

CRAIG GROESCHEL

WINNING THE WAR



IN YOUR MIND

WORKBOOK | 12 SESSIONS

CHANGE YOUR THINKING, CHANGE YOUR LIFE

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Winning the War for Your Mind Workbook

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INTRODUCTION

The life you have is a reflection of what you think.

Like whitewater rapids rushing you downstream, your thoughts move your life in the direction of their strongest currents. The thoughts you believe, hold onto, and use to support your decisions determine your view of everything and everyone around you, including yourself. You probably don't stop and think about the power your thoughts have over your life—which only increases the power they have to determine your decisions and shape your actions.

Simply put, what you think determines what you believe. Every thought in your brain produces a neurochemical change in your mind. And these thoughts shape your life. Once your thoughts determine what you believe, these beliefs then determine how you behave. In many ways, you become what you think about. Therefore, the better you grasp the importance of your thoughts, the better equipped you'll be to change your life in powerful ways.

Even as scientists and neurologists continue to confirm the power our thoughts have on us, God told us this truth more than 1,500 years ago: “For as [a person] thinks in his heart, so he is” (Proverbs 23:7 NKJV). God knows that what we focus on mentally affects every aspect of our lives because he created us that way.

Drawing on what the Bible tells us about the power of our thoughts as well as what we can learn from modern psychology, particularly an area called cognitive behavioral therapy, we have the ability to change our lives for the better. We can live according to the principles and promises God gives us and enjoy being all that he created us to be. Otherwise, our thoughts will continue to sweep us away in dangerous currents of deception, misinformation, and lies from our enemy, the devil.

If you are sick and tired of being sick and tired, of having your life poisoned by toxic thoughts, of being held hostage by those inner voices, then trust God that you can change. As you read *Winning the War in Your Mind*, this workbook will help you understand and apply the important truths essential to changing your thoughts and behavior.

Following the chapters of the book, you will be equipped and empowered with tools to help you identify the lies holding you back and replace those lies with the truth that will set you free. First, you will understand the battle for your mind and why it's the reason you might not be who you think you are. Next, you will discover the spiritual weapons God has given you to win the battles you face and fight daily. From there you will learn how your brain works and the incredible ability you have to reframe your thinking and literally redesign your mind around new thoughts. Finally, you will be equipped to identify your mental triggers and overcome them through the power of prayer.

You will discover how to live free of anxiety and negativity and to experience the joy and peace that comes from knowing God and living in his truth. With his help, you can master your mind, think his thoughts, and do his will. You can renew the intricately designed brain he has created as part of your body. You can stop believing the lies that hold you back, weigh you down, and keep you living a life that leaves you frustrated and unfulfilled.

As you dwell in his truth, you can grow to live by faith and not be overcome with worry. You can allow God's truth to help treat your anxious mind. Instead of wavering aimlessly, you can learn to become more confidently decisive. You can grow beyond all that weighs you down and dwell in daily peace. With God's help, you will experience life to the fullest, living out the purpose for which you were created. It's time to arrest your false thoughts and liberate God's truth in you.

It's time to change your thinking so God can change your life.



PART 1

THE REPLACEMENT PRINCIPLE

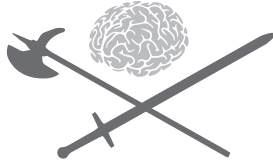
REMOVE THE LIES, REPLACE WITH TRUTH

When you understand the battle taking place in your mind, you realize that you're not who you think you are. In fact, your thoughts may be based on false beliefs and inaccurate assumptions, which then prevent you from living in the truth of who God says you are. When you explore how to identify and remove the lies, you can then focus on the truth of God's Word.

As you practice the Replacement Principle, you will:

- Realize how your perception shapes your reality and therefore the decisions you make and actions you take.
- Perform a thought audit to help you quickly evaluate the different kinds of thoughts occupying your mind and fueling your emotions.
- Become a thought warrior who can push back against thoughts that are untrue, outdated, and destructive.
- Identify the lies you believe and see the harmful impact they have on how you see God, yourself, your life, and your relationships with others.
- Release old lies and redirect your focus to the new truth of God's Word.
- Declare truth in all areas of your thinking as you trust God and live according to his promises.





LESSON ONE

PERCEPTION IS REALITY

*You cannot change what you do not confront.
If you ignore the battle, you lose the battle.*

CRAIG GROESCHEL

Every day you are engaged in a battle. You may not recognize the battle, but it is wreaking havoc in your life. Ever wonder why you can't shake a habit? Why you feel you can't connect with God? Why you lose your temper so easily? Why you continually make bad decisions? Why your kids or friends appear to have a cloud of darkness over them when you're around? Why you and your spouse fight so much? Why you're consumed with worry, fear, and negativity?

There is a reason why. Your mind is a warzone, and it's critical that you recognize the battle is raging. If you ignore what's going on in your thought life, then your unhealthy thoughts will continue to erode your quality of life, your relationships, your faith. Because the assault will not stop unless you engage.

The apostle Paul made it clear, “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12). You are in a battle, and your adversary is not your boss, spouse, kid, or neighbor with the annoying dog that’s always barking. The one you are fighting against is your spiritual enemy—the devil.

Satan is your unseen enemy whose mission is to destroy you (see John 10:10), stop you (see 1 Thessalonians 2:18), and devour you (see 1 Peter 5:8). Satan despises you with more hatred than you can imagine. He wants to keep you from intimate relationships with those you love most. He wants to rob you of deep joy, inner contentment, and abiding peace. The devil wants to strip you from the fulfillment of knowing that what you do makes a difference.

He accomplishes this by convincing you of his lies. He is a deceiver, and his strategy to defeat you is to persuade you to believe lies. We are warned, “there is no truth in him . . . when he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44). If he can get you to accept his false notions and dangerous deceits, then his lies manipulate your perception of reality. You accept the way you see things—based on your enemy’s subterfuge—and live your life based on untrue beliefs.

Winning the war in your mind requires you to study how you see things and why you see them that way, identify the lies of the enemy, and rely instead on the truth of God.

EXPLORING GOD’S WORD

Perhaps no one in the Bible understood how one’s view of reality can be shaped by perceptions better than the apostle Paul. After all, he started life as a devout Jew, zealously committed to maintaining the letter of religious law and persecuting those who were following the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Known then as Saul, he experienced a supernatural encounter with the Lord while traveling to Damascus in the hopes of catching some believers there. As you read through the following account, underline or circle any words, details, or images that relate to how Paul’s perception of Jesus and understanding of faith changed.

¹ Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³ As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

⁵ "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. ⁶ "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

⁷ The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

¹⁰ In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord," he answered.

¹¹ The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. ¹² In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."

¹³ "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

¹⁵ But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. ¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

¹⁷ Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, ¹⁹ and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

WINNING THE WAR IN YOUR MIND WORKBOOK

- What did Saul believe that caused him to go around “breathing murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples” (Acts 9:1)? What was the basis for these beliefs?
- Considering how deeply embedded Saul’s thoughts about Jesus must have been, why did this encounter change his thinking? Based solely on a rational, logical extension of Saul’s false beliefs, what other kind of response might he have had to this situation?
- How did the truth of Saul’s own encounter with Christ force him to reconsider his perception of reality? Why?
- Saul’s transformational encounter is also striking because of the faith of Ananias. Logically, based on the reports he had heard about Saul’s relentless quest to arrest and kill followers of Jesus, Ananias was understandably wary. What changed Ananias’ mind about the task God asked him to perform? What did Ananias’ experience have in common with Saul’s?
- This incident reminds us of how vision often serves as a metaphor for seeing clearly beyond concrete perceptions. How did Saul’s blindness force him to reconsider what he used to believe? What did he learn about his ability to see clearly after he welcomed the Holy Spirit into his life?

- How did Saul’s way of thinking change after he surrendered to Christ and was filled with God’s Spirit? Why did his previous beliefs no longer hold the same power over him?

REFLECTING ON THE TRUTH

After this dramatic encounter, Saul went on to fulfill the prophecy that God related to Ananias: “This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel” (Acts 19:15). He adopted his Roman name *Paul* as he began to travel further into the Gentile world. He spent the rest of his days traveling, preaching, and evangelizing despite experiencing the same kind of persecution he once enforced. He also endured trials and hardships—including arrests, beatings, shipwrecks, snakebites, jail time, and earthquakes—that never shook his faith but only strengthened his trust in God.

Clearly, Paul’s thinking changed in radical ways as he experienced the supernatural power of God and recognized the spiritual warfare in which he was engaged. Paul made this clear when he wrote, “We are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12 NLT).

Yet while Paul provided us with considerable insights into how to win this battle, which we will explore throughout this workbook, he frequently reminded us to focus on the power our thoughts have in defeating the enemy and overcoming temptations. Writing to the community of believers at Philippi, he urged, “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians 4:8–9).

WINNING THE WAR IN YOUR MIND WORKBOOK

- What's your reaction when you read Paul's warning about the spiritual battle we are all fighting? What beliefs and supporting thoughts shape how you view the dark forces you are up against?

- Fill in the blanks:

When I think about devils and demons as Paul describes here, I immediately recall

_____.

If someone asked me to describe my view of the devil, I would tell that person

_____.

Spiritual warfare, in my opinion and based on my experience, can be defined as

_____.

- What concerns you most when you think about the devil opposing you and trying to convince you of his lies? What frightens you or causes alarm? Why?

- What is one of the enemy's lies that you've already identified in your thinking? How did you come to think this?

- With Paul's warning in mind, why do you suppose he also urges us to curate our thoughts and focus only on the positive attributes listed? What's the relationship between the two?

PERCEPTION IS REALITY

- In response to Paul's call for positive thinking, list the first thing that pops into your mind from your personal experience that illustrates each of his categories:

Noble: _____.

Right: _____.

Pure: _____.

Lovely: _____.

Admirable: _____.

Excellent: _____.

Praiseworthy: _____.

CHANGING YOUR STRATEGY

Most of us have bad habits and destructive behaviors that we want to change in various areas of our lives. We know that they are not good for us and that they pull us away from God. It might be how we handle our anger or our tendency to gossip about people at work. We might struggle with looking at sites online that we know do not reflect what God wants for our lives. It could be the way we handle money and remain stuck in debt or how we've resigned ourselves to remaining in unhealthy relationships.

Whether it's focusing on a healthy diet, or coming to terms with a secret addiction, or keeping control over our words, our likelihood for success will increase when we examine our thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and motives around each habit or behavior. Repetition certainly plays a key part in developing a conditioned pattern, but the thoughts and beliefs beneath our actions are often what prevent us from making lasting changes.

As you begin to challenge the way you perceive reality, you may want to begin with the things you are doing that bug you the most and negatively impact your

relationship with God. So, for each area of your life below, list something you would like to change and then funnel down to the feelings, thoughts, and beliefs contributing to your behavior.

SELF-IMAGE AND SELF-CONFIDENCE

Behavior you want to change:

Feelings associated with this behavior:

Thoughts connected to this behavior:

False beliefs supporting these thoughts:

PRIMARY RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILY AND CLOSE FRIENDS

Behavior you want to change:

Feelings associated with this behavior:

Thoughts connected to this behavior:

PERCEPTION IS REALITY

False beliefs supporting these thoughts:

PHYSICAL HEALTH AND LIFESTYLE HABITS (DIET, EXERCISE, SLEEP)

Behavior you want to change:

Feelings associated with this behavior:

Thoughts connected to this behavior:

False beliefs supporting these thoughts:

WORK, CAREER, EDUCATION, AND TRAINING

Behavior you want to change:

Feelings associated with this behavior:

Thoughts connected to this behavior:

False beliefs supporting these thoughts:

WAYS YOU PRACTICE AND EXERCISE YOUR FAITH IN GOD

Behavior you want to change:

Feelings associated with this behavior:

Thoughts connected to this behavior:

False beliefs supporting these thoughts:

EXERCISING THE EXCHANGE

The key to winning the war in our mind comes down to identifying the harmful thoughts, connecting them to the false beliefs and lies of the enemy we've accepted, and replacing them with the truth of God's Word. Too often, we allow our thoughts to run like wild horses back and forth in our minds. We draw conclusions, create expectations, and assume worst-case consequences without stopping to check and verify the basis for these runaway mustangs. We know that comparing ourselves to others often makes us feel depressed, envious, and inadequate, but rarely do we challenge ourselves to examine and top the comparisons.

As you begin identifying, eliminating, and replacing negative thoughts and false beliefs, you will find that it helps to prepare ways you can respond when you

catch yourself thinking destructive thoughts that are not true. Gradually, you will learn to be more aware of what you're thinking and how these thoughts directly relate to your moods, attitudes, perceptions, decisions, and actions (or lack of actions). The best place to begin is by becoming a collector of your thoughts and a student of each one's origin and impact.

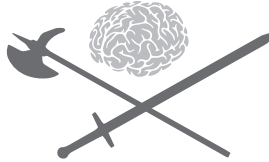
Toward that goal, you will find a helpful exercise at the end of chapter 1 in *Winning the War in Your Mind*. If you haven't already completed "Your Thought Audit" at the end of that chapter, go back and spend some unhurried time answering the questions about your thought patterns. Once you've completed "Your Thought Audit," look for patterns, triggers, and consequences that various thoughts have in your life on a daily basis. Use the following questions to help you become more aware of your typical thoughts and the ways they shape your life, both in big ways and in small ways.

- What consistent patterns and repeated thoughts emerged from your audit? How aware were you of these patterns and repetitions before the audit?
- What surprised you most from the findings in your thought audit? Why did this surprise you?
- Overall, do your thought patterns reflect your beliefs about God and the faith you have in Jesus? How would you describe this gap?
- What one single thought that you recorded during your audit reflects a recurrent theme or larger struggle throughout your life? What's the belief underlying this thought?

After answering these questions and reviewing your audit, spend some time in honest prayer before the Lord. Ask him to work through your efforts to help

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you win the spiritual battle in your mind once and for all. Pray for wisdom and discernment as you seek to identify the negative, destructive ways of thinking that continue to pull you down. Thank God for all that he's doing in your life and the victory you have because of what Jesus did on the cross.



LESSON TWO

BECOMING A THOUGHT WARRIOR

*To win the battle for our minds, we must engage,
because there is no other way for us to defeat evil.*

CRAIG GROESCHEL

Like most people, you probably carry around baggage from your past that continues to shape the way you think. Experiences from your childhood linger just below the surface, and parental voices become embedded in your consciousness, echoing messages that may have been true then but not now. You have memories and associations of those events, messages, feelings and more as you progressed into adulthood, forming conclusions and expectations based on all these assumptions.

But many of them, perhaps *most* of them, are simply not true.

You are not who others say you are. You are not what your dad said. You are not who your mom told you to be. You are not what your teacher said. You are not what your grandmother said. You are not what the bully online said.

You must also realize this: You are not who *you* say you are. You are not what your insecurities echo across your lifetime. You are not what the accusing whispers say you are. You are not the failure your past mistakes claim you are. You are not the lies you believe.

Satan's strategy to win the battle for your mind is convincing you to believe lies. If you believe a lie, it could hold you back from serving where you believe you could make a difference. It will keep you living in shame from the past when God wants you free for a better future. The lies will poison you to believe you can never be full of joy, when God desires to bless you in more ways than you can even imagine.

Those voices have probably haunted you, demeaned you, stripped you of your confidence, stunted your spiritual growth, cast a shadow over what should be joyful moments in your life, paralyzed your ability to make healthy decisions, and inhibited your ability to enjoy God, people, life.

Those thoughts can destroy you, but those thoughts *lie*.

You are *not* who you think you are.

There is hope. Your future doesn't have to look like your past. You can change.

If you're willing to fight.

But you have to make a choice to recognize the battle you're in and engage with this spiritual reality if you want to change your thoughts, improve your life, and grow closer to God. Simply put, you have to fight. You may not consider yourself a fighter or someone who enjoys going to battle, but you're being assaulted by your spiritual enemy, the devil, each day. You may be oblivious to his attacks or fail to recognize his involvement, but he's out to get you.

If this sounds overly dramatic, alarmist, or exaggerated, then you're thinking exactly what the enemy wants you to think. It's probably easier for you to recognize that your life is not what you want, that you've settled for less than God's best for your life, and that constant busyness keeps you distracted and pulled in a million directions. You may be pretending you're okay, even happy, but you know that you long for more—more peace, more purpose, more passion, more hope, more life.

As long as you ignore what's going on in your thought life, then your unhealthy thoughts will continue to erode your quality of life, your relationships, your faith. Because the assault will not stop unless you engage. To win the battle for your mind, you must become a thought warrior, because there is no other way to defeat evil.

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD

Even when you're willing to fight, it can be tough to move forward because you quickly realize that you don't have what it takes to win the war. Like most people, you've tried to change your thinking, tried to break old habits, tried to change your life. You've done everything you know to do, but you always end up back in the same place. You keep doing what you don't want to do and not doing what you want to do. You keep falling down and falling short. Sometimes you might feel like giving up.

Because here's the problem: The power you need to win the battle in your mind is a power you don't possess. Relying on your own power is just self-help, and self-help only goes so far against the power of the enemy. But no matter what your circumstances may be or how hopeless you feel, don't lose your faith. You are not alone in your frustration. Because even the apostle Paul struggled with feeling stuck. Here's how he describes himself:

¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

²¹ So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?

— ROMANS 7:15–24

WINNING THE WAR IN YOUR MIND WORKBOOK

- How does Paul describe his response to the opposing forces at work in his life? What thoughts does he identify related to each of these opposite forces?
- How does Paul's description of this cycle lead him to a frustrating conclusion? Why does he call himself a "wretched man" by the end of his internal analysis?
- According to Paul, why does he keep on sinning even when he knows he's disobeying God, which is not what he wants to do?
- Why does Paul not give up and just resign himself to sinning and thinking of himself as spiritually defeated? What sustains him?
- Make a list of the laws that Paul mentions in this description. Why does he feel like he's a prisoner to one and unable to fully embrace the other?

- What assumptions does Paul make here about the “law of sin” at work in him? And what motivates him to try and resist temptation and avoid sin?

REFLECTING ON THE TRUTH

If Paul never learned to rely on God’s power to win his spiritual battle, then he might not have much to teach us. He hardly sounds like a successful thought warrior in Romans 7:15–24. Fortunately, for himself and for us, Paul experienced incredible victory in this battle and therefore has a lot to teach us. Just consider how he describes himself in Philippians 4:12: “I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation.” Now that sounds like a guy who has mastered his thoughts and won the battle in his mind!

What’s Paul’s secret? It’s one that he summarizes as well as describes in more detail throughout his writings. So first consider the big picture he provides in revealing his secret to success in this spiritual battle: “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 Corinthians 10:3–5).

This shift in Paul’s perspective should encourage you if you feel like your thoughts seem to run out of control some days. In order to move from this mental tug-of-war to the peaceful, purposeful focus Paul eventually experienced, notice three things in his explanation from this passage: (1) while we’re in this world, we don’t fight like the world fights; (2) therefore, the weapons we use are not the world’s weapons; and (3) our weapons have divine power.

This last point is huge because you not only have divine power but also the spiritual force required to “demolish strongholds.” Here, the word *demolish* is translated from the Greek word *kathaireo*, which means destruction requiring massive power. No matter how strong you are or what kind of arsenal you might have amassed, your power cannot compare to what Paul’s describing here.