

Helping Your Kids Win the Battle in Their Mind

by Joyce Meyer

I have taught the truths of God's Word for over thirty years. After all that time, I am convinced that one of the greatest areas in which we need help is our thinking.

I believe the key to victory in our lives, as well as in the lives of our children, is being renewed in our minds daily by the power of God's Word. This means learning to think about the things God wants us to think about, instead of just thinking about whatever comes into our heads. As parents, you and I need to realize what we do—and what our children do—is the result of what we are thinking. So, in order to deal with wrong behaviors, we need to deal with wrong thinking.

Our thoughts have the power to either help or hurt us, and the same is true for our kids. What they think about will affect their health, their moods, their relationships—everything. When I first began to study the Word, I had problems in many areas of my life. But a major transition took place in my soul and spirit when I received a revelation about my thought life. I discovered that the primary reason my life was messed up was because my thinking was messed up.

What Goes In Must Come Out

The Lord showed me that all of us have an inner life and an outer life. The inner life—the part that only God and we see—includes our thoughts, attitudes and motives.¹ So the mind is a primary part of the inner life, and it's like a computer—we can only get out of it what we put into it. The brain is the hard drive. It runs everything. If it gets corrupted or crashes, it doesn't matter how good any other part of the computer is—it won't work. In Proverbs 23:7 it says that as a person thinks in his heart so is he. In other words, our thoughts are the building blocks of our behavior—they determine our actions.

The enemy is actively creating opportunity after opportunity for our kids to put garbage into their minds. From TV and movies, the Internet and video games, to music and the friends they choose, the opportunities for planting the wrong things in their minds are endless. As parents we need to fight against this negative influence by being aware of what our kids are taking in and providing godly alternatives for them to feed their spirits. We need to be aware of what they are doing with their time and who they are spending their time with. One good idea is to keep computers and TVs in a family room where they can be easily seen. You could also invest in a good filter system for the Internet and TV if you have cable.

Most importantly, make time to develop a relationship with your children. This will make them more open to your instruction. Encourage godly friendships and activities so that the influences in their lives will be good ones. You may not be able to avoid every bit of garbage out there, but you can use your influence and authority in their lives to guide them in the right direction.

The Message version of the Bible says this in Deuteronomy 6:6,7: *Write these commandments that I've given you today on your hearts. **Get them inside of you and then get them inside your children.** Talk about them wherever you are, sitting at home or walking in the street; talk about them from the time you get up in the morning to when you fall into bed at night.*

When we meet Christ as adults, our minds often need major reprogramming. One of the benefits of raising our children in a Christian home is that we can help program their minds with right thinking from the beginning.² I cannot emphasize enough that the battle for our children's souls is won or lost in the mind *before* we ever see wrong behavior.

Building On the Right Foundation

I believe that if we expect our children to receive instruction from us concerning the importance of God's Word and right thinking, they must see that we are living what we teach and that we love them unconditionally. I heard a good quote from Josh McDowell that says, "Rules without relationship lead to rebellion." A good relationship with our kids is the foundation for teaching them anything.

It is not always easy for you and me to love our kids as they go through the process of growing up. But if they feel sure of our unconditional love, then they are going to be more open to accepting our instruction and discipline. This will help them feel free to make the changes that growing up requires.

Unconditional love thinks *long-range*. It sees what our children *can* become and believes that they *will* become all that God has planned for them to be. It was definitely the love of God that overcame evil in my life—it changed me and drew me into a deep relationship with Him. Because Dave loved me unconditionally, he was willing to suffer with me while God was changing me. And because I felt his love, I was able to make the changes in my thinking that I needed to make in order to be in agreement with God's Word.

Engaged in a Battle

One of the things that we must help our children understand is that they need to *choose* their thoughts *on purpose*. In other words, they can't just sit around empty-headed and expect the right thoughts to just drop into their heads. They need to learn to guard their thoughts, making sure they line up with God's Word.³ As parents, we are in a unique position to help them by prayer, instruction, guidance, correction, and especially by example.

I believe it's very helpful and important to know the types of wrong thoughts that our kids are being bombarded with so we can counter them with prayer. Some of the lies that youth today are dealing with are:

- You don't need to listen to your parents, pastor or other leaders. Look at their flaws and inconsistencies. This is your life...live it your way.
- Drinking, drugs and sex won't *really* hurt you. Adults don't want you to have any fun—they just want to control you.
- There is no devil; he is a myth. No intelligent person would believe that. There is no God in heaven either. Right now is all there is—so if it feels good, do it.
- If there really is a God who cares, would you be feeling lonely, overwhelmed and depressed?

You and I can't just assume that our children will be okay because *we* know the Lord. They must have a firsthand experience with God. And by God's grace, we can help them establish their own relationship with Him.

Strategies for Victory

Years ago I was an extremely negative person. It was one of the weakest areas of my life. I used to say, "If I thought two positive thoughts in a row, my brain would cramp up!" My life's philosophy was, "If you don't expect anything good to happen, then you won't be disappointed when it doesn't." My thoughts and words were so negative, that it was no wonder negative things happened to me all the time.

In the same way, Satan will look for your child's weakest area and attack at that point. He will attempt to fill your child with worry, reasoning, fear, depression and discouraging negative thoughts. Negative, hopeless thinking and depression have become a serious problem for many young people today. In order for this to change, we need to teach our kids how to line up their thinking with God's Word.

One of the practical ways God showed me to help our kids do this is to make a list of all the positive points about a situation or person that they are struggling with. In other words, help them look for the good in every situation they face. Along with this, show them how to look up scriptures that relate to the problem and write them down. When I first did this years ago, I carried these verses around and read them out loud whenever I was tempted to give in to wrong thinking. God has used this method to renew my mind in many areas. The more we and our children learn to meditate on what's good and true, the smaller our problems will become.

As we begin to renew *our* thinking according to God's Word, we are becoming equipped to help our children renew their minds and walk in the truth too. When I came to the understanding that if I wanted to have a better life I needed to think differently, God began to reveal to me areas where I had accepted Satan's lies. Once I identified the lies the enemy had planted in my mind, I asked God for grace to uproot them with the truth of His Word. Regardless of our age, the only way to overcome the lies of the enemy is with the Truth.

I encourage you to do all you can to help the next generation win the battle in their minds. Do your best to set an example of loving and obeying God's Word in your life. Let your kids know God has a wonderful future ahead of them.⁴ As they set their minds in agreement with God's Word, He will help them meet any challenge that comes their way and lead them into the destiny He has prepared for them.

(1) See Hebrews 4:12,13; Revelation 2:23. (2) See Romans 12:2. (3) See 2 Corinthians 10:4,5; Proverbs 4:23. (4) See Jeremiah 29:11.