



GOD'S PATH
— *to* —
MENTAL
HEALTH

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HOW THE DEVIL ATTACKS YOUR MIND

By Rick Renner

Excerpted from *[Dressed to Kill](#)*

Multitudes of people in this world today are held hostage in their minds by the devil. They are incarcerated, locked up, and caged in their minds and emotions, held like slaves, prisoners, or detainees who are under arrest and live at the mercy of their conqueror.

Yet with God's mighty, supernatural power at our disposal, we are now ready for battle. We can commence our successful confrontation with unseen demonic spirits that come to wage war against the flesh and the soul!

For this reason, Paul goes on to tell us, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11).

Let's talk about the phrase "whole armor." That phrase is taken from the Greek word *panoplia*, and it refers to a Roman soldier who is fully dressed in his armor from head

to toe. Since this is the example Paul puts before us, we must consider the full dress, the panoplia, of the Roman soldier.

Because of Paul's many imprisonments, this was an easy illustration for him to use. Standing next to these impressive-looking soldiers during his prison internments, Paul could see the Roman soldier's loincloth; huge breastplate; brutal shoes affixed with spikes; massive, full-length shield; intricate helmet; piercing sword; and long, specially tooled lance that could be thrown a tremendous distance to hit the enemy from afar.

The Roman soldier of New Testament times wore all seven pieces of this armor. These pieces of weaponry, which include both offensive and defensive armor, can still be found in our museums today.

First of all, the Roman soldier wore a loincloth. Although it was the least impressive and most commonplace piece of weaponry that the Roman soldier wore, it was the central piece of armor that held all the other parts together. For instance, the loincloth held the breastplate in place; the shield rested on a clip on one side of the loincloth; and on the other side was another clip on which the Roman soldier hung his massive sword when it wasn't in use.

This first piece of armor was so ordinary that no soldier would have written home to tell his family about his new loincloth. Yet the loincloth was the most important piece of weaponry the Roman soldier owned because of its importance to the other pieces of armor. Without it, the other pieces of weaponry would have fallen off the soldier!

The Roman soldier also wore a second weapon — a magnificent and beautiful breastplate. The breastplate of the Roman soldier was made out of two large sheets of metal. One piece covered the front of the soldier, and the other piece covered his back; then these two sheets of metal were attached at the top of the soldier's shoulders by large brass rings.

Frequently these metal plates were comprised of smaller, scale-like pieces of metal, causing the surface of the breastplate to look very similar to the scales of a fish. Later on, the breastplate was most often referred to as a “coat of mail.”

This heavy piece of weaponry began at the bottom of the neck and extended down past the waist to the knees. From the waist to the knees, it took on the resemblance of a skirt. The breastplate was by far the heaviest piece of equipment that the Roman soldier owned. Depending upon the physical stature of the soldier, this piece of equipment could weigh in excess of 40 pounds! In First Samuel 17:5, we are told that Goliath's breastplate weighed “five thousand shekels of brass” — or the equivalent of 125 pounds!

In addition to this beautiful coat of mail, the Roman soldier also wore a third weapon — a pair of very dangerous shoes. These shoes were not like the Roman sandals that people wear today, which are merely a flimsy little piece of twine wrapped around the heel and the toe. The shoes that the Roman soldier wore were primarily made of two pieces of metal.

The first piece of the Roman shoe was called a greave. This was a piece of bronze or brass that had been wrapped around the soldier's lower legs. Beginning right at the top of the knee, it extended down past the calf of the leg and rested on top of the foot. Because this tube-like piece of metal covered the lower leg of the soldier, the Roman soldier's shoes looked like boots that were made of brass!

In addition, the top, sides, and bottom of the foot were encased in a very thick piece of heavy metal. On the bottom, the Roman soldier's shoes were affixed with extremely dangerous spikes. The spikes on the bottom of a civilian soldier's shoes were approximately one inch long. If, however, the soldier was involved in active combat, the spikes on the bottom of his shoes could be between one and three inches long! These shoes, which Paul amazingly calls "shoes of peace" in Ephesians 6:15, were intended to be "killer shoes." (These "shoes of peace" will be fully dealt with in Chapter Twelve.)

The Roman soldier also carried a fourth important weapon — a large, oblong shield. This massive shield was made of multiple layers of animal hide that were tightly woven together and then framed along the edges by a strong piece of metal or wood.

The fifth weapon that the Roman soldier wore was his helmet. This all-important piece of armor, which protected the soldier from receiving a fatal blow to the head, sometimes weighed 15 pounds or more.

Whereas the breastplate was the most beautiful piece of weaponry the Roman soldier possessed, the helmet was the most noticeable. It would have been very difficult to pass by a Roman soldier without noticing his helmet!

The sixth weapon of the Roman soldier was his sword. Although there were many kinds of swords during that time in history, the sword that the Roman soldier carried was a very heavy, broad, and massive sword specifically designed for jabbing and killing an adversary or foe.

Finally, the Roman soldier also carried a seventh weapon — a specially tooled lance designed to strike the enemy from a distance.

Most have not recognized the presence of the lance in Ephesians 6:10-18 because it isn't specifically stated. But the lance must be present in the text, because we are told to "put on the whole armour of God "

There is no doubt that the lance was a part of the whole armor of the Roman soldier. In order for Paul to carry through on this illustration of the "whole armor of God," it would have been absolutely necessary for him to include the lance in this text.

In the chapters to come, you will see that the lance is indeed a very important part of "the whole armor of God."

A NEW SET OF CLOTHES

These weapons are clearly taken from Paul's mental picture of a Roman soldier who is dressed in full armor — a

soldier who is dressed to kill! Having set this example before us, Paul now gives us a powerful word of instruction. He says, “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11).

Especially notice that Paul says, “Put on.” The phrase “put on” is taken from the Greek word *enduo*. The word *enduo* is frequently used throughout the New Testament. In fact, it is the exact word Luke used when he recorded Jesus saying, “And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49).

The word *enduo* refers to the act of putting on a new set of clothes. In light of this, one expositor has properly translated Luke 24:49: “ But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be clothed with power from on high.”

Paul used the word *enduo* throughout his writings to symbolically depict the “putting on” of the new man. In both Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10, he urges us to “put on the new man.” By using the word *enduo* in these two particular passages, Paul tells us we can “put on” the fruit of our new life in Christ in the same way we might put on a brand-new set of clothes.

Now Paul uses the word *enduo* in Ephesians 6:11 in this same way — to denote the act of putting on a new set of clothes. However, this time he uses this word in connection with spiritual armor.

He instructs us to “put on the whole armour of God.” Moreover, Paul uses the imperative tense in this text. This means he is not making a suggestion; rather, he is issuing the very strongest kind of command that can be given. In the strongest tone of voice available, Paul is commanding us with great urgency to take a particular kind of immediate action. This action is so important that when Paul speaks to us, he speaks in the imperative tense — commanding and ordering us to be clothed with the whole armor of God.

We can reject Paul’s command — or we can accept it. But if we choose to take his command to heart, we must then learn how to put on the spiritual armor God has provided for us.

HOW DO YOU PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD?

Paul describes this weaponry as “the whole armour of God.” Especially notice the phrase “of God.” This little phrase is taken from the Greek phrase *tou theou*, and it is written in the genitive case.

Simply put, this means our supernatural set of weaponry comes directly from God. God Himself is the Source of origin for this armor. Thus, the verse could be accurately translated, “Put on the whole armor that comes from God.”

Because this weaponry has its origin in God, it is vital for us to remain in unbroken fellowship with Him in or-

der for us to continually enjoy the benefits of our spiritual armor. If we break fellowship with the Lord, we step away from our all-important Power Source. But as long as our fellowship with the Lord is unbroken, the Power Source for our spiritual weaponry also remains intact.

I am amazed by people who ignore their spiritual lives and cease to walk in the power of God — and then complain because it seems like all kinds of trouble are breaking loose in their lives! They often look for deep, dark reasons for this trouble that has erupted in their lives — when the explanation for this outbreak of confusion is actually very simple. Spiritual armor has its source in God. So when a believer temporarily ceases to walk in fellowship with and in the power of God, he is choosing to temporarily step away from the Source from which his armor comes!

Just as we draw our life, our new nature, and our spiritual power from God, this spiritual armor also comes from God as well.

What happens to your spiritual life when you temporarily cease to walk in fellowship with the Lord? In that condition, do you enjoy abundant life as you once did? Of course not!

While abundant life still belongs to you, this state of stagnation will pull the plug on your spiritual walk, allowing the abundant life you once enjoyed to drain away until you eventually feel empty inside. Why does this happen? Because abundant life has its source in the Lord! When you temporarily cease to walk in fellowship with God, you

are electing to temporarily walk away from His divine flow of abundant life.

What happens to the power of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life when he develops a "who cares?" attitude about his spiritual development? Does that believer continue to enjoy the operation of God's power in his life? Certainly not!

Although the power of God is still available to that believer, his "who cares?" attitude temporarily pulls the plug on his Power Source. Why? Because this spiritual power has its origin in the Lord! Thus, when a believer stops walking in fellowship with the Lord, he is choosing to temporarily stop the flow of this divine power into his life.

Furthermore, consider what happens to a believer's ability to walk in his spiritual armor when he temporarily suspends his fellowship with the Lord. Does that believer continue to reap the benefits of his God-given spiritual armor in this state of spiritual suspension? Of course not!

Yes, this believer's spiritual armor is still available for him to use and enjoy. But because he has suspended his fellowship with the Lord, he is also opting to temporarily suspend his ability to walk in the armor of God — the very armor God gave to protect and defend him. Why is this? Because spiritual armor has its origin in the Lord!

Whenever you put your spiritual life temporarily "on hold," you are opting to lay aside your spiritual armor. And you will only be able to pick up your armor again when

you repent and begin to walk in fellowship with the Lord once more.

Many Christians begin each new day by pretending to put on the whole armor of God. As soon as they get out of bed in the morning, the first thing they do is to act as though they are actually putting on each piece of their weaponry.

A person who does this reaches down to his waist and pretends like he is actually wrapping the loinbelt of truth around his body. Then he reaches around his chest as if he is actually placing a breastplate of righteousness across his upper torso. He bends down and acts as if he is putting shoes of peace on his feet. He pretends to put on a helmet of salvation and then reaches over and “picks up” a shield of faith to carry throughout the day. Finally, he simulates the movements of one who is placing a sword in its scabbard at his side.

There is nothing wrong with this daily routine of pretending to put on spiritual armor. In fact, it may help some people focus better on their spiritual walk (especially children). However, this daily simulation of putting on a suit of armor does not actually put “the whole armor of God” on anyone.

The armor of God is ours by virtue of our relationship with God!

This is the reason Paul wrote in the genitive case. He wanted us to know that this armor originates in God and is

freely bestowed upon those who continually draw their life and their existence from God.

Your unbroken, ongoing fellowship with God is your absolute guarantee that you are constantly and habitually dressed in the whole armor of God.

Also notice that in Ephesians 6:11, Paul says, “Put on the whole armour of God...” God has provided a complete set of weaponry for us, not a partial one. He has given us the whole armor of God.

Remember, the phrase “whole armor” is taken from the word *panoplia* and pictures a Roman soldier who is fully dressed in his armor from head to toe. Everything the soldier needed to successfully combat his adversary was at his disposal. Likewise, God has given us everything we need to successfully combat opposing spiritual forces! Nothing is lacking!

It is unfortunate that some denominations and Charismatic organizations have majored only on certain parts of the armor of God. Some teach incessantly on the “shield of faith” and the “sword of the Spirit” while neglecting the other pieces of armor God has given believers. Other groups and denominations seem to preach and teach on nothing but the “helmet of salvation” week after week. They have their helmets on — but otherwise, they are stark naked!

We are commanded to put on the WHOLE armor of God.

- Thank God for our loincloth of truth, but He gave us

more than a loincloth.

- Thank God for our breastplate of righteousness, but He gave us more than a breastplate.
- Thank God for our shoes of peace, but He gave us more than shoes.
- Thank God for our shield of faith, but He gave us more than a shield.
- Thank God for our helmet of salvation, but He gave us more than a helmet.
- Thank God for our sword of the Spirit, but He gave us more than a sword!

We have been given the whole armor of God — and it is this complete set of spiritual weaponry that Paul commands us to pick up and use continually in the course of our Christian lives!

MAINTAINING A STRATEGIC POSITION OVER THE BATTLEFIELD OF YOUR LIFE AND MIND

As Paul continues in this passage, he tells us why we need this armor. He says, “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”

Especially notice the phrase “...that ye may be able...” The word able is derived from the word *dunamis*, and it

describes explosive ability and dynamic strength or power. This Greek phrase could be more accurately translated, "...that you may have incredible, explosive, dynamic power..." By using this word *dunamis*, Paul declares that when we are equipped with the whole armor of God, we have explosive and dynamic power at our command!

This *dunamis* power is so strong that it equips us, for the first time in our lives, to confront and pursue the enemy rather than to be pursued by him. Because of this *dunamis* power that is at our command when we walk in the whole armor of God, we become the aggressors! This is why Paul goes on to say, "...that ye may be able to stand against "

The phrase "to stand" is taken from the word *stenai*, and it literally means to stand. In this verse, Paul uses the word *stenai* to picture a Roman soldier who is standing upright and tall with his shoulders thrown back and his head lifted high. This is the image of a proud and confident soldier, not one who is slumped over in defeat and despondency.

This word *stenai* depicts what we look like in the spirit realm when we are walking in the whole armor of God. This armor puts us in a winning position!

There is no reason for us to live our lives slumped over in defeat. We are equipped to beat the living daylights out of any foe that would dare assault us. Hence, we can walk boldly and confidently — with our shoulders thrown back and our heads lifted high — because we are dressed in the whole armor of God!

There is something else important about this word *stenai* that must be pointed out. This word was used in a military sense, meaning to maintain a critical and strategic military position over a battlefield. Why is this so important? Because this meaning of *stenai* implies that we have a responsibility to stand guard over the battlefields of our own lives!

If God has called you to fulfill a specific assignment in the body of Christ, you must stand guard and maintain a critical position over that assignment until it is completed. The devil doesn't want you to fulfill the call of God on your life, so he will try to attack that divine call and turn it into a battlefield. Therefore, until the job is finished and the battle is won, you must stand guard over the will of God for your life. You must determine that you will not give the enemy an inch. This is your responsibility!

Remember — the most important battlefield of your life is your mind!

And spiritual warfare is primarily a matter of the mind. As long as the mind is held in check and is renewed to right thinking by the Word of God, the majority of spiritual attacks will fail. However, when the mind is left open and unguarded, it becomes the primary battlefield Satan uses to destroy lives, finances, businesses, marriages, emotions, and so on.

This is why one of your most important responsibilities is to stand guard over your mind. In doing so, you are actually placing a guard around every other battlefield in your life!

AN EYEBALL-TO-EYEBALL CONFRONTATION!

Notice the next word in this verse! Paul continues, "... that ye may be able to stand against..." The word "against" is derived from the word *pros*, and it denotes a forward position or a face- to-face encounter.

By employing the word *pros* in this verse, Paul is portraying a soldier who is looking his enemy directly in the face — eyeball to eyeball! This is a soldier who is standing tall. His shoulders are thrown back, and his head is lifted high. He is so bold, daring, and courageous that he is glaring fearlessly right into the eyes of his adversary. This is the eye-to-eye confrontation that the word *pros* undoubtedly depicts!

This clearly demonstrates that, with God's mighty power and His armor on our side, we are more than a match for the enemy. In fact, we are a fearsome and terrible threat to Satan's domain! We should never shudder at the thought of what the devil can do to us, because this spiritual armor puts us in a super-powerful position that makes the devil shudder and tremble at the very thought of what we can do to him!

With the armor of God in hand, we are so mighty and powerful in Jesus Christ that the devil and his forces don't have a chance. When we are dressed in this suit of armor, we become mighty spiritual warriors who are dressed to kill!

TAKING A STAND AGAINST THE WILES OF THE DEVIL

Why do we need this armor? What are we supposed to “stand against” in this conflict? Paul tells us: “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11).

But what are “the wiles of the devil”?

The word “wiles” is one of three key words you must know and understand when studying the subject of spiritual warfare. The other two words are devices and deception. It is impossible to have a correct and balanced view of spiritual warfare without having an understanding of these three foundational words.

The word wiles is taken from the Greek word *methodos*. It is a compound of the words *meta* and *odos*. The word *meta* is a preposition that simply means with. The word *odos* is the Greek word for a road. Compounded together, they form the word *methodos*. Literally translated, the Greek word *methodos* means with a road.

It is from this word *methodos* that we derive the English word method. However, the word method is not really strong enough to convey the full meaning of *methodos*. This Greek word was carefully selected by the Holy Spirit because it tells us exactly how the devil operates and how he comes to attack and assault a believer’s mind.

The word wiles (*methodos*) is often translated to carry the idea of something that is cunning, crafty, subtle, or

full of trickery. However, the most basic translation of this word is its literal meaning, with a road. By electing to use this word *methodos*, Paul tells us how the devil puts his cunning, crafty, subtle, and tricky deception to work. The word *wiles* clearly reveals that the devil operates with a road or on a road.

What does this mean?

This means that, contrary to the common belief of most people, the devil does not have as many tricks in his bag as he would like us to believe. The word *wiles* (*methodos*) plainly means that the enemy travels on one road, one lane, or one avenue. In other words, he primarily has only one trick in his bag — and he obviously has learned to use that one trick very well!

What is that one trick the devil uses against people? Or perhaps we should more correctly ask, “If the devil operates on one single avenue, what is the destination that diabolical road is headed toward?” These questions lead us to the second important word to understand when discussing spiritual warfare: the word *devices*.

THE DEVICES OF THE DEVIL

In 2 Corinthians 2:11, Paul gives us a clue as to where this road leads that the devil is traveling on. Paul says, “... We are not ignorant of his [Satan’s] devices.”

The word *devices* is taken from the word *noemata*, which is derived from the word *nous*. The word *nous* is

the Greek word for the mind or the intellect. However, the form *noemata*, as used by Paul in 2 Corinthians 2:11, carries the idea of a deceived mind. Specifically, this word *noemata* denotes the insidious and malevolent plot of Satan to fill the human mind with confusion.

The word “devices” (*noemata*) actually depicts the insidious plots and wicked schemes of Satan to attack and victimize the human mind. One expositor has even stated that the word “devices” bears the notion of mind games. With this in mind, you could translate the verse, “..We are not ignorant of the mind games that Satan tries to pull on us.”

Paul used this word “devices” to describe attacks that he had personally resisted, so we know that even he had to deal with the adversary’s mental assaults from time to time. Paul knew from experience about the mind games the devil tries to pull on people!

It was for this very reason that Paul said, “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

The devil loves to make a playground out of people’s minds! He delights in filling their emotions and senses with illusions that captivate their minds and ultimately destroy them. He is a master when it comes to mind games.

Like Paul, we must make a mental decision to take charge of our minds, “...bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” We must stop listening to ourselves and start speaking to ourselves! The devil always tries to manipulate our emotions and physical senses in order to pull a mind game on us. Therefore, we must speak to our emotions and senses, dictating to them exactly what to believe!

By considering the words “wiles” and “devices,” we have now seen two vitally important things that we must know about the devil’s strategy to attack and victimize the human mind.

First, the word “wiles” (*methodos*) explicitly tells us that the devil travels with a road or on a road. This road the devil is traveling on is obviously headed somewhere.

Where is that road headed? The word “devices” clearly demonstrates that this road of the devil is headed toward the mind.

Whoever controls a person’s mind also controls that person’s health and emotions. The enemy knows this! Therefore, he seeks to penetrate a person’s intellect — a person’s mental control center — so he can flood it with deception and falsehood. Once this is accomplished, the devil can then begin to manipulate that person’s body and emotions from a position of control.

When Satan succeeds in penetrating and paving a road into a person’s mind and emotions, the process of men-

tal and spiritual captivity in that person's life is well under way. What comes next is up to the individual who is under attack. He can abort this devilish process by renewing his mind with the Word and by allowing God's power to do a work within him. But if that person does not choose to renew his mind and yield to the work of the Holy Spirit, it will be only a matter of time before a solid stronghold of deception begins to dominate and manipulate his self-image, his emotional status, and his overall thinking.

This leads us to the third word we must understand when discussing spiritual warfare: the word deception.

THE DECEPTION OF THE DEVIL

Deception occurs when a person believes the lies that the enemy has been telling him. The moment someone begins to accept Satan's lies as truth is the very moment those wicked thoughts and mind games begin to produce the devil's reality in his life.

For instance, the devil may assault your mind by repeatedly telling you that you are a failure. However, as long as you resist those demonic allegations, they will exert absolutely no power in your life.

But what if you begin to give credence to these lies and to mentally perceive them as the actual truth? Those lies will then begin to control you and to dominate your emotions and your thinking. In the end, your faith in those lies will give power to them and will cause them to create a bona fide reality in your life — and you will become a failure. This is a manifestation of completed deception.

Many marriages fail because of false allegations that the enemy tries to pound into the minds of each spouse. As long as the couple repels these allegations, the devil's lies exert no power in that marriage. However, when one of the spouses begins to pay attention to and dwell on those lies, he or she has taken the first fatal step toward deception.

Take, for instance, the example of a marriage that is in tip-top shape until one of the spouses starts dwelling on unjustified questions and suspicions about the other spouse. This is clearly the work of the enemy to deteriorate the couple's confidence in their marriage.

At first, this spouse absolutely knows that these suspicions are outright lies of the devil. Indeed, he or she thinks, our marriage has never been better!

But the enemy continues to pound away on this spouse's mind:

- “Your husband [or wife] isn't pleased with you.”
- “Your marriage is in trouble.”
- “This relationship can never last.”
- “It's too good to be true.”

Sadly, as this dear Christian continues to pay attention to those lying insinuations, the door remains open for the devil to continue pounding away at that person's mind and preying on his or her emotions. After a period of time, the person's mind — battered and weary from worrying — begins to believe those false allegations. That spouse's faith in

those lying emotions and suspicions may then empower the lies to become a reality in his or her marriage.

By mentally embracing these false insinuations, this spouse opens the door for the enemy to penetrate his or her mind. Thus, the process of confusion is implemented; mind games are set in motion; and that believer's perception of things becomes twisted and bent. If this seducing, deceiving process is not stopped at this point, it is probably only a matter of time before the weary-minded believer begins to embrace these mental lies as though they were really the truth.

What is the end result of the devil's deception? When believers falsely believe that their marriage is on the rocks, that they will die of a terminal disease, or that they have no hope for the future, they open the door for the enemy to move these lying suggestions from the thought realm into the natural realm, where they become a bona fide reality. These believers' false perceptions empower the lies, and the devil uses those false beliefs to create HIS reality in the natural realm!

Perhaps the enemy has constantly bombarded your mind about sickness. Perhaps his lying allegations have repeatedly told you that you are going to contract a terrible disease and die an early death. When these lies first assaulted your mind, you resisted them and refused to believe what you were hearing. Now, however, you have begun to wonder if these thoughts may have some validity.

If you don't stop this process, it will only be a matter of time until you truly begin to feel physically sick in your body. Do not give credence to those lying insinuations! When you embrace the devil's mind games and perceive them as truth, you give power to them!

If you do not take charge of your mind and begin to speak God's truth to yourself to combat the devil's lies, the complete process of deception will continue working in your life. Eventually that process will be complete, and your fears will become reality. When this occurs, you will be deceived in that area of your life.

You can see now why these three words — the wiles, devices, and deception of the devil — are extremely important for us to understand — especially when studying the subject of spiritual warfare.

Let's review: First, the word "wiles" (*methodos*) tells us that the devil operates with a road, or primarily with one avenue of attack.

Second, the word "devices" (*noemata*) reveals where that avenue is headed: It is headed toward the mind. Once that road is paved into a person's mind, the enemy begins to regularly travel in and out of that person's mind and emotions to confuse and scramble his thoughts with wrong thinking, wrong believing, and false perceptions.

Third, "deception" occurs when a person embraces the lie that the devil is telling him. The false perception that this person has embraced empowers that lie to become a bona fide reality in his life. This is completed deception.

AN EXAMPLE OF DEMONIC INTIMIDATION

Perhaps the best biblical example of the wiles, devices, and deceptions of the devil can be found in the story of David and Goliath.

By studying the true-life story of David and Goliath, you will see all three of these negative forces at work.

In 1 Samuel 17, we see how the devil used Goliath's lying allegations to intimidate and confuse the armies of Israel.

Goliath's outlandish, arrogant, boastful, and proud declarations of the Israelites' demise were so effective that not one soldier from the Hebrew camp was willing to stand up to this aggressor. The Israelite army was rendered functionally paralyzed for 40 days — until a courageous young man named David came along with the power of God to challenge those lies!

And the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side: and there was a valley between them. And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, WHOSE HEIGHT WAS SIX CUBITS AND A SPAN.

1 Samuel 17:3,4

No wonder the Israelites were intimidated by Goliath! The appearance alone of this giant would be intellectually and emotionally overwhelming. Goliath was “six cubits and a span” tall — which is 9 feet 9 inches tall!

And he had an helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass. And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him.

1 Samuel 17:5-7

Goliath was armed to the max! Notice that the “coat of mail” he wore weighed “five thousand shekels of brass.” As I mentioned earlier, 5,000 shekels of brass is the equivalent of 125 pounds!

In addition to Goliath’s helmet and his breastplate that weighed 125 pounds, he also had greaves of brass and a target (javelin) of brass slung between his shoulders! The staff of his spear was like a weaver’s beam — which means the long staff of his spear weighed at least 17 pounds. Additionally, the scripture specifically says that the spear’s head weighed 600 shekels of iron — which is the equivalent of 16 pounds.

One scholar has speculated that the weight of all these pieces of weaponry together — his helmet, breastplate, greaves, brass javelin, spear, and shield — may have weighed in excess of 700 pounds!

In every respect imaginable, Goliath was a very frightful sight! How would you feel if you were challenged by a foe who stood 9 feet 9 inches tall and wore more than 700 pounds of weaponry? And if Goliath wore weapon-

ry weighing that much, imagine how much the giant must have weighed himself!

Yet it wasn't Goliath's size or his weaponry that caused the Israelites to shrink back in fear. What did cause the Israelites to fear? The constant threats and mental bombardment that Goliath hit them with every single day. This mental harassment crippled the Hebrew soldiers so that they lost sight of the awesome ability of God.

Concerning these continuous threats of Goliath, the Bible says:

And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us.

And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together.

1 Samuel 17:8-10

These threats of the huge, menacing Goliath were so emotionally overpowering that the next verse declares, "When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid" (v. 11).

Goliath mentally and emotionally immobilized the armies of Israel without ever using a sword or spear! With words alone, he incapacitated, disabled, stunned, numbed, and disarmed the Israelites. The giant's flagrant and prepos-

terous distortion of his own greatness was so outrageous that his words bewitched the listening Israelite army until they were spell-bound under his verbal control.

In effect, Goliath said to them:

“Who do you think you are to fight with me?”

Come on, just try to do damage to me, and you’ll find out what I’ll do to you!”

“What’s wrong? Are you afraid to face me and take me on?”

Where do you suppose Goliath learned this kind of foul behavior? From the devil! The devil is a slanderer and an accuser! Today the devil still seeks to incapacitate, disable, stun, numb, and disarm believers the same way he paralyzed the Israelite army through Goliath. The devil’s flagrant and preposterous allegations are so outrageous that they often bewitch listening believers until they become spellbound under his control.

This outrageous conduct is still the mental tool the devil uses to assault the minds of believers. He bombards them with threatening thoughts, such as:

- “You think you’re so tough — but I’ll show you who the tough guy really is!”
- “I’ll use this bad situation to beat the life right out of you!”
- “I’ll strike you down so hard and fast, you won’t know what hit you!”

Lying threats and false accusations are the enemy's attempts to beat a hole through your mind and emotions so you can't think rationally. He comes to pave a road of fear into your mind; then he plays his mind games, trying to fill your mind so full of fear and confusion that you eventually lose the courage you need to step out in faith and obey God's call on your life.

Throwing one slanderous accusation after another at your mind, the devil will do everything he can to slander and belittle you. He will defame, malign, revile, and smear your faith in order to drive you back into the ditch of self-preservation where you never do anything significant for the Kingdom of God.

If you meditate on the devil's threats long enough, you will become "dismayed and greatly afraid," just like the children of Israel who listened to the words of Goliath and became functionally paralyzed by fear for 40 days. You'll find yourself living on the low side of victory — unwilling to take on any new challenges for fear that you might fail, for fear of what others might say, for fear of potential catastrophe, etc.

The devil wants to take you captive and destroy you with the same tools Goliath used against the Israelites. Satan wants to ruin your effectiveness with deceptive suggestions and lying allegations!

HARD FACTS OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

In the midst of all Goliath's lies, the giant did make one statement that was true in verse 9. He said in effect, "If one of your number is able to fight me and win, we will serve you for the rest of our lives. But if we win, YOU will serve US!"

These rules of battle that Goliath laid out were the hard facts of warfare during David's day. Whoever won the battle was the champion — whether it was the aggressor or the one who accepted the challenge. Whoever fell in defeat would forever serve the other as a slave. These hard facts of battle are still the rules of spiritual warfare today.

If you conquer all the lying emotions, slanderous accusations, and deceptive suggestions that the devil tries to use in his attempt to neutralize you, you will be able to keep the enemy in a subordinate position for the rest of your life. Once you pull the plug on Satan's intimidating threats and lies, he will no longer be able to hold your mind captive.

If, however, you do not learn how to take your thoughts captive, your mind and emotions will be used as tools of Satan to dominate your thought processes for the rest of your life. If you do not take charge of your mind — learning how to SPEAK God's truth to yourself rather than LISTEN to the enemy's lies — the devil will continue to use lying emotions and illusions to manipulate, dominate, and control you for the rest of your life.

Notice that Goliath said, "...I defy the armies of Israel this day..." (v. 10). Today the devil is still breathing out the same kind of blasphemous and terrorizing statements against the people of God, such as:

- "Just try to walk in divine health!"
- "I defy you to believe that your financial situation is going to turn around!"
- "I defy you to succeed in the ministry!"

Although the wicked Philistines never lifted a sword, threw a spear, or budged from their encampment, they conquered the people of God with mental and verbal attacks of intimidation. The Israelites wrongly considered and meditated on Goliath's threats, allowing those threats to flood them with fear. As a result, they were neutralized without a ground war ever taking place!

How often did Goliath come to make these threats? The Word says, "And the Philistine drew near morning and evening, and presented himself forty days" (v. 16). Day and night, morning and evening, Goliath came to mentally undo the people of God.

This, of course, is how the enemy still attacks people's minds and emotions. He doesn't strike once and then come back a week later to strike again. Instead, he strikes fast and repeatedly — again and again and again. Morning and evening the devil attacks, intent on his goal of irreparably damaging people's faith and confidence.

THE FLESH COUNTS FOR NOTHING

Let's read on in First Samuel 17 to see what happened next:

Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehemjudah, whose name was Jesse; and he had eight sons.... And David was the youngest: and the three eldest followed Saul. But David went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem....

And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him [to take food to his brothers]; and he came to the trench....

And as he talked with them [his brothers], behold, there came up the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, out of the armies of the Philistines, and spake according to the same words: and David heard them.

1 Samuel 17:12,14,15,20,23

Notice that verse 23 says, "...And David heard them." This was David's first encounter with the foreboding giant, and something in Goliath's words incited anger in David's soul. What a shock it was for this young shepherd to hear a pagan Philistine insulting the God of Israel and to realize that no one was doing anything about it! In fact, the Israelites weren't just sitting around doing nothing about Goliath.

Verse 24 says they actually ran in terror: "And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid."

But young David wasn't afraid of this Philistine giant — he was annoyed by Goliath's verbal arrogance!

And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to that man that killeth the Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?

1 Samuel 17:26

Immediately David's elder brother took offense at David's confidence and reprimanded his younger brother for acting too boldly.

And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle.

1 Samuel 17:28

Quite often when young men and women of God step out to challenge the foe, they are accused of acting too boldly. Their elder leaders may be correct in pointing out the vast difference between spiritual boldness and rude arrogance. Nevertheless, there is a true boldness that the Holy Spirit gives to surrendered vessels.

David was one such yielded vessel. He was so surrendered to God's power working through him that a Holy Spirit-inspired confidence rose up within him. At that point, David simply could not hold back his righteous anger!

David was stunned by his elder brother's hostile reaction and the fear that possessed the huge Israelite soldiers surrounding him. He asked Eliab, "...What have I now done? Is there not a cause? And he turned from him toward another, and spake after the same manner: and the people answered him again after the former manner" (vv. 29,30).

In essence, David was asking: "Isn't there a cause here that is worth fighting for? Isn't there one soldier in this camp who is man enough to face this uncircumcised Philistine? Why aren't we fighting?"

David apparently began to turn from one soldier to the next, asking, "How about you? Will you fight Goliath?" It quickly became clear to him that no one had the faith or courage to believe that this vile giant could be killed.

Word of David's confidence and boldness immediately spread through the Israelite camp like wildfire. In the same way, you can be sure that when you make the decision to move in the power of God and to pull strongholds down from your life, it will make news! Everyone around you will be talking about your boldness. Some may even try to talk you out of it!

Notice what the Bible says next:

And when the words were heard which David spake, they rehearsed them before Saul: and he sent for him. And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.

1 Samuel 17:31,32

In David's heart was a willingness to be used of God and a burning desire to see the enemy slain. Saul was so amazed by the young man's supernatural courage that he said to David, "...Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth" (v. 33).

Naturally speaking, David was too young and unskilled in the natural weapons of warfare to do battle with this giant. King Saul knew this. Therefore, looking on things from a fleshly, worldly perspective, Saul knew that David — naturally speaking — was no match for Goliath!

However, David had Heaven's perspective. He knew that the outward man — the flesh — counted for nothing when it came to moving in the supernatural power of God! So David responded to Saul's doubts with words of faith: "...Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him..." (vv. 34,35).

Goliath wasn't the first enemy David had faced in life — he'd already had eyeball-to-eyeball confrontations with both a lion and a bear! As a shepherd, David had determined that those devourers would not steal one thing from him — not one. That was the winner's attitude David needed to defeat his enemy every time his enemy struck.

We must have this same attitude when the devil comes to manipulate our minds and emotions, to strike family members with disease, to devour our finances, or to internally destroy our church or ministry. Our attitude must be

the same as David's attitude. We have to boldly declare to the enemy:

- “Satan, you cannot have this ministry!”
- “Devil, you cannot have our finances!”
- “You cannot kill our family members with sickness or disease!”
- “You cannot, cannot, CANNOT!”

If the devil doesn't willingly release that which is ours when we tell him to do so, we will have to respond as David did when the lion and the bear attacked his sheep. David told Saul, “And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear...” (vv. 35,36).

David had already experienced so much of God's power and victory in his life that this Philistine was no threat to him. He had already faced a ferocious lion — and had experienced God's faithfulness as he was empowered to kill the lion. David had already faced a bear — and had experienced God's faithfulness as he was empowered to kill the bear.

In the same way, we have to “go out after” the devil in the authority Jesus has given us and force him to release whatever he has seized from us against our wills!

MOVING BEYOND THE FLESH

As David looked back on his past experiences and reflected on the goodness of God that had already been bestowed on his life, he could now look straight into the face of this conflict with Goliath and declare to King Saul:

Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.

David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee.

1 Samuel 17:36,37

Notice Saul's response to David's desire to be used of God:

And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail. And David girded his sword upon his armour....

1 Samuel 17:38,39

David had already killed the lion and the bear without the use of any natural armor or weaponry. However, because of the size of the menacing Philistine giant, Saul thought that David needed more than God's faithfulness!

It was as though Saul was saying to the young man who stood before him, "David, this fight with Goliath is going to be far more intense than your conflict with the lion and

the bear, so let me help you! Let me put my helmet on your head and dress you in my coat of mail. And, here, David — take my sword with you, too, and use it like it's your own!”

Can you imagine how silly young David must have looked in Saul's massive armor? You can be sure that Saul's intentions were pure. He wanted David to be safe and adequately equipped with armor equal to Goliath's armor. However, Saul's counsel was extremely defective. David had never worn such armor before. Had he gone to battle clothed in the king's heavy armor, he would have been so weighed down that he would have been unable to successfully wage warfare.

This is the reason verse 39 goes on to say, “...And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him.”

Previous to this time, David had defeated his enemies without fleshly weapons. Knowing that he was unaccustomed to these kinds of natural weapons and that they would therefore do him no good, David took off Saul's armor and “...took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine” (v. 40).

Notice it says that David “...drew near to the Philistine.” David, a young man in his teenage years, charged a giant with 700 pounds of weaponry — with nothing in his hands to kill this giant but a sling and five stones!

According to the natural realm, David was not equipped to fight this kind of foe. But according to the spirit realm, David was dressed in the armor of God and empowered by the power of God. Goliath could not see these spiritual weapons with his physical eyes. Therefore, he had no idea that David was “dressed to kill”!

And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David; and the man that bare the shield went before him. And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance.

And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.

1 Samuel 17:41-43

Goliath was expecting more! He thought the Israelites had finally found a match for him. This is the reason the man who bore his shield went before the giant; this shield-bearer was to protect Goliath from the blows of his challenger. But when Goliath looked around and saw only small, young David, he was shocked. Immediately the Philistine giant began to mock both David and his God!

Goliath began to use his tools of mental and verbal harassment, just like the devil does today. Attempting to intimidate David and paralyze him with fear, “...the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field” (v. 44). Just as the entire army of Israel had been functional-

ly immobilized for 40 days by Goliath's outrageous claims, now the Philistine giant was proceeding to use that same strategy again in an attempt to immobilize and paralyze David with preposterous, bloated boasts and lying allegations!

If David had turned his eyes from the Lord and stopped meditating on His faithfulness, he would have begun to consider what Goliath had to say. Soon those threats would have immobilized David, just as they had immobilized the armies of Israel.

But before the giant's threats had an opportunity to take root in his soul and produce paralyzing fear, David spoke forth his declaration of war against the enemy:

... Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

This day will the Lord deliver you into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and He WILL give you into our hands.

1 Samuel 17:45-47

PREVAILING OVER THE PHILISTINES IN YOUR LIFE

Once David made his declaration of war, he wasted no time. Verse 48 says, “And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hastened ”

This must have shocked Goliath! Most challengers ran away from him, but David “hastened.” In other words, when the moment of conflict finally came and David saw Goliath coming, he picked up his sling and his five stones and RAN toward the giant. It was as though the young man was saying to himself with relish, “Now the action begins!”

The Word continues: “And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him ” (vv. 49,50).

But wait — David wasn’t finished yet! While Goliath lay with his face to the ground, stunned by the small pebble that had been hurled from his young opponent’s sling, David seized the opportunity to make sure the job was finished!

...But there was no sword in the hand of David. Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled.

1 Samuel 17:50,51

How about you? Are you tired of the Philistines in your life? Are you tired of being mentally harassed and emotionally tormented by the lying insinuations and slanderous accusations of the adversary? How would you like to sling a stone into the head of those accusing thoughts and drop them stunned to the ground — and then cut off their heads so that they can never harass you again?

This is precisely why Paul urges us, “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11)!

Natural training and education is good, and we all need to receive as much of it as we possibly can. However, we must all eventually discover that natural weapons and natural education will not help us in our fight with unseen, spiritual enemies.

In such moments, we must move beyond the realm of our fleshly means of defense and enter into the realm of spiritual armor. This armor will empower each one of us to successfully “...stand against the wiles of the devil.”

THE DEVIL’S MODE OF OPERATION

It would be a great injustice to conclude this chapter without explaining what the name devil means. Once you have an understanding of this name, you will know it was the nature of the devil himself that was working through Goliath to intimidate the armies of Israel.

The name devil is taken from the Greek word *diabolos* and is a compound of the words dia and ballo. The word dia carries the idea of penetration, and the word ballo means to throw something, such as a ball or a rock. Literally, the word diabolos describes the repetitive action of hitting something again and again — until finally the wall or membrane is so worn down that it can be completely and thoroughly penetrated.

Thus, the name devil (*diabolos*) is not only a proper name for this archenemy of the faith, but it also denotes his mode of operation. The devil is one who strikes repeatedly, again and again, until he finally breaks down a person's mental resistance. Once that person's mental resistance has been breached, the enemy then strikes with all his fury to penetrate and take captive that person's mind and emotions.

This is how the enemy works! He will repeatedly try to hit you with lies, suggestions, accusations, and allegations, bombarding you with one slanderous assault after another. In this way, the devil attempts to wear you down — looking for an opportunity to make his move and take you captive in one of your weaker moments.

If the enemy can find you with your guard down, he will then try to pave a road into your mind (*methodos*) so he can confuse your emotions with “mind games” (*no-emata*). His goal is to deceive you to the point that you actually begin to believe his threats. If he succeeds, your false perceptions will empower his lies to become a reality in your life.

Now you can better understand the sense of urgency behind Paul's command in Ephesians 6:11. If you're ever going to live free from the enemy's tormenting lies and accusations, it is absolutely imperative that you "clothe yourself with the whole panoply — the loincloth, breastplate, shoes and greaves, shield, helmet, sword, and lance — that comes from God, that you may have explosive and dynamic power to stand proud and upright, face to face and eyeball to eyeball, against the roads that the slanderer would try to pave into your mind!"

AN ARSENAL OF SUPERNATURAL WEAPONRY

Eddie Turner

Excerpted from *Conquering the Chaos in Your Mind*

People often contact me after hearing my story. Hearing everything I went through and how the Lord set me free gives them hope that they can find freedom as well. Without question, freedom is available to all—though it comes with a fight. But it is a fight we're definitely not in alone. As children of God, we have mighty supernatural weapons so formidable they can demolish any stronghold of Satan. This is fantastic news and a truth we must boldly believe and declare. We can rejoice that no one is beyond God's help—no one. Our victory is all about learning to wield the mighty weaponry God has given us.

The very nature of the word stronghold, which Paul talks about in 2 Corinthians 10, lets us know that effort and determination have been exerted against us to imprison us. Likewise, it will take effort and determination to get free from this prison. The effort and determination I refer

to is not physical strength or willpower but the diligence to use our spiritual weapons to walk in liberty, even more than the devil has been diligent to harass and imprison us.

Every day all day, my mind was bombarded with thoughts of quitting, giving in, and giving up. Many times, I entertained thoughts of ending my life because the promises in God's Word of peace and a sound mind seemed so far removed from the reality I was facing. But I resolved that I would not give up or give in.

I remember walking through my house shouting at the tormenting thoughts blaring in my mind. I recall the thoughts and images of the police and medical professionals coming to get me and forcefully taking me to a facility for the mentally insane. But even with those scenes playing out in my mind, I would yell, "I don't care if they take me away, I will never surrender to these thoughts. I will continually declare that God has given me a sound mind."

It was a fight—a constant warfare—for over a year. But I continued to use my spiritual weapons—weapons mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. And those weapons, which I am detailing in this book, are the spiritual weapons that eventually set me free. They are the weapons that will set you free—and keep you free!

WEAPON #1- THE WORD OF GOD

Your Bible is your weapon—it's the number one weapon in your arsenal.

For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires (Hebrews 4:12, NLT).

This verse tells us that our Bible is not just any book. It is not just paper and ink. It is a weapon that is alive and powerful, and its purpose is to help you protect, defend, and obtain. It will protect and defend you and your family. It will help you obtain everything God has promised you so that you can live an abundant life.

The apostle Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, gave us amazing insight into the power contained in our Bibles. Peter told us that the truth in our Bibles has the power to give us the very life of God.

1 This letter is from Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ. I am writing to you who share the same precious faith we have. This faith was given to you because of the justice and fairness of Jesus Christ, our God and Savior. 2 May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord. 3 By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. 4 And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires (2 Peter 1:1-4, NLT).

Unfortunately, many people's devil-defeating, life-giving, spiritual weapon—the Bible—sits unused on their

desks or shelves. Too often it's a weapon the possessor doesn't know how to use.

Recently I was visiting with a family and the conversation turned toward the possibility of someone breaking into their house to rob and injure them.

I asked them, "Don't you have a gun?"

"Yes, we have a gun," the homeowner replied. "But I'd have to ask the intruder to show me how to use it because I don't know how to load it or fire it."

It doesn't seem logical or smart to possess a weapon without knowing how to use that weapon. Yet, many Christians are in the same condition. Satan is the thief who comes to steal from us and destroy our families, but we have a formidable weapon available to defeat him. The words in our Bible are powerful enough to render him ineffective, but too many believers don't know how to use them.

The power of our Bible is contained in our faith and confidence in what it says. When we don't know what it says, our Bible is useless even though it carries the power of life and death. This is the reason so many Christians are powerless and being defeated by our enemy.

I discovered years ago that my love for God should run parallel to my love for the Word of God. In other words, I don't love God any more than I love His Word.

THE WORD OR GOOD FEELINGS

The Pentecostal, Charismatic style of worship is often filled with emotional celebrations and intense seasons of intercession. It's not uncommon in one of these services to see dancing, joyful singing, and at the same time, a heartfelt cry of repentance. Often the emotional response felt in a service becomes the focal point of the service and the confirmation to the participants that God has been in their presence.

I was born and raised in a Pentecostal Church, a church that believes the Bible is God's Word. But God's Word didn't have first place in my life—good emotional feelings did. Ask yourself the same question. Which has first place in your life?

My Holy Spirit moment was different than many of the young people in our little church. Whereas many of the kids in our youth group received the Holy Spirit at a youth service or youth camp, I received the infilling of the Holy Spirit in a private time of prayer.

One Sunday night, the pastor preached on the subject "Tarry Until" with the emphasis on "tarrying for the Holy Ghost." The premise was that the disciples had to wait for the Holy Spirit to fall on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, so we must be willing to wait also. The altar call was given to tarry or wait for the Holy Ghost, so I responded. I remember thinking, Hopefully, we won't have to wait for days like the disciples did in the book of Acts because I have to go to school the next day.

Anytime the youth went forward to the altar in our small Pentecostal church, the older ladies would gather around and start praying for them. The goal was to get all the youth filled with the Holy Ghost and speaking in tongues.

While kneeling at the altar, suddenly I found myself surrounded by the “mothers of Israel,” as I called them. One of them grabbed one of my arms and raised it while another grabbed my other arm and held it up. Thus, the altar service ramped up to full speed.

My mother was playing the organ, and the church ladies had me surrounded. A few other young people knelt at other places around the front, but it appeared that night I was the selected Holy Ghost target. A combination of praises, hallelujahs, and various ladies switching back and forth from tongues to English in my ear kept my attention captivated. I remember one on my right side, saying, “Let go, son!” Another on my left side was saying, “Hold on, son!”

Now if you have never been a part of an old-fashioned Pentecostal altar service, you have not experienced real church. Time is not considered, and quietness is a sign of spiritual coldness. The voices were praying loudly, the music was a victory march, and the ebb and flow of the altar service would shift and swoon with the intensity of the next mother who would take the prayer lead.

I don't know how long we stayed at the altar that night, but it was long enough that I had become weary of praying

and calling on God at the top of my lungs. This “tarrying until” was becoming more than I bargained for. My shirt was soaked with sweat, and my arms were numb from being held up. Finally, I gasped out a mumbled breath from weariness, and when I did, one of the ladies hollered, “You got it! You got it!”

Suddenly the mood switched from “pressing in” to celebration. People starting clapping and rejoicing accompanied with cheers of “Thank You, Jesus!” from everyone around the altar. The ladies were excited because they thought they had prayed another child through to the Holy Ghost.

After being hugged and squeezed by every grandmother in the church and patted on the back by every man, people started making their way back to their seats to retrieve their possessions and head home. Another young person Holy Ghost filled, another altar service enjoyed where God came down and glory filled their souls.

As we walked through the door out to the parking lot, I remember a woman saying, “Son, I am so glad you got it!”

I remembered politely and quietly saying, “Thank you.” But as I walked away, I remember thinking, If this is the infilling of the Holy Spirit, this is the no nearest nothing I have ever experienced.

I didn’t sleep much that night. I was disappointed. I experienced a lot of emotions around the altar, but there was no substance that occurred in my heart. I was under

the impression that the infilling of the Holy Spirit was to empower a person with spiritual power. I read about the disciple's lives being changed after their experience on the day of Pentecost. I read where men filled with fear immediately turned into men of boldness. If a spiritual power came, surely I would know it and sense a change. But unfortunately, none of that happened to me that night.

The next day at school I kept replaying the scene from Sunday night, questioning what I had experienced. When I got home, I went to my room and started reading my Bible, looking for answers. I knew God was real and believed what the Bible said was true, but what I had experienced was disappointing because I didn't sense any change in my heart at all.

Two years earlier, I had responded to an altar call at a summer revival meeting, and the moment I prayed and asked Jesus to come into my life, I knew inside that a transformation had taken place. I knew I was different.

By Tuesday night, I had looked up all the Holy Spirit scriptures I could find in my Bible. I desired to experience what the disciples experienced in Jerusalem that fateful day, but I didn't want to go through another emotional roller coaster with all those people at church. I was about to close my Bible and stop reading for the night when I stumbled upon an important scripture.

“And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. 10 For

everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. 11 “You fathers—if your children ask for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? 12 Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! 13 So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him” (Luke 11:9-13, NLT).

As a twelve-year-old boy, it was as if a light from heaven immediately shined in my heart. Suddenly, I saw it! I didn’t need to do emotional cartwheels to receive the Holy Ghost, and I didn’t have to tarry for a long time. I simply had to ask the heavenly Father, and He would give me the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

“...How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him,” I just read. I fell asleep that night with a peace in my heart and a plan to receive the Holy Spirit. In fact, the next day was Wednesday and church Bible study, so I planned to ask the heavenly Father then for the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Normally on Wednesday night, I would take my schoolwork to church with me and do homework while my grandfather taught the lesson. But on that night, the only thing I took to church was my Bible. I don’t remember what my grandfather’s Bible study was about. I was looking forward to the prayer time at the end of service.

When I was a child, at the end of every service in our church, everyone would be invited to come to the front and

find a place to spend a few moments in personal prayer before they left the church house. We must be prayed up before we go out into a sin-cursed world. This night was no exception. My grandfather finished his lesson and “opened the altars for prayer,” which meant an invitation was extended for people to come forward to pray. There were probably only twenty-five or thirty people in that service, so the altar area wasn’t crowded. But I wasn’t getting anywhere close to the altar that night. What happened last time was nothing short of a Holy Ghost gang up, and I wasn’t allowing those grannies to get a hold of me again.

I waited till everyone had gone up to the front to pray and slipped out of my pew. I walked down toward the front but turned into an empty pew about four rows from the front. I knelt down and opened my Bible to Luke 11:13, “So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him” (NLT).

I remember saying softly, “Lord, You said right here that if I would ask You for the Holy Spirit, You would give Him to me. So, I ask You to fill me with the Holy Spirit now.”

Without hollering or marching music—even without raised arms—there, kneeling alone, a sense of joy immediately rose up inside of me. I didn’t know how to respond or what to say except, “Thank You, Jesus.” In a moment’s time, that intelligible “thank you” turned into a language I had never heard, spoken, or learned. At first, I was so shocked by what I heard myself saying that I stopped and made sure

I wasn't dreaming. Then like a river that had been released, I opened my mouth and yielded my heart. Words flowed out in a language that I had never heard before. With each moment that passed, my heart became more excited and freer. I sensed freshness, newness, and life.

An excitement took over my emotions, and I began to cry out of joy. Once my crying started, I calmed myself the best I could because I didn't want the grandmothers to hear me and take that as a sign to give me a Pentecostal double dose.

I don't know how long I knelt there, but it must have been a while because when I stood up and looked around, everybody was already back in their seats and looking at me. I slowly made my way back to my regular pew and sat down. Maybe I should say that I floated back to my regular pew and sat down. I was on cloud nine. This was it!

The next several months was totally different for me. I wanted to witness to all my friends and share what had happened to me. Most of them thought I was crazy, but I didn't care. I got it, and it was real!

For months I lived in an emotional euphoria. At every church service, I couldn't hold back the tears. They were not tears of sadness; I had an unusual joy and thankfulness in my heart. Every song stirred my heart, and every sermon inspired me. I loved going to church and couldn't wait to get there.

Yet, over a period of time, I came to rely upon those emotional feelings. I assessed the move of the Holy Spirit

by the emotional response I witnessed or experienced. If there were emotions of crying, that meant there was repentance. If there were emotions of joy, that meant the Holy Spirit had come down. If the service really got carried away and the preacher didn't get to preach because people were laughing, dancing, or falling under the power of the Spirit, then that was the epitome of a Holy Ghost-filled service. The preaching of the Word of God was important, but a good sermon would always take an inferior position to a Holy Ghost move.

At the same time, I began noticing it was always the same folks going to the altar for prayer in every service. It seemed like people were going to the altar, but their lives were not being altered.

Also, in the New Testament books of Acts, when the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, they began witnessing. Their witness and testimony of what Jesus had done for them compelled others to come and see what was taking place. But new folks were not coming into our church; no one invited anybody. A great church service was not the result of people being born again but what kind of experience the regular crowd had around the altar.

Later that year, my grandfather resigned as pastor of the church after serving for twenty-two years. I had never been to a church where my grandfather was not the pastor, so things started changing quickly. Within a few weeks, new preachers started coming in every Sunday. One Sunday a young couple came and preached. I don't remember their

names, and I never saw them after that particular Sunday. Yet almost fifty years later, I still remember he preached a sermon titled, “The Power of the Word of God.”

I listened intently as he talked about things I had never heard before. He talked about using the Word of God every day in your life. I was under the impression that the Bible was for Sundays and the stories in the Bible were for preachers to preach messages. I had the Holy Ghost, so why did I need to study the Bible every day? Every Sunday and Wednesday I can get filled up with the Holy Ghost, and that is all I need, I reasoned.

For years, I believed that the Holy Ghost was all I needed. I graduated college with a bachelor’s degree in religion. Many of my studies were about the historical accuracy of the Bible. I studied the Greek language and took Hebrew classes. Each class was taught about the Bible, but none of them taught me how to apply the Bible to my daily life. That didn’t concern me then because I had the Holy Ghost. I had the “fantastic feeling.”

But years later, while driving down the road, that rogue thought popped into my mind: You must be demon possessed. Suddenly, the fantastic feeling left, and no matter how much I prayed and cried, I could not get that feeling back.

Praying and crying also did not make the harassing thoughts stop. I prayed more during that year than any time in my life. Before fear grabbed me and held me a prisoner in my home, I would get around the altar every day

at our little church and cry for hours pouring out my heart to God. I was trying to get that feeling back and trying to chase the harassment away, but it was not working.

GOD'S WORD ALIVE AND POWERFUL

The prophet said it well in Hosea 4:6, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” I didn’t understand that my Bible is a powerful weapon. As long as I was blinded to the revelation of the power in God’s Word, Satan kept me in defeat.

Today we have numerous Christians who think they have an understanding about God and His ways, but their thinking does not line up with the Bible. It’s impossible to know the ways of God if we are not students of His Word.

Let’s look again at Hebrews 4:

For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires (Hebrews 4:12, NLT).

The writer of Hebrews informs us that the Word is alive and powerful. The Greek language translates word as logos. In this verse, it is referring to the written Word of God, our Bible.

Then we see the same Greek word logos is used in the gospel of John:

1In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He existed in the beginning with God. 3 God created everything

through him, and nothing was created except through him. 4 The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it (John 1:1-5, NLT).

In these verses, the Greek word *logos* is not referring to the written Word of God, the Bible, but to the Living Word of God, Jesus. I often hear people say, “Oh, I wished I had lived when Jesus was alive to see all the things He did and experience the healings and miracles He performed. Things would be much better today if Jesus were here.”

The truth is, Jesus is the living Word, but we have the written Word. It wasn't Jesus the human who was powerful but Jesus the Word of God who was powerful. We have the Word of God that the New Testament citizens had, just in a different form. But the power has not diminished.

Both the written Word of God and the living Word of God contain the Life of God.

The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone (John 1:4, NLT).

The word *life* is the Greek word *zoe*, which means “life as God has it.” Jesus gave the God-kind of life to everything He encountered and brought the God-kind of life to us.

You'll recall that in Hebrews 4:12 it says, “The word of God is alive and powerful” (NLT). The word *alive* in the original language is a compound of two Greek words *zoe* (life as God has it) and *poieo* (to make). In other words, Jesus is the living Word came to give life. The Bible, the writ-

ten Word—when we believe and act upon it—will make us alive with the life of God. Our Bible, the Word of God, is a weapon that furnishes the same power Jesus had when He walked on earth, but we must believe it and act upon it.

Time and time again, we read instances in the New Testament when people believed and acted upon the Word of God, and God's power was manifested.

When Jesus returned to Capernaum, a Roman officer came and pleaded with him, 6 “Lord, my young servant lies in bed, paralyzed and in terrible pain.” 7 Jesus said, “I will come and heal him.” 8 But the officer said, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come into my home. Just say the word from where you are, and my servant will be healed. 9 I know this because I am under the authority of my superior officers, and I have authority over my soldiers. I only need to say, ‘Go,’ and they go, or ‘Come,’ and they come. And if I say to my slaves, ‘Do this,’ they do it.” 10 When Jesus heard this, he was amazed. Turning to those who were following him, he said, “I tell you the truth, I haven’t seen faith like this in all Israel! 11 And I tell you this, that many Gentiles will come from all over the world—from east and west—and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the feast in the Kingdom of Heaven. 12 But many Israelites—those for whom the Kingdom was prepared—will be thrown into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” 13 Then Jesus said to the Roman officer, “Go back home. Because you believed, it has happened.” And the young servant was healed that same hour (Matthew 8:5-13, NLT).

Here is an example of a man who had the same faith in the Word of God as he had in Jesus the Living Word of God. The Roman officer goes to Jesus to tell Him about his

servant who was paralyzed and in severe pain. Jesus said to the Roman officer that He would personally go and heal the servant. How did the officer respond? He said, “You don’t have to come personally. Just speak the word, and my servant will be healed.” In other words, the Roman officer believed the Word of God carried the same power and ability as Jesus carried in the flesh.

If we have the same faith in God’s Word as we would in Jesus personally coming to do something for us, we will see the exact same results.

The truth that equipped me to pull down the stronghold of fear, lust, and condemnation that had been established in my mind was this: The supernatural power of God resident in Jesus—the living Word of God—is also contained in the Bible—the written Word of God.

I realized my Bible wasn’t just a historical book, and it wasn’t simply a sacred text. Its words contain the life and power of God.

When that simple truth dawned on me, the verses below took on new meaning in my life.

7But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! 8 When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father (John 15:7-8, NLT).

Jesus tells us that when the Word of God becomes a part of our lives and the Bible gets in us, then our requests are motivated and activated by God’s Word that is alive and powerful.

Angels respond to His Word, demonic spirits respond to His Word, sickness and disease respond to His Word, and the environment responds to His Word.

Jesus and His Word carry the same power—it's the container that is the difference. The powerful life-giving Word of God was contained in Jesus' flesh body when He was alive on earth. Today, the Bible contains the life-giving, powerful Word of God, and we must believe it and act upon it, which is called faith.

My love, honor, and respect of God's Word must coincide with my love, honor, and respect of Jesus. It's interesting that people easily believe in the historical Jesus and the power He displayed when He walked planet Earth, but they struggle believing that same power of God is available today through believing and acting on His Word.

Many view the Bible as a history book that teaches us how to live based on other people's actions and life events. The Bible is a wonderful book of lessons and a supreme teacher, but it is also much more than that. The Bible is the life and power of God to those who believe and act upon it.

For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile (Romans 1:16, NLT).

Paul said the Bible is the power, the *dunamis* (Greek), the ability and might of God. He continued to say it is the power and ability of God at work toward everyone who believes.

This was the key that I missed growing up in church. I believed in Jesus and was born again. I was filled with the Spirit and spoke in tongues. I even preached sermons and used the Bible as my resource. And that's my point: My Bible was a resource to me—not a life source. When my Bible became my life source, the power of God was released in my life, and my Bible became a mighty weapon.

ACTING ON THE WORD

I have asked the Lord to give me the ability to articulate in writing the efficacy of encouraging you to believe and act upon the written Word of God. I encourage you to believe and act upon what Jesus said in the Bible as if He appeared to you and said it in person.

After Jesus appeared to me, the demonic spirits didn't cease their attack against my mind. For a short season, the thought attacks diminished, but they came back. Jesus didn't reappear to me each time the thought attacks came back. No, I had to do something about it. I had to resist and withstand those thought attacks, and the way I remained free was to believe, confess, and act on the Word of God.

The dumb devil took advantage of my lack of understanding for months and years. It wasn't a fair fight. He knew things I did not know and imprisoned me because of my ignorance.

But when he came back around to imprison me again with those same fearful, condemning thoughts, the fight once again was not fair. This time it was a lopsided fight in my favor.

Those harassing thoughts that once tormented me with fear and paranoia lost their power and sting when I responded with the Word of God. Every tactic, thought, scene, memory, and imagination Satan previously used successfully against me was rendered powerless by the Word of God that I confessed and meditated on daily.

Remember, the key is not owning a Bible, reading it periodically, or even knowing the Bible well. The Bible only turns into a weapon and a defense in our lives when we believe it and do what it says.

24 “Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. 25 Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won’t collapse because it is built on bedrock. 26 But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn’t obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. 27 When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash” (Matthew 7:24-27, NLT).

Jesus tells us that Christians can be destroyed and swept away into mental defeat and emotional discouragement. In no way does being a Christian make us immune from mental or emotional storms. But in Matthew 7, Jesus informed us that although the storms rage and the attacks come, those who withstand and endure the onslaught of Satan are those who do what the Word of God says. Just hearing the Bible preached on Sunday is not enough. We must act upon it and obey it.

The Word of God became the all-consuming, driving force in my life. I read the Bible daily and memorized it continually. When thoughts of defeat and discouragement tried to enter my mind, I refused to entertain them. Instead, I quoted a Bible verse I had memorized. Sometimes I had to quote verses multiple times because harassing thoughts wouldn't immediately stop.

SCRIPTURES TO MEMORIZE

Let me encourage you to memorize the following verses from your Bible. These are the verses I used, which instilled in me a confidence in the power of God's Word. I read and quoted these verses daily until they became a part of my very being.

Hebrews 4:12 (NLT)- For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.

Matthew 24:35 (NLT)- Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear.

Luke 4:32 - And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority.

John 6:63 - It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

John 14:24 - He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.

John 8:51 - Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word, he shall never see death."

John 14:23 - Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.

1 John 2:3 - Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

Psalms 119:89 (NLT)- Your eternal word, O Lord, stands firm in heaven.

Isaiah 40:8 (NLT)- The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever.

1 Peter 1:25 (NLT)- But the word of the Lord remains forever. And that word is the Good News that was preached to you.

Jeremiah 15:16 (NLT)- When I discovered your words, I devoured them. They are my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God of Heaven's Armies.

2 Timothy 3:16 (NLT) - All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.

Psalms 119:11 (NLT) - I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

Colossians 3:16 - Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Psalms 19:8 (NLT)- The commandments of the Lord are right, bringing joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are clear, giving insight for living.

Psalms 119:105 (NLT)- Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.

2 Peter 1:18-19 (Phillips)- We actually heard that voice speaking from Heaven while we were with him on the sacred mountain. The word of prophecy was fulfilled in our hearing! You should give that word your closest attention, for it shines like a lamp amidst all the dirt and darkness of the world, until the day dawns, and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Psalms 119:97 (NLT) - Oh, how I love your instructions! I think about them all day long.

Psalms 33:4 (NLT) - For the word of the Lord holds true, and we can trust everything he does.

Psalms 107:20 (NIV) - He sent out his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave.

Psalms 119:77 (NLT) - Surround me with your tender mercies so I may live, for your instructions are my delight.

Psalms 119:145-148 (NLT) - I pray with all my heart; answer me, Lord! I will obey your decrees. I cry out to you; rescue me, that I may obey your laws. I rise early, before the sun is up; I cry out for help and put my hope in your words. I stay awake through the night, thinking about your promise.

Each of these verses helped me see the importance of God's Word while I was fighting for my mental life.

Let me encourage you to re-read the final passage above from Psalm 119:145-148, written by David, and envision the despair he experienced and the hope he expected. As I read these verses, I was able to relate to King David. While I was going through mental and emotional hell, I prayed with all my heart and cried out to God for rescue with every fiber of my being. Day after day, I watched the sun rise,

crying for God's help to make it through another day. The nights were the worst, as the thoughts of fear and images of death invaded my mind like a flood. I could relate to the hopelessness David was feeling.

But then I noticed David didn't stop with his despair or hopelessness. David had one goal through all his pain—to believe in and obey God's Word. Obeying God's Word was David's hope. It was his rescue, and it was his deliverance.

Years later now, I am writing to you because the Word of God I committed to memory and deposited in my heart eventually rescued me from the mental onslaught of Satan. The personal visitations I had from the Lord helped me greatly, but it was the Word of the Lord—my Bible I embraced daily—that has kept me free for many years. God's Word will do the same for you!

Here are a few other verses that played a significant role in my life. These verses instilled in me an understanding of the power in God's Word and the need to have it abiding in me. As these verses became my life source, thoughts of fear and condemnation that had dominated me for years lost their grip on my mind and life.

Ephesians 1:17-23 - that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him

from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 3:14-20 - For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.

Proverbs 30:5 (NLT) - Every word of God proves true. He is a shield to all who come to him for protection.

Ecclesiastes 8:4 - Where the word of a king is, there is power....

Ephesians 6:17 (NLT) - Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 (NLT)- Therefore, we never stop thanking God that when you received his message from us, you didn't think of our words as mere human ideas. You accepted what we said as the very word of God— which, of course, it is. And this word continues to work in you who believe.

James 1:21 (NLT)- So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls.

I memorized these verses many years ago in my darkest hours. Yet these same verses rise up in me today when thought attacks try to distract me and captivate my mind.

SOW TODAY, REAP TOMORROW

Some years ago, sitting in the Houston airport catching a connecting flight to Tulsa, Oklahoma, I saw Pastor John and Dodie Osteen walking down the corridor. He was the pastor of the great Lakewood Church in Houston and the father of noted author Joel Osteen. I punched Amanda and said, “Look, there is Pastor John and Dodie Osteen.” I watched him on television every Sunday night. In my eyes he was the premier pastor of pastors. He was a man of faith, passion, and integrity. He was bigger than life to me and a man I admired and longed to meet one day.

I couldn't take my eyes off of him as they came closer. Amanda and I were flying commercial airlines and waiting at the gate for our flight to board. I told Amanda that I bet they were walking down to a gate where people keep their private jets. But to my surprise, they slowed their pace and turned into the gate area where we were sitting and sat down across from us. I couldn't believe it. The world-renowned John Osteen was flying on the same plane as me. I tried not to stare, but I couldn't help it.

After a few minutes, I guess he saw me struggling not to stare, and he smiled at me. I felt embarrassed and smiled back and ducked my head.

Amanda said, “This is your chance! Walk over and meet him and tell him how much you appreciate his ministry. “But I don’t want to bother him,” I responded.

“This is the best chance you will ever have,” she replied.

A couple minutes more and I worked up the courage to walk over and introduce myself. I told him how much I loved his ministry and how I watched him every Sunday night in Tennessee. To my amazement, he asked me to sit down beside him, and he asked me about my church and my life. For the next fifteen minutes, I was in heaven, listening to every word he shared.

Our conversation was stopped when the desk attendant called for the flight to start boarding. I shook his hand and once again told him that I appreciated his ministry and was so thankful to meet him. We boarded the plane, and since we were not the first one hundred passengers seated, we had to take available seats toward the rear of the plane. As the plane took off, I was reflecting on my conversation with Pastor Osteen. I had even started writing down some notes of the things he shared because I didn’t want to forget them.

The plane reached our cruising altitude, and the pilot came on the intercom telling the passengers they could move around the cabin if needed. A minute or two later, I glanced up and noticed Pastor Osteen walking down the aisle toward the back of the plane where we were seated.

I punched Amanda and said, “Look, here comes Pastor Osteen! I bet he is going to the bathroom.”

“Eddie, most people have to go to the restroom at some time during the day,” she answered me, laughing. When I realized how silly my comment was and how starstruck I had become, we both had a good chuckle.

As he got closer to where we were sitting, instead of walking past us, he stopped at our aisle and said, “Eddie, do you have a few more minutes to talk?”

I was stunned and just shook my head yes.

“Squeeze over!” Pastor Osteen said and sat down on the arm rest of my aisle seat. For the next five to ten minutes, he began sharing with me some things about ministry. Those few things he talked about still resonate in my heart and mind many years later.

He told me one thing in particular that I have never forgotten. I think about it continually because I have discovered it to be true over and over. He said, “Eddie, if you will put God’s Word in your heart when you don’t need it, the Holy Spirit will be faithful to bring it out of your heart when you do need it.”

Pastor Osteen has since stepped over to heaven, but that day on the plane he told me a truth that has helped me immensely through the years. The memorization of scripture has been the greatest weapon I have discovered to combat anxiety attacks, runaway thoughts, and the harassment of my mind by fear and doubt.

On the good days when my mind was not under attack, I learned to commit a portion of my daily devotion to

scripture memorization. I would take time and memorize one verse per week. It didn't take much effort, but the benefits to my life were immense.

Amazingly, it never failed. On the tough days, when anxiety would try to invade my mind and fear would try to flood my thinking, the Holy Spirit would always bring up a verse I had memorized. That memorized verse was like a sword that rose up in me and cut through the deception and fear the devil tried to inflict upon me.

16 In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. 17 Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:16-17, NLT).

Once your Bible, the very word of God, becomes your life force deposited in your heart and mind, it will become a weapon of power that destroys anxiety, fear, and every tactic of Satan.

SATAN HATES TO BE IGNORED

During the season I struggled with relentless thought attacks, I learned how resistance is most effective against Satan. Look with me at a wonderful verse, known by most Christians, that promises this very thing.

So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you (James 4:7, NLT).

According to Vine's Dictionary, the word resist in the original Greek is antitasso. The word has many variations of meanings, depending on which form of the word is used. One form means "to oppose or rage in battle against."

It carries the idea of aggressive behavior.

...After Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul spent all his time preaching the word. He testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. 6 But when they opposed and insulted him, Paul shook the dust from his clothes and said, "Your blood is upon your own heads—I am innocent. From now on I will go preach to the Gentiles" (Acts 18:5-6, NLT).

The word oppose in Acts 18 is the same word used as resist in James 4. Notice the crowd exhibited hostile, aggressive behavior against Paul. This is the meaning many of us think about when the concept of resisting the devil comes to mind. We think of aggressive behavior toward him. We often think about warring in prayer, binding and losing, and using our authority over the devil in an aggressive way.

No doubt, aggressive resistance is a marvelously effective truth and a principle we need to exercise in our lives. But there are also times when we cannot stop in the middle of what we're doing or where we are to rebuke the devil. Then what?

On multiple occasions, I would be sitting in a church service and the most hideous, tormenting thoughts would bombard my mind. Like a machine gun firing repeatedly, the harassing thoughts would fire into my mind, trying to distract me from the service or the Bible lesson being taught. At that moment, I couldn't do what I would normally do in my prayer time. I could not just start loudly rebuking the devil in the middle of the church service. If

I would have done that, they definitely would have come after me with a straitjacket.

I have been in a company of friends or family members when a bad thought or impure thought would pop into my mind. I couldn't just quote scriptures out loud or blurt out, "I resist you in Jesus' name!" That would be confusing and disorderly, and we know confusion is not from God. So how could I exercise resistance in those situations?

Several years ago, I was sitting in a high-level meeting with the leaders of the organization with which I was affiliated. I was there representing all the churches and ministers in our state. The meeting began at 9 a.m. that morning, and by 9 p.m. that evening, I was done. The meeting was still going, but I had endured enough. My mind was weary, and my body was tired. Sitting in the same chair for twelve hours with only an occasional break had taken its toll on me.

Without warning, a hateful, accusatory thought flashed through my mind about the minister at the podium. Afterward, I immediately thought, I like that guy. Where did that thought come from? Suddenly another horrific thought popped into my mind about the organization I was representing. Then a thought flashed through my mind that I had not entertained in years, You need to go back to your room and end your life.

When that occurred, I immediately stood up and was getting ready to shout, "Satan, I rebuke you! Get out of my mind!" But it dawned on me where I was and how many

people were sitting around me. Wouldn't that have been some type of scene if I had aggressively resisted the devil and his thought attacks at full volume? Instead, I quietly sat back down with a smile on my face and gathered my notebook and conference items. I turned to the minister sitting beside me and told him I had endured enough for one day and I was going back to my room.

As I walked past several other friends and colleagues, I either stopped and shook their hands and told them I would see them tomorrow or patted them on the shoulder as I walked by. As I walked out of the conference hall, I started humming the old tune, "There's Power in the Blood of Jesus." By the time I arrived at my room, my mind was refreshed. I had some energy in my step, and most of all, those hideous thoughts had evaporated. To this very day, I have not had another situation occur like that again.

I did not resist the devil aggressively, but I resisted him nonetheless. And he ran away. Satan cannot stand it when he is not the center of attention.

In public, I had to learn the power of passive resistance, which simply means I ignored the tormenting thoughts. I have learned that Satan cannot read my mind. He knows what thoughts he has fired into my mind, but he has no idea if those thoughts have found a place of lodging or a beachhead on which to stand. The only way he knows if his thoughts have hit their target is by my actions and my words.

Another meaning of the word resist means "to withstand, set against, to stand firm against." This word carries

the meaning of “standing your ground.” It doesn’t necessarily mean aggressive behavior against something but simply taking a stand and refusing to be moved.⁷

By ignoring tormenting, negative, and doubtful thoughts, we are exercising passive resistance. We are standing our ground and resisting the devil. When fearful or ungodly thoughts try to invade our minds, we resist them by not acting on them, not thinking on them, and not speaking them out. What does God’s Word promise will happen when we resist the devil? He will flee. It doesn’t say maybe he will flee; it says he will flee.

Today, I still have moments when unhealthy and fearful thoughts try to invade my mind. Instead of running to my prayer closet to exercise warfare prayer each time a bad thought comes, I have learned to simply resist the thought by ignoring it. Satan hates rejection. Each time we don’t pay attention to the devil’s attempts to harass us, it disarms him a little more in our lives.

WEAPON# 2 - THE NAME OF JESUS

Since I grew up in church, I had been warned all my life about the sacredness of God’s name and the danger of taking the Lord’s name in vain (Exodus 20:7). I even grew up understanding the need to end my prayers in the name of Jesus, according to John 16:23-24. Yet my understanding of the value of Jesus’ name was still limited.

I always knew it was a special name that deserved honor and respect and commanded authority. But it wasn’t un-

til I became a prisoner to fear that I discovered the name of Jesus is much more than a name we should respect. The name of Jesus is also a mighty spiritual weapon we possess.

One particular scene from the visitation when Jesus appeared to me in my den is sealed in my memory. It's the image of the monkey-looking creatures (demons) huddled in the corner. Each time Jesus looked at them, they shook with fear. Their fear was so tangible that I could see the hair on their bodies shaking.

During the visitation, Jesus didn't speak to the demons, He didn't rebuke the demons, and He didn't chase them away. No, Jesus simply looked at them. The demons were powerless in His presence. Jesus' presence—His very look—rendered the demons powerless.

Over the years, I have been asked several times why I thought Jesus didn't say something or do something about the devils harassing me. Honestly, soon after the visitation, I had the same question. When the tormenting and harassing thoughts started again, I was hoping Jesus would reappear and take care of the situation as He had done before. He did not.

It was during another onslaught of condemning and accusing thoughts that I remembered what Jesus said to me that day. After He pulled the banners with the tormenting thoughts out of my head, Jesus pointed to the corner of the room and to the two monkey-like creatures and said, "Eddie, there's your problem!"

Jesus pointedly told me those two demons were my problem. Even standing right next to me, Jesus didn't do anything about them. Why? Because He already has defeated them.

So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority. 11 When you came to Christ, you were “circumcised,” but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature. 12 For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead. 13 You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. 14 He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. 15 In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross (Colossians 2:10-15, NLT).

Paul said we are “in union” with Christ who is the head or ruler over every ruler and authority. Therefore, since we are in union with Christ, we likewise should rule over demonic authorities. Paul also told us how we received our divine authority. When Jesus died on the cross, He forgave, cancelled, and eliminated the charges and accusations against us, which also means He disarmed and rendered powerless the condemnation Satan has used against us.

Jesus shamed the demonic rulers and authorities by His victory on the cross. That's the reason the demons in my visitation were so frightened of Jesus. They recognized the One who defeated them and shamed them. They were

scared to even look at Him, so they quickly buried their heads.

In the passage below, let's read a story of Christ's authority over Satan before His death and resurrection. The disciples of Jesus had returned from ministering in the cities and villages and were excited because the devils were subject to them. The disciples were able to cast out devils and help people get free.

17 Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."

18 And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you (Luke 10:17-19).

Look at the first sentence once again to see a key element. Notice the disciples discovered that demons were subject to them when they used the name of Jesus. Demons were not subject to the disciples in and of themselves. The demons obeyed the disciples when they were armed with the name of Jesus.

Think about this story. Jesus and Satan were in heaven together. Satan rebelled, and God kicked him out of heaven. Satan came to earth, deceived mankind, and became the god of this world. Jesus showed up on earth, born of a woman. The authority exercised in heaven over Satan remained in effect when the name of Jesus was used on earth. The name of Jesus is all powerful in both worlds—heaven and earth. That makes Satan a two-time loser in both worlds—heaven and earth.

PETER AND JOHN POSSESS THE NAME OF JESUS

Peter's life and ministry contrasted each other at various times to say the least. He was always talking big and brave in a small company of friends or when he was in the presence of Jesus. But when he was confronted and threatened by the Romans who captured Jesus, his courage left.

31 On the way, Jesus told them, "Tonight all of you will desert me. For the Scriptures say, 'God will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' 32 But after I have been raised from the dead, I will go ahead of you to Galilee and meet you there." 33 Peter declared, "Even if everyone else deserts you, I will never desert you." 34 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, Peter—this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny three times that you even know me." 35 "No!" Peter insisted. "Even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you!" And all the other disciples vowed the same (Matthew 26:31-35, NLT).

Jesus told His disciples that He would be betrayed that night and all His disciples would forsake Him. Peter, being big, boisterous, and brave, boldly declared that even if everybody denied Jesus, he would never deny Him. Jesus responded to Peter and said he would deny Him three times in just a few hours before the rooster crowed. Not knowing when to keep his mouth shut, Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you!" And all the other disciples vowed the same.

Peter wasn't the only one who said he would never deny Jesus; each of the disciples joined in the conversation with

declarations of boldness, loyalty, and courage. Unfortunately, their courage quickly vanished as Jesus was arrested a couple of hours later in Gethsemane and carried away by guards. The disciples followed from a distance, and the word of Jesus came true concerning Peter.

69 Meanwhile, Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant girl came over and said to him, "You were one of those with Jesus the Galilean." 70 But Peter denied it in front of everyone. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said. 71 Later, out by the gate, another servant girl noticed him and said to those standing around, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." 72 Again Peter denied it, this time with an oath. "I don't even know the man," he said. 73 A little later some of the other bystanders came over to Peter and said, "You must be one of them; we can tell by your Galilean accent." 74 Peter swore, "A curse on me if I'm lying—I don't know the man!" And immediately the rooster crowed. 75 Suddenly, Jesus' words flashed through Peter's mind: "Before the rooster crows, you will deny three times that you even know me." And he went away, weeping bitterly (Matthew 26:69-75, NLT).

Peter had received revelation about the deity of Jesus that the other disciples hadn't received. He walked on the water with Jesus, witnessed the sick healed, and the dead raised to life. Firsthand, Peter saw Jesus perform miracle feedings and calm storms by His words. Yet Peter still denied that he knew Jesus when confronted by a servant girl. The bodacious fisherman walked away broken, realizing that Jesus' words about him had become true.

But Peter's story doesn't end there. A few days later on the day of Pentecost, Peter was gathered along with others

waiting because Jesus had taught them about a promise yet to come. Suddenly and without warning, a spiritual deposit—being filled with the Holy Ghost—was made into their lives. As a result, those who waited in the Upper Room began speaking in languages they had never learned. This phenomenon created such a stir that thousands of people rushed to the place where this supernatural event was taking place. As the onlookers mocked and questioned what was happening, Peter, the denier, stood up with boldness and courage and preached about Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit they had just received.

A few days after the Day of Pentecost, Peter and John went to the temple. This was the same area where Jesus had earlier driven out the money changers and created such a stir. It was the same general area where Peter fled from the servant girl who recognized him as a follower of Jesus. But this time, Peter and John were not fearful, denying, or hiding. The Bible tells us they arrived at the hour of prayer at the exact same time the largest multitude of worshippers was present.

We pick the story up in Acts 3:

1 Peter and John went to the Temple one afternoon to take part in the three o'clock prayer service. 2 As they approached the Temple, a man lame from birth was being carried in. Each day he was put beside the Temple gate, the one called the Beautiful Gate, so he could beg from the people going into the Temple. 3 When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for some money (Acts 3:1-3, NLT).

Each time I read this story, I am reminded of a humorous play on words that I heard a preacher share concerning this story. The King James Version says, “Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple, which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked alms” (Acts 3:1-3).

The country pastor was clipping along preaching his message about the lame man at the Gate called Beautiful. Without pause, he said, “Isn't it interesting that the lame man asked for “alms” but got legs instead? Hallelujah! God works in mysterious ways.” That is not the correct interpretation of this story, but it's memorable nonetheless.

Picking up again with the story of Peter and John, on their way into the temple, they passed a crippled person who daily was brought to the same place to beg for money. He asked Peter and John for alms or money, and this was their response:

4 Peter and John looked at him intently, and Peter said, “Look at us!” 5 The lame man looked at them eagerly, expecting some money. 6 But Peter said, “I don't have any silver or gold for you. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, get up and walk! 7 Then Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up. And as he did, the man's feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened. 8 He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! Then, walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the Temple with them. 9 All the people saw him walking and heard him praising God (Acts 3:4-9, NLT).

Peter responded to the crippled man, saying they didn't have any money to give him, but what they had, they would gladly give to him. They told him in the name of Jesus Christ to get up and walk. Peter and John were filled with boldness on the day of Pentecost, and they were fully equipped and carried the powerful name of Jesus as their possession.

Over the years, I have heard people try to explain this story away as non-applicable for us today, saying the reason the man was healed was because Peter and John prayed for him. They argue that Peter and John were apostles, and apostles have supernatural power others do not have. Granted, there are power enduements that apostles more frequently operate in than other offices in the body of Christ, but Peter and John clearly declared it was not their apostleship gifts that healed the man. They also said it was not their holiness or personal power.

Let's continue reading:

11 They all rushed out in amazement to Solomon's Colonnade, where the man was holding tightly to Peter and John. 12 Peter saw his opportunity and addressed the crowd. "People of Israel," he said, "what is so surprising about this? And why stare at us as though we had made this man walk by our own power or godliness? (Acts 3:11-12, NLT).

Peter boldly declared what it was they possessed that healed the crippled man.

And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith

which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all (Acts 3:16).

Peter told the crowd it was the name of Jesus and faith in the name of Jesus that caused the crippled man, who had never walked in his life, to be healed and walk. The healing of the lame man created such an uproar that Peter and John were arrested and taken to jail. The next day they appeared before the high priest and others who questioned them about what power or name they used to bring about this healing.

7They brought in the two disciples and demanded, "By what power, or in whose name, have you done this?" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of our people, 9 are we being questioned today because we've done a good deed for a crippled man? Do you want to know how he was healed? 10 Let me clearly state to all of you and to all the people of Israel that he was healed by the powerful name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, the man you crucified but whom God raised from the dead. 11 For Jesus is the one referred to in the Scriptures, where it says, 'The stone that you builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.' 12 There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:7-12, NLT).

Again, before the officials, Peter boldly declared it was the mighty name of Jesus that healed the crippled man. Then Peter expounded further, declaring the name of Jesus is the most powerful name on the earth. There is no other name—not another single name—that carries the authority or power the name of Jesus carries.

After hearing this report and witnessing the crippled man healed, the Jewish leaders were dumbfounded and had no defense. They eventually threatened Peter and John and warned them never again to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. They knew who Jesus was and were instrumental in having Him crucified. Undoubtedly, they had spoken the name of Jesus in their own conversations. But when Peter and John used the name of Jesus, the supernatural took place. Remember what Peter said, “It’s the name of Jesus and faith in that name.”

Once released, Peter and John returned to the group of believers in Jerusalem and had a prayer meeting where again they voiced their faith in the wonderful and miraculous name of Jesus. They didn’t shy away from using the name of Jesus but instead prayed more miracles and healings would occur because of that supernatural name.

And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and give us, your servants, great boldness in preaching your word. 30 Stretch out your hand with healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” 31 After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:29-31, NLT).

It’s vitally important we understand that faith in that name also means a reverence and respect for the name of Jesus. We cannot flippantly use the name of Jesus or call that name in vain and then turn around and expect the name to have power when we need it. These few back-to-back stories in the book of Acts reveal that the early church

depended upon and believed in the power of the name of Jesus. They also viewed the name of Jesus as their weapon that gave them authority over Satan and sin.

STOP! IN THE NAME OF JESUS

A family friend called one day to tell me that her husband was verbally and physically abusing her. Having known this person for years, I asked her if he had ever before exhibited this type of behavior. She said no and explained that in the past he had gotten mad and said some unkind things, but he had never raised a hand to physically harm her. As she shared that information, I realized we were dealing with an evil spirit oppressing her husband. I didn't have time to try and figure out what door he had opened to allow this oppressive spirit into his mind. I just wanted to make sure she was physically safe.

She told me she tried to reason with her husband, prayed for him, begged him to leave, and even threatened to leave him if he didn't stop. Sadly, she really had nowhere to go. She refused to call the police because she didn't want anyone knowing the situation. She felt if he were exposed, he would lose his job and that would send him over the edge. She was afraid he might try to kill her.

We lived a long distance away, so we couldn't get to her quickly to help. I told her to just stay away from him until I could figure out what she needed to do. That night I awoke several times unable to sleep. As I began praying early in the morning, the Lord spoke to me and said, "Tell her to stand in the doorway this afternoon, and as he steps across

the threshold, point her finger in his face and loudly and boldly say, ‘In the name of Jesus, I command the spirit operating in you to stop and release you.’”

Later that morning, she called me again seeking prayer and counsel. I relayed to her what the Spirit had told me. At first, she explained she was scared to do it—that he would probably mock her and knock her down. But a boldness came over me while talking to her, and I said, “He will be unable to touch you. The name of Jesus is more powerful than the evil spirit operating in him.”

After a few more minutes of talking, she said she would do it. After we hung up, all types of fearful thoughts tried to invade my mind. Images of him hitting her or knocking her to the floor tried to create stress and fear in me. A couple of times during the day, I was tempted to call her and tell her not to do it because doubt was trying to steal my faith.

As the time drew closer for him to arrive home, I secluded myself and prayed, taking authority over all evil spirits trying to destroy this husband and our family friend.

The time passed when he normally came home, and I heard nothing. Almost an hour later, my phone rang, and I quickly answered. On the other end, I heard her voice trying to talk to me, but she was crying so hard it was difficult to make out what she was saying. Fear gripped me, and thoughts battered my mind. You’ve done it now! It didn’t work! He has beat her up!

“Are you okay? Are you okay?” I yelled into the phone.

After a short pause, she said, “Yes, I am okay.” She then composed herself enough to tell me what happened.

She explained that fear tried to get her not to go through with it, but she couldn’t live in fear any longer.

“So I met him at the door,” she said, “and as he opened the storm door, I stepped in the doorway, pointed my finger toward him, and yelled, ‘You evil spirit harassing my husband, leave him now in the name of Jesus!’”

“He froze like a statue and couldn’t say anything,” she said. “Then a moment later, he fell face first across the doorway, crying, and asking me to forgive him.”

Many years have passed since then, and they are still happily married.

The powerful name of Jesus is the possession of the Church today. As we honor, reverence, and believe by faith in that name, the name of Jesus will become more than a common name. It will become a powerful weapon that will pull down strongholds in our lives.

WEAPON #3 - THE BLOOD OF JESUS

The third weapon at our disposal is one often overlooked and misunderstood, yet the power of this formidable weapon dates back to the children of Israel and their deliverance from Egypt. Our third weapon able to pull down strongholds is the precious blood of Jesus.

While exiled on the isle of Patmos for his faith in Christ Jesus, the apostle John received an amazing vision we commonly refer to as the last book of the New Testament, the book of Revelation. During this revelation of Jesus and the end times, John also gains insight about Satan and his tactics. Look with me at the following passage:

7 Then there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and his angels. 8 And the dragon lost the battle, and he and his angels were forced out of heaven. 9 This great dragon—the ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, the one deceiving the whole world—was thrown down to the earth with all his angels. 10 Then I heard a loud voice shouting across the heavens, “It has come at last—salvation and power and the Kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters has been thrown down to earth—the one who accuses them before our God day and night (Revelation 12:7-10, NLT).

John told the story of a heavenly battle between the archangel of God, Michael, and his angelic associates in a war with Satan, called the dragon, and his demonic helpers. Michael and his angelic helpers prevail in the battle and kick Satan out of heaven. Satan’s tactic of deception was revealed, and he was thrown down to earth.

Once the devil fell, an announcement was made across the universe that revealed another of his tactics: condemnation. Notice again the latter part of verse 10, “For the accuser of our brothers and sisters has been thrown down to earth the one who accuses them before our God day and

night” (NLT). The devil’s trickery was exposed—he is the accuser of Christians and accuses us continually to God.

One of the reasons Satan was able to easily access my thoughts with the suggestion You must be demon possessed! and God does not love you! is because I grew up incorrectly thinking condemnation and guilt were tools God used to keep Christians in line.

My friend Terry Law wrote this in *The Power of Praise*:

Most of us have been taught to think that God is speaking to us when we feel guilty and the devil is lulling us into a spirit of complacency when we feel innocent. We think conviction is God making us miserable. Conviction simply means that God is clearly showing us our sins and admonishing us to change. Sin consciousness has held many Christians in bondage for years. Whenever anyone preached against sin, they say, “that’s me.” They are constantly aware of the effects of sin in their life. They have never really come into the revelation concerning the realities of the new creation.

If I had not known better, I would have thought Terry lived in my home and attended my little church. I grew up in a theological environment where you were guilty until proven innocent. Although I went to church three or four times a week since birth, I never heard a teaching on our “righteousness” in Christ Jesus. In fact, I didn’t know what the word righteousness meant until I became an adult.

I spent a lot of time praying as a child and a teenager, not necessarily because I was spiritual, but because I lived with the feeling that God was mad at me and I was displeasing to him. So, when that rogue thought popped into

my mind that day, You must be demon possessed, I wasn't able to put up a theological fight. In a way, it made sense to me because I was sure God was mad at me.

While the book of Revelation identifies Satan as the accuser of the brethren, the voice from heaven also clearly tells us how Christians can overcome Satan's accusations.

And they have defeated him by the blood of the Lamb and by their testimony. And they did not love their lives so much that they were afraid to die (Revelation 12:11, NLT).

If you have been around the church world very long, you have heard about the blood of Jesus. Yet, many view the blood of Jesus only as a past ingredient of the atonement of Christ with no present-day power on earth. Others only think of the blood of Jesus when they are taking communion, the Eucharist, or the Lord's Supper.

But the voice that sounded from heaven tells us, one and all, that we overcome the accuser called Satan by the blood of the Lamb and by our testimony. Our testimony of what the blood of Jesus has done for us enables us to overcome Satan's condemning accusations.

THE BLOOD OF JESUS REDEEMS AND FORGIVES

In the book of Ephesians, the apostle Paul told us that our redemption was purchased by the blood of Jesus.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the

*forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace
(Ephesians 1:7).*

According to this verse, we have two wonderful benefits because of the blood of Christ. Firstly, we have redemption through His blood. The Greek word used for redemption means “to release us from our sin and cancel our debt.” The word literally carries the idea of buying us back.

17 And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; 18 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Peter 1:17-19).

The reason the blood of Jesus is so powerful is because it paid the price for our release. Satan no longer has legal hold of the child of God. We have been redeemed or purchased back by the blood of Jesus. The blood of Jesus is not historical symbolism but the invaluable currency that paid the price for our lives for an eternity.

The apostle Paul declared the same thing when speaking to pastors:

Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

Secondly, we have forgiveness through the blood of Jesus, which Greek scholar Rick Renner addresses in his book *Sparkling Gems from the Greek Volume 2*:

When Paul used the word [aphiemi for forgive] in Ephesians 1:7 to describe the forgiveness of sins, he was saying that God has permanently dismissed our past sins from us. We are liberated completely from them. He has discharged them from us; He has sent them away; and He has released us from them. The debt we once owed due to past transgressions is canceled and God has freed us from the guilt of those previous actions....⁹

I wish I would have known this truth years ago when Satan was tormenting my mind. The devil daily was reminding me and accusing me of every sin I ever committed. He filled my mind with memories of things from my past that I had not thought about in years. But not anymore, praise God! My testimony—my daily confession and declaration—is I have been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus. My sins have been sent away from me. When the accuser comes to harass my mind with my past failures and sins, his accusations are rendered ineffective because of what the blood of Jesus accomplished for me.

THE BLOOD OF JESUS IS A SHIELD AND PROTECTION

Not only does the blood of Jesus give us a legal right to refute the accusations of Satan, but it also serves as a shield and protection for us. We see the benefits of the blood clearly played out in the Old Testament book of Exodus. The children of Israel were slaves to the Egyptians and cried out to God for deliverance. God sent Moses as the deliverer and instructed him to go to Pharaoh and tell him to let the people go so they could worship their God. But Pharaoh refused, and ten plagues of judgment came upon Egypt.

The tenth plague was the death of the firstborn of every human and creature. Whereas the first nine plagues mainly fell among the Egyptians and the Israelites were spared, the tenth plague was completely impartial and would strike everyone. God told His people there was a way of protection from the tenth plague, but it required shed blood.

While the Israelites were still in the land of Egypt, the Lord gave the following instructions to Moses and Aaron: 2 “From now on, this month will be the first month of the year for you. 3 Announce to the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each family must choose a lamb or a young goat for a sacrifice, one animal for each household. 4 If a family is too small to eat a whole animal, let them share with another family in the neighborhood. Divide the animal according to the size of each family and how much they can eat. 5 The animal you select must be a one-year-old male, either a sheep or a goat, with no defects. 6 “Take special care of this chosen animal until the evening of the fourteenth day of this first month. Then the whole assembly of the community of Israel must slaughter their lamb or young goat at twilight. 7 They are to take some of the blood and smear it on the sides and top of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the animal. 8 That same night they must roast the meat over a fire and eat it along with bitter salad greens and bread made without yeast. 9 Do not eat any of the meat raw or boiled in water. The whole animal—including the head, legs, and internal organs—must be roasted over a fire. 10 Do not leave any of it until the next morning. Burn whatever is not eaten before morning. 11 “These are your instructions for eating this meal: Be fully dressed, wear your sandals, and carry your walking stick in your hand. Eat the meal with urgency, for this is the Lord’s Passover. 12 On that night I will pass through

the land of Egypt and strike down every firstborn son and firstborn male animal in the land of Egypt. I will execute judgment against all the gods of Egypt, for I am the Lord! 13 But the blood on your doorposts will serve as a sign, marking the houses where you are staying. When I see the blood, I will pass over you. This plague of death will not touch you when I strike the land of Egypt. 14 “This is a day to remember. Each year, from generation to generation, you must celebrate it as a special festival to the Lord. This is a law for all time (Exodus 12:1-14, NLT).

God told the children of Israel to slay an unblemished lamb and spread the blood on the doorpost. The night the judgment of death came into the land, it would not touch any of those in houses where the blood was on the doorpost. God said, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” Thus, the feast was given the name The Passover. Whoever hid behind the blood was safe. The blood of the lamb was sufficient to save the people from their sins.

Hundreds of years later, as Jesus walked on earth, John the Baptist confirmed Jesus by declaring this:

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29, NLT).

Then Paul wrote to the Corinthians and called Jesus Christ the Passover lamb:

Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7, NLT).

Growing up in our little Pentecostal church, I remember the saints often would say, “I plead the blood. I plead

the blood over my family. I plead the blood over my life.” For years I didn’t know what that phrase meant, but today I have learned the value of pleading the blood.

I cannot say it any better than Kenneth W. Hagin said it in his article in the Word of Faith magazine titled “I Plead the Blood.”

Pleading the blood is not begging God to do something. It is not a statement of unbelief or fear. Pleading the blood activates what happened through the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross. It is asking God to provide what Jesus’ blood has already purchased. It’s a statement of faith about what happened at Calvary.

Activate what Jesus already purchased for you! Plead the blood of Jesus over your mind! Plead the blood over your thoughts, your life, your family, your home!

The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. When addictions, phobias, perversions, and demonic influences invade our lives and minds, we have much stronger weapons to bring them down.

Yet our weapons are useless unless we use them. Our weapons are ineffective unless we fire and launch them. How do we launch them? Through the confession of God’s Word, through our praise and prayer, through our release of the power contained in the name of Jesus, and through pleading the blood of Jesus over our lives.

When my mind was being harassed, I combated those tormenting thoughts by speaking God’s Word. When the

devil bullied my mind, I resisted him. When I prayed, I imagined myself being in union with Jesus, and therefore, I carried the power of His name. When Satan tried to remind me of my past, I remembered and declared my redemption and forgiveness through Jesus' blood.

ENCOURAGED TO OVERCOME

It's also important to understand there were times during my battle that I became weak. The constant mental and emotional struggling has a way of wearing down the most diligent warrior, and I was no exception. There were many days that I felt I couldn't quote another scripture or sing another worship song. There were days when I entertained thoughts of giving up and giving into the torment. On those days, the Holy Spirit was always faithful to send a partner or partners to me help fight the good fight of faith. People would encourage and remind me of the weapons the Lord has given us all to overcome our enemy.

Over the years, Satan's attacks on my mind haven't had the same effect as they did years ago before I learned how to control my thoughts, but the devil still continues to come back around periodically with worry, moments of anxiety, fear, and even temptation. He picks and chooses his moments. Satan watches, and if we are physically or emotionally weary, he will try to slip something in on us.

THE WEAPONS AT WORK

Fifteen years after the visitation from the Lord, another situation happened in my life where I needed help getting

free. Our church had just built the largest worship facility in the county, and people were attending by the hundreds. I was so naïve that I thought everyone would be excited about a growing church in their city. After all, a church represented good moral values and a place where families were taught how to be a blessing to humanity. Unfortunately, I found out that not everyone views a growing church that way.

A group of citizens were unhappy that their little community had become the growth area of the county. Cars by the hundreds crammed into their community every Sunday and Wednesday. Our church was buying available property around us, for prices above appraised value. We paid more than appraised value so people knew we were being fair to families who had lived in those houses for years. We paid for new city sidewalks and helped with infrastructure improvements. Yet, regardless of what we did, it was not enough.

One day I received a call from the town mayor who invited me to a city council meeting that evening at city hall. Once again, being naïve, I thought they were possibly going to award the church some type of honor or thanks for all the things we had done for the community. The exact opposite occurred. I walked into an ambush. A group of citizens had formed a militia to run me and the church out of town. They had no demands other than for us to get out. I sat stunned as I was yelled at, falsely accused, and threatened. I apologized that we had apparently inflicted harm on their quality of life, but apologies were not what they wanted. They wanted revenge.

As a sidenote, one of the most hurtful sights of the evening was seeing citizens who were members of other churches in our community in chorus with the insults and accusations being hurled my way. I walked out of that meeting hurt, discouraged, and confused.

On my way home, it was as if Satan jumped on my shoulder and started whispering in my ear: Yeah, look at you. You have ruined your witness now. The church is supposed to be a blessing, but you have led it to become a curse in this community. You have made enemies you will never win back. The church's reputation is stained forever. You are not the pastor of the largest church in the county who is respected; you are the most hated person in the county. You have embarrassed God and the congregation.

To be honest, I was not prepared for this attack. We had just concluded a building project that cost over two and a half million dollars. And that was twenty years ago, so you can imagine what it would cost today. I was physically tired and emotionally drained. The church was experiencing rapid numerical growth, which required more staff and systems in place. Unfortunately, I had allowed my prayer life to slip, and I wasn't spending the quality time with the Lord that I needed to spend. I was depleted physically, emotionally, and spiritually, and then the attack came.

For the next month, the words spoken in that city meeting tormented me day and night. Fear started to grab me again. I knew what was happening, but I couldn't catch up and get ahead of it in prayer. I couldn't pray through the

hurt and pain. People from the community would stop by the church during the week to complain about something we were doing. The city manager was calling me multiple times during the week with complaints from neighbors. The militia even started writing letters to the editor of the local paper complaining about me and the church. I was heartbroken and scared. Sleep escaped me, and the vise grip around my head came back. I was scared to go to my church office. I found myself paranoid, thinking everyone was out to get me.

Within two months, the fear had consumed me. I couldn't escape it, and I couldn't logically reason a way out of this ordeal. I tried to talk Amanda into relocating somewhere else and leaving the church. The words of those people harassed me day and night.

Daily thoughts invaded my mind: You are a failure. Yes, you beat this thing years ago, but this time you have messed up bad. You're done with. Your ministry is over in this community, and this debacle will follow you everywhere you go. What a failure you are.

During a monthly church board meeting, I finally took off my mask and revealed to the elders my fear, hurt, and pain. I wept like a baby, exposing my vulnerability to them. I had no idea what they would do with their pastor having a nervous breakdown. Would they remove me, ridicule me, blame me, or send me away for treatment? I did not know. I just knew that I was miserable and scared to death.

In unison they rose from their chairs and gathered around, laid hands on me, and started praying. At first,

nothing seemed to change. I still felt the pressure around my head, and the fear gave way to embarrassment that I, the pastor, needed prayer. After a few moments, they started to pray in the Spirit, declaring the name of Jesus and the blood of Jesus over my life and my mind. I heard them individually praying scriptures over me, proclaiming God's promises of protection and peace of mind.

In the midst of their praying, I heard a rubber band pop. At the same moment, the pressure around my head instantly left! Peace returned to my mind, and joy overwhelmed me. I felt freer and more refreshed than I had in months. My friends and spiritual partners helped break that stronghold of fear that had tormented me for two months.

Again, the power of 2 Corinthians 10:4 comes to mind, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (KJV). I experienced once again that every stronghold of Satan begins with a single thought. If you allow the thought to continue, its influence in your life will strengthen with fantasy and an undisciplined imagination. If at that point, you don't demolish those images and fantasies, it will become a stronghold that controls your life, causing you to act in ways you never dreamed of acting.

You see, the problems of life will come to all. It's not a matter of maybe or if—but when. And when problems come, thoughts will come. When they do, what will you do? Will you use your mighty God-given weapons to live in the peace God promises you?

A RENEWED MIND IS THE DEVIL'S WORST NIGHTMARE

Kylie Oaks Gatewood

Excerpted from *[Winning the Mind Battle](#)*

A renewed mind is the devil's worst nightmare come true. Why would the devil hate it when someone has a renewed mind? Very simply, the mind is the only means he has to get to us. That's his only access point to our lives. So if we renew our minds, the devil has no access to our lives. That's really good news!

Now the question is, "How does the devil access our minds?" He accesses our minds through our thoughts. My own story specifically started with one simple thought. Let's take a look into the Word of God and I'll show you what I mean. Every person has to deal with "castles" in their minds. Not everyone's situation is as extreme as mine was, obviously, but there is no one who is exempt, no one who doesn't have to learn how to control their soul.

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.

2 Corinthians 10:4

Circle those words strongholds. In the Greek, the word strongholds is a very old word with two meanings. Rick Renner has some excellent teaching on the word strongholds, if you'd like to find it on the Internet, but for the sake of understanding, I'll give you the short version here. Both of the meanings of strongholds work in this situation. The meaning is described as a place like a castle or a fortress. If you are dealing with a stronghold in your mind, it's as if a lie has been in your head for so long that it's become like a castle sitting inside your head. The devil moves in and from this lofty place, he begins to dictate what you think, what you feel, and the way you see yourself.

The second definition of "strongholds" also works in this situation. The second definition is "a prison." Seemingly these definitions paint pictures of two different things. A castle is something with big walls that tries to keep things from coming in. In a prison, you're behind bars and can only see what is on the other side. You are on the inside looking out, as the prison keeps you from going out.

When a stronghold is built up in your mind, this lie creates a huge fortress from which the devil will dictate what you should think, how you should feel, and how you should interpret situations in your life. Sometimes people aren't actually doing anything wrong to you, but you're seeing their actions as all wrong. You've worn these glasses of

hurt and unforgiveness for so long — the glasses of “this happened to me in my childhood,” or whatever your case may be — that you see situations in life now through the lens of those past hurts, rejections, and experiences, and you are isolated with no one getting in and no one going out.

This also reminds me of the word oppression. The word oppressed in the Greek means an entity or a lie, like a wicked king or a tyrant ruling in your head. Oppression terrorizes your life. An example of this is found in the book of Acts.

CASTLES IN YOUR MIND

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

Acts 10:38

At the time, I didn't understand all this. As a girl wanting love, I decided that the only way I could find it was to have sex with whomever I could. I longed for that feeling of love, even though it wasn't really love at all. Then the thoughts started coming, Sex equals love, so go get all you can. You don't know what love really is because your family chose the whole world and lost their daughter. Because this man did that to you, you're used goods. Who would want to be with you? I would give myself to random people I didn't even know. I'd meet them in a bar for a one-night stand, have sex with them, and think that I was truly try-

ing to find love. This was a castle — a stronghold — that had built itself up in my mind, and I was seeing the whole world through this.

Everything changed for the worst when I started accepting those thoughts as truth. When you listen to the lies of the enemy — those thoughts, those ideas, those suggestions — and accept them as truth, they start to affect you. Truth always lines up with God's Word. I guarantee that none of that mess was in the Word of God. None of it!

But the devil wasn't happy with me just drinking and sleeping around. His ultimate goal was to steal, kill, and destroy my life (John 10:10). Ultimately, he wanted me to either get a STD and die or just be so broken that I wanted to die. That is exactly what happened; I just wanted to die! As I gave away a piece of myself here and there, I didn't want to live anymore. The satisfaction of love that I thought I would find in the arms of somebody I hardly knew in a bedroom, wasn't doing it for me. I didn't feel loved. I felt so empty. I felt so broken. I truly just wanted to die and get it over with.

If my life is proof of nothing else, it is proof of the fact that even when things look their very worst, God does provide a way out. Let's take a look at 2 Corinthians 10:5. This verse adds more insight into how to handle these strongholds.

CAST DOWN IMAGINATIONS

In Genesis 1, God created His world by speaking it into existence. He spoke words. If we are created in God's image and likeness (and we read that we are, indeed), it stands to reason that we create our world just as our Creator did — by speaking! We create the framework of our minds, what we're allowed to think and what we're not allowed to think, by speaking. Our words are extremely important!

In 2 Corinthians 10:5, we are told to cast down imaginations. You can do this very simply by putting your hand on your head and saying, That is not my thought. I only think thoughts of life. I do not think thoughts of death. I plead the blood of Jesus over my mind, in Jesus' name. The enemy cannot cross the blood of Jesus applied to your life and situation!

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:5

The word imaginations in the Greek, is the word logismos. This is where we get our word logical. There are two types of imaginations. There is the logical imagination and there is an illogical one.

A great example of a logical imagination is when the Holy Spirit tells you to give a certain amount of money in the offering. The logical imagination says, I can't give that much in the offering because I wouldn't be able to pay this

back and I wouldn't be able to do that. Just like that, you reason yourself out of what the Holy Spirit tells you to do. Why? It's logical. Right? Logical imaginations are the hardest ones to overcome. Not that this is impossible to overcome them; they are just harder to do because they make sense.

An example of an illogical imagination is when the devil comes and lies to you, like he does to a person with an eating disorder. This person is extremely skinny, yet feels like she is overweight. When she looks in the mirror, she sees a 200-pound reflection, but anybody else looking at her can see that she is nothing more than skin and bones. The devil took something that was completely illogical and set up a stronghold in her mind, will, and emotions. He fed her a lie and she chose to accept it.

HANDLE YOUR THOUGHTS

The shield of faith plays an important part in helping you ward off those imaginations from the enemy. How do you release your faith? With your mouth, through the words you say. This is the answer to everything. You must learn that once you accept a lie as truth, it will become one of your beliefs. Once it becomes a belief, you will start acting like it's true. Everything you do starts with a thought. Thoughts can be categorized into two groups: 1) thoughts of life and 2) thoughts of death. Thoughts are not always extreme like kill yourself, but deadly thoughts can be anything that is anti- God, anti-anointing, anti-Christ, or anti-life.

You can be free from the lies that the devil sends to steal, kill, and destroy. It is vitally important that you deal with those thoughts, ideas, and suggestions quickly and in line with the Word of God. Your thinking determines your emotions. Your emotions determine your decisions. Your decisions determine your actions. Your actions determine your habits. Your habits determine your character.

I didn't handle my thoughts or emotions. I didn't handle my hatred, anger, or unforgiveness. And because I didn't handle them, these things affected my character. I had to learn to deal with all of these things in order to have victory over them. I'm not trying to preach to you or make you feel bad. I've been where you are. If you've been struggling, I want you to know you're not alone. I've got good news for you! You can look at me and my life now and know that there is hope. I am 35 years old and have been totally free from all that junk for more than 10 years. I no longer have thoughts about committing suicide. It never crosses my mind. I don't have thoughts about being used up or being unlovable. Why? Because perfect love casts out fear! God is love!

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear.

1 John 4:18

I don't care how used up you feel, the perfect love of God, the grace of God, and the mercy of God drive away all the hurt and pain and fear. God is truly perfect in all of His ways! You may be living like the devil like I did, but God sees you through grace. God sees you through

the blood of Jesus, and you are perfect in all of your ways!
Now, it's time to learn.

YOU CAN CHANGE

The key to change—to thinking differently—is simple. Opening your mouth is the shield of faith. If you want to change, pull up that shield of faith, and say to the devil, “Not here, bad boy. Not here! Freedom reigns in this place, in Jesus’ name!”

When you learn how to deal with the devil and go on the offensive instead of the defensive, the devil will not be able to find any place in your life. You can't stop him from trying, but his arrows will slide right off of you without impact.

My husband, Jimmy, and I have been married for over three years. We have never — I'm not lying to you — never raised our voices to one another. Do we ever disagree? Oh, absolutely! I'm a woman; he's a man! But you know, our disagreements just don't have to be explosive. I can say to him, “Now honey, this is the way I see it. “And he'll say, “No, this is the way I see it.” Then we meet in the middle and work it out.

I am determined that my daughter will never hear us fight. But if you let the devil keep a foothold in your life — in your soul, in your mind — you will find that you take every single little thing that your mate does and turn it into something that offends you. This is not how you bring change into your life! I may sound rough, but I've lived,

and I overcame this mess. I have learned that you have to be bulldog-determined to get rid of all the mess in your life if you want freedom in your home, if you want freedom in your life, and if you want freedom in your marriage!

PEACE SHALOM

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

Isaiah 26:3

The word thou in this verse is referring to the Father. Read that verse again. Underline in your Bible the words “perfect peace.” What is the qualifier to walking in perfect peace? Having your mind stayed on God because you trust in Him.

The word “perfect” in Hebrew is the word shalom, and it means nothing missing, nothing broken. It’s not just a word of greeting like saying, “Hey!” It’s a blessing Jewish people say every time they greet each other with the word shalom. They are declaring over each other, “Whatever is missing in your life, I proclaim that it’s no longer missing. Whatever is broken in your life, I proclaim that it’s no longer broken.”

It’s interesting to learn that the word translated “peace” is also the word shalom. So in the Hebrew, this verse would say, “Thou wilt keep him in shalom shalom whose mind is stayed on You.” When God uses a word two times in a row He is in “get your attention” and “multiplication” mode. The word shalom in its root also means salvation. But it

doesn't just mean salvation for your soul, it's also talking about health, prosperity, wealth, and goodness. It means all of these good things. Actually, this verse could be broken down like this: I will make you doubly peaceful. I'll make you doubly prosperous. I'll make you doubly victorious, whose mind is stayed on Me. That is shouting ground for you right here! That is the blessing part!

In Hebrew, the word stayed paints a word picture. Have you ever built a house or watched a house being built? It starts with some little old two-by-fours. They're just small timbers, but they're going to frame the whole house. The word "stayed" means framed. You can think of it this way: "I will keep you in shalom shalom (perfect peace — nothing missing, nothing broken) and doubly wealthy, doubly healthy, doubly wise, if your mind has a frame and you tell your mind what you are allowing it to think and what you are not allowing it to think."

For example, when I used to do a lot of teaching in children's church and classes, we made this stuff called gack. Are you familiar with gack? It's made out of Borax, Elmer's Glue, and water. It's similar to slime. The weird thing about it is that when you squeeze it, it feels hard. But if you just put gack in your hand and allow gravity to do its thing, the gack becomes a soft slime that oozes through your fingers. This perfectly illustrates what happens to your mind when you do not keep it in the confines of a framework. If you do not dictate what your mind is allowed to think and what it is not allowed to think, it will run like gack does through your fingers.

Thoughts, ideas, and suggestions will come, and you'll think, I guess I'm not a good Christian. But that is not coming from you; it's not your thought. And God had nothing to do with it either. The devil brings those thoughts. He does what he does, as he tries to use his wiles against you. You can't completely stop the devil from doing what he tries to do because you live on this planet. But the fact of the matter is, his fiery darts don't have to torment you.

Anger, stress, jealousy, and even some trust issues all start with an itty bitty thought. With anger specifically, you're just kind of ticked off at a situation. It starts out pretty small. For example, I love to cook. I do it a lot. It's fun for me. Have you ever whisked fresh cream with a wire whisk, not with your handy dandy KitchenAid, but with a plain old hand whisk? You add a little sugar to that cream, and you just start whisking away. Now at first, the cream in the bowl is relatively smooth; it has no ripples. But the minute a little agitation comes to it, what happens? A few bubbles start to form, and it gets a little bubbly on the top. Then the more you whisk and the more effort that goes into the cream, it starts to stiffen up and grow in volume. Eventually when you whisk it long enough, you can make a sharp peak with the cream, and it will stay in that position.

Think of this image of whipped cream when you think of anger. You have to stop your thoughts before they harden. Say your confessions. Tell your soul what it is allowed to think when you see just a couple of bubbles of anger. If you can be strong enough to stop when it's just a couple of bubbles, it will not ruin your life or cut someone with its sharp peak once it grows and hardens.

Husbands and wives, you know when something is ticking you off. Ladies, when your husband has once again not picked up his underwear or once again has not put down the toilet seat, you will probably get upset with him. But whatever it is that ticks you off a little, at that point when it's just a couple of bubbles, choose to manage how you respond.

Learn how to dictate what your soul is allowed to do. How should you handle the things that come your way? What do you do first? First of all, you have to identify the enemy and that's the devil, not your husband, wife, kids, or whomever. Second, you need to judge your thought. How do you judge it? You need to realize that the thought of you getting angry is not in line with the Word of God. So, judge that thought. If it is not a Word thought—a life thought—then it is a death thought.

TAKE INVENTORY OF YOUR THOUGHTS

I'll share my experience of how I got free from those thoughts, which had tormented me since childhood. It's not some heavy duty revelation; it's actually so practical that anyone can do it! The first thing I had to do was to identify the enemy. You'd think that would be pretty easy to do since the answer is always the same. The devil is our enemy. But in my case, I had to realize that my brain wasn't the enemy. The enemy was the devil. Once I got that straight, I began to understand his tactics: thoughts, ideas,

and suggestions.

When I was in the middle of all that, I did not trust myself to just think. It sounds weird, but I really didn't. So this is what I had to do. I had to get down to the raw nitty-gritty and inventory every thought I had. I had to think about what I was thinking about. I couldn't let my mind just go rampant.

I had to start judging every thought and putting it into one of two piles: thoughts of life or thoughts of death. For example, if the thought came to me: No one loves you Kylie Oaks, I would have to analyze that thought. Okay, that is not a thought of life. That thought went into the pile of death thoughts. Then a thought might come such as, I need to use the washroom. I would judge it. Yes, that's a good and needful thing, so that thought went into the pile of life thoughts. It started out that elementary where I had to take every thought into captivity and judge which pile it went into.

Whenever there was a death thought — not so specific as, You deserve to die, but death as in being anti-life or anti-God — I had to recognize it for what it was and deal with it accordingly. This is the key to your victory right now. If you do this, I promise, you will get free. It is not about doing it one time; this practice is the sum total of all its parts. When I first started doing this, I did it upwards of 200 times a day. I'm not kidding you!

I would say these things out loud in the most embarrassing places on the planet, like the peanut butter aisle in

Walmart. A death thought would come to me, and I'd be whispering, No, not now! But I knew that if I didn't keep a leg up on the devil, he would keep a leg up on me. So I would stop there in the store or wherever I was and put my hand on my head as a point of contact and say, "In the name of Jesus, that is not my thought."

What was I doing? First of all, I was telling that thought it did not belong to me, and I was rejecting the thought of the enemy. Then I would say, "In the name of Jesus, I plead the blood of Jesus over my mind. I only think thoughts of life. I do not think thoughts of death. That is not my thought. I refuse that thought. I don't have issues about that anymore." After doing that, I would go on.

Once I got a little stronger in this, I would insert a bit of Scripture that talks about life. I would find a scripture that pertained to the situation that I was dealing with at the time. If I was dealing with my self-esteem, I would insert a scripture about who I was in Christ Jesus.

I started out with the bare basics in Scripture and went from speaking these things to myself 200 times or more a day to about 150, then to about 100. I kept going; I would not give up until I was the master of my mind. It came down to 25 times a day and fewer. Then finally one day, all of a sudden it seemed like, I woke up and realized that for the whole day before, I had not thought about dying — not one single time!

When I was dealing with anger issues and that anger would start bubbling up inside of me, I would lay my hand

on my head and say, “In the name of Jesus, I plead the blood of Jesus over my mind. I only think thoughts of life. I do not think thoughts of death. I do not have an anger issue.” I started calling those things that be not as though they were (Romans 4:17). I confessed, “I don’t have anger issues anymore.” Now you might ask, “Isn’t that lying?” No! It’s going back to who you truly are. I knew these things were true because I’m a child of God. I’ve been made in the image of God, and I walk according to His Word.