

Battlefield of the mind

DEVOTIONAL

100 Insights That Will Change the Way You Think

JOYCE MEYER



New York Boston Nashville

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1

The Invitation

What I have forgiven . . . has been for your sakes . . . to keep Satan from getting the advantage over us; for we are not ignorant of his wiles and intentions.

—2 CORINTHIANS 2:10–11

Suppose we receive a package from an overnight carrier. After we open it, we stare at a beautiful, oversized envelope, with our name written on it in exquisite calligraphy. Inside, the invitation starts with these words:

You are invited to enjoy a life filled with misery, worry, and confusion.

Which one of us would say yes to such an outrageous invitation? Don't we seek the kind of life that keeps us free from such pain and distractions? Yet many of us choose such a life. Not that we blatantly make that choice, but we sometimes surrender—even temporarily—to Satan's invitation. His attack is ongoing and relentless—the devil is persistent! Our enemy bombards our minds with every weapon at his disposal every day of our lives.

We are engaged in a warfare—a warfare that rages and never stops. We can put on the whole armor of God, halt the

evil one's advances, and stand fast on the Word of God, but we won't put a complete end to the war. As long as we are alive, our minds remain Satan's battlefield. Most of our problems are rooted in thinking patterns that produce the problems we experience. This is where Satan triumphs—he offers wrong thinking to all of us. This isn't a new trick devised for our generation; he began his deceptive ways in the Garden of Eden. The serpent asked the woman, "Can it really be that God has said, You shall not eat from every tree of the garden?" (Genesis 3:1a). That was the first attack on the human mind. Eve could have rebuked the tempter; instead, she told him God would let them eat from the trees, but not from one particular tree. They couldn't even touch that tree, because if they did, they would die.

"But the serpent said to the woman, You shall not surely die, For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing the difference between good and evil and blessing and calamity" (vs. 4–5).

This was the first attack, and it resulted in Satan's first victory. What we often miss about temptation and the battle our enemy levels against us is that it comes to us deceptively. Suppose he had said to the woman, "Eat of the fruit. You'll bring misery, anger, hatred, bloodshed, poverty, and injustice into the world."

Eve would have recoiled and run away. He tricked her because he lied and told her what would appeal to her.

Satan promised, "You will be like God. You'll know good and evil." What a marvelous appeal to the woman. He wasn't

tempting Eve to do something bad—or at least he phrased it in such a way that what she heard sounded good.

That’s always the appeal of sin or satanic enticement. The temptation is not to do evil or to cause harm or bring injustice. The lure is that we will gain something.

Satan’s temptation worked on Eve. “And when the woman saw that the tree was good (suitable, pleasant) for food and that it was delightful to look at, and a tree to be desired in order to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she gave some also to her husband, and he ate” (3:6).

Eve lost the first battle for the mind, and we have continued to fight for it since that time. But because we have the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we can win—and we can keep on winning.

Victorious God, help me resist the onslaughts of Satan, who attacks my mind and makes evil seem good. I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

2

Well-Laid Plans

For we are not wrestling with flesh and blood [contending only with physical opponents], but against the despotisms, against the powers, against [the master spirits who are] the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenly (supernatural) sphere.

—EPHESIANS 6:12

“**H**ow could you?” Helen screamed. “How could you ever do such a thing?”

Tom stared helplessly at his wife. He had committed adultery, faced his sinful actions, and asked his wife to forgive him.

“But you knew it was wrong,” she said. “You knew that was the ultimate betrayal of our marriage.”

“I never planned for an affair to happen,” Tom said with tears in his eyes.

Tom wasn’t lying. He knew he was making a few bad choices, but he hadn’t looked ahead at the consequences of his actions. After almost an hour of pleading, he said something that helped Helen begin to understand and eventually to forgive.

“I was unfaithful to you in hundreds of ways before I ever committed adultery.” He spoke of their being too busy to spend quality time together, his critical attitude, her occasional lack of emotional response, her not listening to him when he talked about problems at the office. “Just little things, always little things,” he said. “At least in the beginning they seemed that way.”

That’s exactly how Satan works in human lives. He begins by bombarding our minds with cleverly devised patterns of irritation, dissatisfaction, nagging thoughts, doubts, fears, and reasonings. He moves slowly and cautiously (after all, well-laid plans take time).

Tom said he began to doubt that Helen truly loved him. She didn’t listen, and she didn’t always respond to his amorous moods. He dwelt on those thoughts. Whenever she did anything he didn’t like, he kept track. He kept track by remembering and adding that to his list of dissatisfactions.

One of his coworkers listened, and she offered him sympathy. One time she said, “Helen doesn’t deserve a warm, caring man like you.” (Satan also worked in her.) Each time Tom took a tiny step off the right path, he justified his actions in his mind: *If Helen won’t listen to me, there are people who will.* Although he said the word *people* to himself, he really meant the woman in the next cubicle.

The coworker listened. Weeks later, he hugged her and as he did so, he wished he could feel that caring response from his wife. It was a harmless embrace—or so it seemed. Tom didn’t grasp that Satan is never in a hurry. He takes time to

work out his plans. He doesn't immediately overwhelm people with powerful desires. Instead, the enemy of our minds starts with little things—little dissatisfactions, small desires—and builds from there.

Tom's story sounds much like that of a forty-two-year-old bookkeeper who was indicted for stealing nearly three million dollars from her organization. She said, "The first time I took only twelve dollars. I needed that much to pay the minimum amount on my credit card. I planned to pay it back." No one caught her, and two months later, she "borrowed" again.

By the time they caught her, the company teetered on the brink of bankruptcy. "I never meant to hurt anybody or do anything wrong," she said. She never intended to do anything big—just to take small amounts. The prosecutor said she had been stealing from the company for almost twenty years.

That's how Satan works—slowly, diligently, and in small ways. Rarely does he approach us through direct assault or frontal attacks. All Satan needs is an opening—an opportunity to inject unholy, self-centered thoughts into our heads. If we don't kick them back out, they stay inside. And he can continue his evil, destructive plan.

We don't have to allow those wrong thoughts to take up residence in our heads. The apostle Paul wrote, "For the weapons of our warfare are . . . mighty before God. . . . [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 . . .” (2 Corinthians 10:4–5).

Lord Jesus, in Your name, I cry out for victory. Enable me to bring every thought into obedience. Help me not to allow Satan’s words to stay in my mind and steal my victory. Amen.

3

Satan's Strongholds

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.

—2 CORINTHIANS 10:4

A stronghold is an area in which we are held in bondage—any part of our lives in which Satan imprisons us. He does this by causing us to think a certain way—a way that is based on lies we have been told. As long as we believe things that are not true, we will remain imprisoned by those strongholds. To enjoy freedom, we must learn to use God's mighty weapons.

In my book *Battlefield of the Mind*, I referred to Mary, who had been mistreated and brainwashed by her father, and by the time she was a teen, she didn't trust men. It's no wonder that she and her husband faced many conflicts in their marriage. For years, Satan had lied to her and she believed the lies.

Mary isn't one isolated case. I know a man named Daniel, who is quite intelligent. In fact, his family used to tell him he was the smartest man in town. God had given him a good mind, but Satan used that fact to imprison him. Until he met Jesus Christ, Daniel believed he was smarter than and supe-

rior to everyone else. Because of his pride, it was easy for him to be deceived and think more highly of himself than he should. He became critical and judgmental of others who he felt were not as brilliant as he believed he was.

Patricia was somewhat like Mary, except that her father constantly told her she was no good; that she was worthless and should marry the first man who would have her. That's exactly what she did, and she lived a miserable life. She felt she was never good enough for anyone.

Mary, Daniel, and Patricia had been trapped in different prisons, but Satan was the jail keeper. All three lived miserable lives until they learned what Paul meant by “the weapons of our warfare.” The Word of God is the weapon that set them free. That weapon became effective through preaching, teaching, books, tapes, seminars, small Bible study groups, and their own private studies. They also learned to turn to other spiritual weapons such as praise and prayer. They learned that when we genuinely praise God from our hearts, we defeat the devil quicker than by using any other battle plan.

They didn't overcome every problem the first day—it was a slow process, but it was worth the wait. Patricia later said, “It took a lot of years for me to become imprisoned through the lies of Satan, so why not give God plenty of time to work His good plan into my life?” Our victory is not a one-time, big event—it is a process.

“The more I realized how badly Satan played with my mind,” Daniel said, “the more I could stand against him. The truth of God's Word made me free.”

Praise and prayer are great weapons that God's people should use in overcoming the power of the evil one. Praise helps us keep our minds on God, His power, and the good things that are taking place in our lives. It is proof that we believe He can and will help us.

True prayer reflects a relationship with God and shows that we depend on Him. We are His children, and He is our Father. When we pray, we open the door for God's help. We ask Him to free our minds and give us victory over Satan's strongholds.

God answers those prayers. In fact, God is more eager to answer our prayers for help than we are to ask. Think of prayer this way: when we pray in faith, tremendous power is made available to us.

As we truly understand that we are God's children, we will gain confidence to use the weapons of our warfare. The weapons are there. We just need instruction on how to use them and encouragement not to give up. Jesus has promised to be with us always (see Matthew 28:20). We can win with our weapons because they are *spiritual* weapons. The devil fights a carnal, fleshly warfare, but we can win because we have the power of God on our side.

Precious Holy Spirit, teach me to understand that the weapons of our warfare are spiritual and that we can win against every attack of the devil. In Christ's name, I pray. Amen.

4

The Devil's Lies

[Jesus said]

You are of your father, the devil, and it is your will to practice the lusts and gratify the desires [which are characteristic] of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a falsehood, he speaks what is natural to him, for he is a liar [himself] and the father of lies and of all that is false.

—JOHN 8:44

The devil lies. In fact, the devil doesn't know how to speak the truth.

Most Christians know that—and yet they still listen to his evil words. Sometimes the lies seem to just pop into our minds for no apparent reason; sometimes Satan even speaks to us through other people. He puts something critical or hurtful into their minds about us, and they speak it out for us to hear. If we listen and accept what we hear, our enemy rejoices. If we listen long enough to the deceptive information we have taken in, we will find ourselves facing serious problems. Instead of listening and absorbing the untruths and

satanic deceptions, you can look at what Jesus did and follow His example. After fasting for forty days in the wilderness, Satan tempted Him three times. Each time He defeated the devil by declaring, “It is written,” and quoting the Word of God. No wonder the devil fled from Him (see Matthew 4:1–11). Learn the truth of God’s Word, and every time Satan lies to you, quote a scripture back to him. Learn to talk back to the devil!

Too many people don’t know how to use the Word to defeat Satan’s lies. Many people—even Christians—don’t seem to realize that they can refuse to listen to that voice. Too many people don’t realize that the devil attacks their minds with negative or wrong thoughts. It’s his nature to lie; he is out to enslave everyone.

I encourage people to realize that they are not alone in their spiritual battles—their minds are not the only ones under attack. Satan comes against everyone. His entire goal is to kill, steal, and destroy, but Jesus came that we might have and enjoy our lives abundantly (see John 10:10). By becoming more conscious of the spiritual weapons the Lord has made available to us and learning how to use them, we can gain victory. We can break the strongholds the devil has built in our minds. The Bible tells us that when we know the truth, that truth will free us from Satan’s strongholds (see John 8:32).

In the illustration of Mary, I mentioned that the devil had whispered to her for years that all men were alike and wanted

to hurt women and take advantage of them. As Mary read the Bible and prayed more effectively, she learned that it was the devil who had pushed her around. Now she knows she can be free.

As Mary develops in her relationship with God, she is equipping herself to win the battle for her mind. She's learning more about God and more about how to pray effectively.

"Jesus has become my friend," Mary said. She had known Him as her Savior and worshiped Him as God, but this was a new revelation to her. One day she read Hebrews 2:18 in a totally new light. It says of Jesus, "Because He Himself [in His humanity] has suffered in being tempted (tested and tried), He is able . . . to run to the cry of (assist, relieve) those who are being tempted."

That passage came alive to Mary because she saw Jesus not only as God, but as her friend—one who knows what it's like to be tempted and who knows what it is like to suffer. "I knew He died on the cross, but I had not thought of all the pain He went through for me. To realize that He understands my pain and problems was a new thought to me."

Mary also says that when negative, mean, or ugly thoughts come into her head, she is learning to stop those thoughts. "Jesus wouldn't talk that way. Jesus wouldn't be critical and judgmental, so that's the devil fighting for my mind."

Mary hasn't won all the battles, but she has learned to fight the great deceiver. Every time she wins one battle, the next one becomes easier.

God of all power, thank You for giving me the weapons to defeat the lies of the devil. Help me to always make good use of them. Thank You, Jesus, for being my friend and for being with me in my difficulties and struggles. Amen.