have learned that the more you and I magnify and meditate on what's good, the smaller our problems become.

Get In Agreement with God

As we endeavor to line up our thinking with God's Word, right words and right actions will follow. Ephesians 4:22–24 says, *Strip yourselves of your former nature [put off and discard your old unrenewed self] which characterized your previous manner of life... And be constantly renewed in the spirit of your mind [having a fresh mental and spiritual attitude], and put on the new nature (the regenerate self) created in God's image, [Godlike] in true righteousness and holiness.*

I believe it's very important to understand that verse 23 is the bridge between verses 22 and 24. In order to get rid of our old ways and put on the new nature of righteousness and holiness, you and I need to constantly renew our minds with the truth of God's Word. I used to be a very negative person, so it took daily determination for me to reprogram my thinking. But now that it's done, God's positive perspective is almost automatic.

I challenge you to get into God's Word and see what He says about you and your situations. **Think about what you are thinking about** on a regular basis. Don't just accept thoughts like, *I guess I'm going to be poor and in debt all my life... Nobody's ever going to want to marry me... My thinking is never going to change.* Instead, get into agreement with God. Begin to think things like, *God wants me to prosper in every way* (see 3 John 2). *God has the perfect mate that He is preparing for me while I rest in Him* (see Genesis 2:18). *God is changing me every day, from one degree of glory to another, to be just like Jesus* (see 2 Corinthians 3:18).

I encourage you to choose to believe and meditate on God's Word. The more you study the Word, the more you'll be able to recognize and reject Satan's lies. Take God at His Word daily, and He will bring healing, restoration and rejuvenation to every area of your life!

RENEW YOUR MIND

- Romans 12: 2
- 2 Corinthians 2: 11
- 2 Corinthians 10: 4,5
- Ephesians 4: 22–24, 27
- Philippians 4: 8
- 1 Thessalonians 5: 23,24