

PROGRAM 22 - HOW TO WIN THE WAR FOR YOUR MIND

TEASER

There is an invisible war going on where you live. The war is in your head. It's the war for your mind. Whoever controls your mind runs your life. And if you think you are the only one who messes with your mind, you have already made someone very pleased—the devil himself. He doesn't want you to know that his forces are firing darts—thoughts—into your mind day and night. But then there is the God of love, joy and peace. He is determined to fill your mind with His thoughts. So don't be surprised at what we all go through—the war for your mind. Let's explore this war—on MORE THAN TALK.

INTRO

No one except a follower of Jesus Christ knows the extent of the war going on to control the mind of men. That's because those without Jesus are under the influence of His enemy—the devil. And so they have no idea that the evil one has open season to send his thoughts of selfishness and evil to minds open to him but closed to God. Once we experience the Lord, everything changes. Satan gets his eviction notice and our new life begins. And that is when we discover a conflict that must be fought and won. It's the war for your mind—and with the Holy Spirit on your side, you can win the battle every time.

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HOW TO WIN THE WAR FOR YOUR MIND

Page 1 Don't be surprised!

Invite Christ into your heart and a new life begins. But always remember that the war for your mind never ends. You must learn how to fight this battle—and win by the power of God.

Pity the new Christian who, after being led to Christ, is told, "Now that you've accepted the Lord, your road will be much easier and your battles are over."

What happens after that is so shocking it almost makes me tremble. The poor person is hit by temptations from every direction and, as the years go by, instead of things getting easier, he finds such a tremendous war going on in his mind that he begins to doubt whether he has ever really known the Lord.

Let me give some specifics. A Christian young man is ready to commit suicide because he is so bombarded with lustful thoughts that he believes himself to be abnormal. A Christian businessman faces temptation and even open seduction from a woman in his office. He wonders if he can endure and remain true to his wife. A normally meek and mild Christian woman has temper tantrums and even fits of rage that leave her wondering if she ever knew the Lord. Another Christian is obsessed with fears of death, while still another has a terrifying fear of cancer.

The list of battles goes on. A Christian couple is so tormented by insecurity concerning the future, that they wonder how they could even be Christians. “After all,” they reason, “shouldn’t a Christian automatically be filled with trust?” A lovely Christian lady calls my wife and me to inform us that after twenty-five years of marriage, her husband, himself a Christian, wants a divorce in order to marry another woman. Still another newly married Christian calls to tearfully report that her husband, who also believes in Jesus, has just lost his temper and struck her.

Am I overwhelming you? There’s more. A Christian couple gets so heavily in debt that the authorities threaten to evict them from their apartment because of failure to pay their rent. A Christian teenager is a singer in the church choir and fornicator outside the church. He hates himself for his lust but feels powerless to stop.

Then there’s the other side of the coin—not the Christians doing these things and weeping powerlessly in remorse—but those who have been openly deceived and think they’re in the right. Like the minister—a married man—who grew dependent toward a beautiful young worker in the church. She admired his “spirituality” and soon the two shared prayer times together. That evolved into a sharing of souls—including unmet needs that each seemed to understand. Hugs followed in those private sessions, the embraces grew long, and soon...he and the other woman walked into the trap, the rope tightened and another scandal became a statistic to be used and laughed at by the world.

Someone has said that, while God owns the hearts of those who are genuine Christians, he owns very few of our minds. Sadly, this is true. There is a war going on for the minds of God’s people and none of us are exempt. Don’t be surprised at this war. Your mind is what controls you, so whoever owns your mind owns you.

Two invisible persons are after your mind—one who wishes to control you with love and goodness, and another who wishes to overwhelm you with hatred, bitterness, lust or whatever can come through your weakest door.

Obviously, these two personalities are the Holy Spirit and Satan. Let's take Satan for a moment. He is a real antagonist—and you're the target. Fact is—there is a real Satan and he doesn't like you. In fact, he's out to destroy you. To do that, he discovers your weakness and goes to work on your mind. It's that simple, and it's deadly effective. He has a book of tricks that he has perfected for some six thousand years and your name is in his little book. He's memorized your habits and weaknesses.

Thank God, your name is also in the Book of Life and you cannot only wage war against Satan—you can win the battle every time. The Christian who knows how to control his mind through the power of the Holy Spirit can resist Satan and watch him flee: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7) What a promise! What a fact!

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Page 2 Your amazing built-in computer

This study is prepared to help you win this war. We won't cover more theory on positive or negative thinking—there's much good material on that. Instead, I want to help you learn how to submit to the infilling of your dearest companion, the Holy Spirit. Through Him I'm learning to resist the subtle hints and aggressive assaults that Satan wages against me in the battle for my mind. So can you. This evil genius would like you and me to be more statistics in the number of Christians surrendering to weakness, frustration, defeat, jealousy, resentment, hatred, lust, etc. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit wills that you and I walk on the high road of victory as the King's children—with our minds as instruments for the Holy Spirit to use rather than computers for Satan to fill with unholy garbage.

The main battle ground for the believer is the mind. It's the first area where the Holy Spirit plants His positive thoughts, ideas and plans. It is an amazing built-in computer. It is also Satan's first area of attack. All Christians are harassed by

satanic darts hurled at the mind. The victorious person is one who learns to quench these darts (Ephesians 6:16) and turn his mind into a fertile field of constantly blossoming positive and creative thoughts.

What I appreciate in this battle for the mind is that we Christians start from victory. II Timothy 1:7 is explosive. “For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love, and of a sound mind.” Since a Christian has the mind of Christ (which is pure and positive), he does not have to struggle to work *into* victory—he starts *from* victory as he learns to discipline his thought life and be transformed daily by the renewing of his mind (Romans 12:1-2) “Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may be able to prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” God’s will in your life. Wow!

Proverbs 3:5-6 states, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” That word “all” means total surrender to the will of God and His lordship over you. It means your humanity has been invaded by His deity and He’s now in total charge. The words “own understanding” do not mean we throw away common sense, but that we do not lean or put our weight on our own human intellect, no matter how smart or experienced we are. (Proverbs 28:26 states that, “He that trusts in his own heart is a fool...”) Note also that the Lord will direct all of our *paths*. The word “paths” is not singular but plural. I like that. It means that each day reveals a new and singular path that we walk with God. “Paths” will also mean that every place we walk that day, and every decision we plan and execute, can be directed by the Lord. Imagine! The Almighty Creator of the Universe directing you life and mine! Incredible!

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Page 3 God’s plan for mind control

The moment you were born, you entered a war zone. The battle of all the ages is being fought on planet earth. Good versus evil. Love versus hate. Life versus death. God versus Satan. In simple terms, every human being has one father. Those not born again into God’s family are ruled by their father the devil. Those who

receive God's free offer of pardon and eternal life through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ can rightfully claim God as their Father.

Once you come to Jesus, the battle is not over. It is just beginning. Satan will do all in his power to pull you back under his control. That's why the Lord tells us to put on all of the armor of God so that we can not only fight this spiritual war, but win each battle through the power of the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 6:10-18) The main struggle is for control of your mind. That is where the evil one attacks constantly. You and I must learn how to win the war for our minds. This is the purpose of this message.

The Bible says, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he..." (Proverbs 23:7). Note the correlation between heart and mind—the heart is thinking. Picture the atmosphere as literally crackling with thought waves. Some are positive and beautiful, and others negative and ugly. Visualize two unseen personalities creating and projecting thoughts on the human mind: a caring and loving God and a subtle and sinister Satan. Both desire control of the mind. A believer is not immune to negative thoughts coming his way. You must choose whether to tune in to the voice of the Holy Spirit or to that of Satan. We must learn to think scripturally.

1. What is God's plan for mind control? Interestingly, the Bible does not tell us not to think negative thoughts. Just try to concentrate on not thinking negative thoughts and you're already thinking them. Scripture tells us to think God's thoughts. In other words, it's not what we *are not* to think on, but what we *are* to think on. Philippians 4:8 is fabulous. This verse states, "Whatever things are true—honest—just—pure—lovely—of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." That's the secret. I'm to test my thoughts using this verse as a guide.
2. God's plan for mind control also takes in James 3:17. "But the wisdom that is from above (God's thoughts) is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." Note that the word "pure" comes before the word "peaceable." Satan can sometimes give a counterfeit peace that is impure. Like the married man who fell in love with the divorced woman he met in church. He felt such "peace" being around her that he believed it had to be God. Throwing away the solid rock of Scripture for the shifting sand of circumstances, he became another victim who had a tragic fall.

3. A third way to test thoughts is through I Corinthians 13:4-7. Let me use the Living Bible for this one. Your thoughts, if growing in the love of God, will contain the qualities of “very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly notice when others do it wrong. It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever truth wins out.” These scriptures can be used as scales to weigh your thought patterns. Then you will know to reject the negative because it will not agree with God’s pattern.

The simple but profound secret to waging successful war against Satan and winning the war for your mind is knowing what God thinks about every important subject in life and then obeying Him by acting on the Word of God. To the degree I live in the Word of God, to that degree I am also living in the mind of God. His words are His thoughts, so when my mind is filled with His thoughts and I’m reviewing them constantly, I will be a most difficult man for Satan to trap.

Most Christians don’t really know what God thinks about the subjects that constitute life, and so they follow what they believe to be the natural course of events and thoughts that enter their own human minds. They don’t realize they’re being programmed by either God or Satan—and that if they knew the Word of God, it would be fairly easy to recognize the evil one’s subtle voice, because he has a habit of disagreeing with God’s Word.

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Page 4 Winning the war one day at a time

Let’s practice a typical day together. You awaken to say “Good morning, Lord. I love you. Empty me of sin and self and fill me with the Holy Spirit.”

Now you pick up God’s love letter the Bible and begin reading it chapter by chapter. As you spend time studying the Word and applying its truths, your mind is further filled with God’s thoughts. Being involved with more time in the Word

also means less idle time for negative thoughts to develop and feed. II Timothy 2:15 takes on new meaning, “Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth.”

You not only begin to see clearly the traps that Satan sets for you and others, but how to avoid those snares and help others do the same. Your mind is virtually pulsating with verses of Scripture, and you see things from the Lord’s perspective.

If you’re a man contemplating a divorce from your mate, you discover according to the book of Malachi that God hates divorce and warns you against being unfaithful to the wife of your youth. (Malachi 2:16) Now you’re being prepared for the Lord to begin a new work, first in your own life, and then in your marriage.

If you’re the person going deeper and deeper into debt because “everyone’s doing it,” you reverse course after discovering Romans 13:8, “Owe no man anything, but to love one another...” and rearrange your priorities so that you can pay off all debts.

If you’re a person battling lustful thoughts, you begin to realize that while this is a temptation that happens to others, you can so fill your life with Jesus that He is able to teach you how to behave with purity and nobility toward others and help you to, “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” (II Timothy 2:22)

If you’re a Christian woman preparing to marry an unsaved man, you halt all proceedings in light of II Corinthians 6:14, “Be you not unequally yoked together with unbelievers...”

If you have a tormenting fear of death, you present that fear to the Holy Spirit and walk away with the gift of Hebrews 2:15—that of being delivered from the fear of death and any resulting bondage, while actually beginning to anticipate that moment of going to be with the Lord who loves you so intimately.

If you’re the Christian businessman or woman facing office seduction, you resolve to go share Jesus with that person so that they will know your purity has no price tag.

Perhaps that day you are faced with one or both of the most common of Satan’s darts—the monster called jealousy and/or an unforgiving spirit. Now that your mind is being taken over by God’s Word, you’re ready to face and win these

battles. As that jealous thought strikes, the Holy Spirit reminds you that you are special to the Lord and that with God as your Father, Christ as elder brother and the Holy Spirit as precious counselor and comforter, you need not bow to the insecurity and inferiority of jealousy.

Now Satan employs one other favorite tool to see if he can defeat you and win the war for your mind—an unforgiving spirit. People will always do things to you and me that would make us secretly wish they would disappear for around fifty years. However, since you have learned that to the degree you refuse to forgive others for their sins and unkindnesses toward you, to that same degree will God not forgive you for your sins, you drop all anger and hatred in a hurry. And God's peace settles in your heart as you choose to forgive so that, "...if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you" (Matthew 6:14). Page 5 after Jim.

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Page 5 Disciplining mind, body and spirit

The day is going fast because you find yourself enjoying submitting to the Holy Spirit and using the Word of God as a guide for that day's thoughts, actions, reactions and words. You used to run on the impressions that came into your mind, but now you find yourself testing those thoughts to see if they agree with Scripture. You also find a sharper awareness of the Holy Spirit and your dependency on His power. Prayer becomes more natural as you begin to pray for people and situations as they come to mind. You're excited that you are actually learning to "pray without ceasing" (I Thessalonians 5:17).

That day you also memorize a fresh scripture verse or two. You have already discovered that memorizing God's Word uses up more storage space in that fabulous computer mind you have, and that the Word is self-expanding and forces out the negative. (Psalm 119:11) "Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against you.")

Perhaps the verse that ignites in your mind and heart is I Timothy 4:8, “Bodily exercise profits (a) little...” You realize that a toned and healthy body is a great aid toward scripturally positive thinking, and you determine to get or stay in good physical condition.

During this typical day, you also declare boldly who and what the Word of God says you are (you’re a king and a priest, so you act like one—Revelation 1:6) as well as confess the greatness of God in your life (“I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress...” Psalm 91:2).

Negative confession puts you deeper into weakness and defeat, but positive confession releases the power of God in your life as you look to Him to, “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer” (Psalm 19:14).

Finally, as you think often on the Lord (Malachi 3:16), you find yourself asking Him less questions and doing less doubting: “Why did this have to happen?” “Why must I endure...?” “What did I do to deserve this?” You’re learning to confess your gratitude to the Lord, not only for the positive things that happen, but also the difficult, as you employ I Thessalonians 5:18 in order to grow into greater maturity, “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

You know that some days will be more difficult and that when you’re at your weakest, Satan will come roaring. But you’re also learning to immediately praise the Lord when negative or depressing thoughts try to capture your mind, and release will often come when you offer the sacrifice of praise with your lips even though you don’t “feel” faith in your heart (Hebrews 13:15).

And you’ve also learned this day that one of the best ways to win the war for your mind is to get your mind off yourself by doing something nice for someone else. Negative thoughts crowd in on the person who thinks too long *on* himself, but deep satisfaction comes to the one who loves his neighbor *as* himself.

You and I walk with a God who is ordering our steps (Psalm 37:23, 24) and who promises that everything will work together for good (Romans 8:28). Take time for self-examination and confession when necessary. A sensitive conscience is a priceless treasure (Acts 24:16). However, don’t glorify Satan by looking too long inwardly in negative introspection because that is actually pride in reverse, because it is still a form of self-centeredness. Instead, make a bold confession of your position and authority through the One Who lives inside you. And always

remember that you're not the only one fighting the war for your mind. We're all in this battle together but, more importantly, so is the Holy Spirit. And that means you're on the side that won!