

# **Winning the War in Your Mind**

# **What's in it for me? Look up to find inner peace.**

Does your daily life feel like a battle? Every minute of the day, you're fighting your own negative thoughts and crippling self-doubt. You want to escape from the downward mental spiral but you feel trapped. If you're stuck in an unhappy rut, these blinks are here to help. Packed with spiritual insights as well as practical self-help tools, this is your guide to mental health the Christian way. You'll discover inspirational words from the Bible, and learn how God's love and strength can support you through any crisis you face. In these blinks, you'll learn

why God whispers rather than shouts; what Satan has to do with your mental health; and how you can make peace with your troubled past.

## **Satan's lies are keeping you prisoner.**

The great escape artist Harry Houdini once found himself in a jail cell he couldn't break out of. Despite his incredible skills, he just couldn't escape. What was so different about this particular jail cell? Houdini couldn't break free because, when the jailer locked the door, he purposefully turned the key the wrong way. This gave Houdini the impression that he was locked in when he wasn't. So when Houdini shifted the lock, thinking he was escaping, he was actually locking himself in. He was trapped because he believed a lie. The key message here is: Satan's lies are keeping you prisoner. Of course, most of us aren't locked in an actual jail cell. Instead, we're prisoners in our own minds, and our jailers are the lies we tell ourselves. These lies include the little voice in your head that says you'll never be good enough, or the voice that says you're too stupid, too lazy, or too unloveable to succeed. These lies stop you from opening the door to your true potential. Like Houdini that day, they keep you believing that the door is locked. If you want to break free and have the future you deserve, you need to reject these lies and embrace the truth. What truth? The truth that you are capable of achieving almost anything you set your mind to. This battle for your headspace is the war between truth and lies. The lies that make you feel fearful and inadequate, and the truth that you are worthy of happiness and love. So, how can you win the war in your mind? The first step is to understand that these lies come from Satan. The Bible tells us that Satan is the father and the creator of lies, and that he's the one who plants these terrible, self-limiting lies in your mind. Even worse, he has you thinking that they're your own beliefs, rather than his. You can identify the devil's presence in your mind by making a thorough list of all the negative thoughts that run through your mind each day. It might feel uncomfortable to reflect on these things, but once you do, you can start to reject them and replace them with the truth.

## **God will give you the strength to change your negative beliefs.**

In ancient times, when an army invaded an enemy city, they knew they had to capture the city's stronghold. The stronghold was a guarded fortress, and it was where the

enemy's leaders would be hiding. Capture the stronghold, and you control the city. Sadly, when it comes to the war in your mind, many people adopt a losing strategy. When they set out to change an aspect of their lives, whether it's quitting smoking or losing weight, they try to change their behavior. They eat less, for instance, or they simply don't buy their next pack of cigarettes. But when you only change your behavior, you're doomed to fail. Why? Because you haven't changed the destructive beliefs that are driving your behavior in the first place. Here's the key message: God will give you the strength to change your negative beliefs. When you change your behavior but not your beliefs, it's like you've subdued the enemy's soldiers but haven't captured the stronghold where the leaders are hiding. As soon as you relax, the enemy's retaliation will begin, and you'll slip back into bad habits. So, to win the war in your mind, you need to attack the stronghold of lies that Satan has built in your head. In other words, to change your life for the better, you need to get to the heart of your problems. But how can you capture Satan's stronghold and cast out your negative beliefs for good? The fact is you're not strong enough to do it alone. After all, you're just one person against the might of Satan's evil. It would be like attacking Godzilla with a tennis ball. Fortunately, you don't have to fight on your own. You have God on your side, lending you His almighty power. Consider the wise words of Paul the Apostle, who often struggled with his own inner demons. According to him, the power God gives us is the same power that He used to resurrect Jesus from the dead. Knowing that this same force is available to you should fill you with hope. So, next time you feel like your negative thoughts are too overwhelming to deal with, remember that God is on your side. And even though you may be up against a powerful enemy and his lies, God is more powerful still.

## **Your brain has a tendency to fall into a mental rut.**

Do you ever feel stuck in a mental rut? You want to make changes, but you can't help doing the same negative things, over and over again. You tell yourself that you'll spend more time talking with your family, but you waste time on your phone all evening instead. Or you tell yourself that you'll think more positively, but the next time you hit a minor setback you start thinking you'll always be a victim. Don't beat yourself up about it. Fact is, everyone is like this from time to time. It's just the way our minds work. The key message here is: Your brain has a tendency to fall into a mental rut. Every time you have a thought, a neuron sends a message to another neuron in your brain. This crackle of energy creates what's called a neural pathway. Every time you think the same thought, you strengthen that particular neural pathway, making it even more likely you'll think that thought again. But sometimes we create unhelpful neural pathways that make it easier for us to keep having unhealthy thoughts. Let's say, for instance, that once upon a time when something bad had happened, you ate a candy bar. When you did that, you got a little rush of pleasure and you temporarily felt better. This gave you the thought that eating chocolate is a good way to deal with feeling bad. Just like that, your brain created a neural pathway, making it easier for you to think about and decide to have a candy bar the next time something went wrong in your life. The first step to getting out of these ruts is to go back to the source of your unhelpful thought, and understand how the unhealthy neural pathway got established. The author, for instance, found himself stuck in a rut about his personal finances. Even though he and his family were financially secure, he kept thinking that financial ruin was just around the corner. Eventually, he realized that this thought pattern had begun when he was a child and his

grandmother told him terrifying stories about the Great Depression. From that point on, he worried that he'd never have enough money to look after his family. Fortunately, there's a powerful technique that will help you escape your mental rut and establish healthier thought patterns. Find out more in the next blink!

## **Your truth trench will be created from the word of God.**

To win the war in your mind, you must identify the neural pathways that support your negative thoughts, and lay down new, helpful pathways in their place. Whereas the old pathways represented your mental rut and Satan's lies, your new pathways will be your truth trench. You might think a rut and a trench don't sound all that different, but think again. A rut is something slippery and dangerous that you fall into, whereas a trench is something you dig purposefully. It has meaning and it can change your life. Here's the key message: Your truth trench will be created from the word of God. After the author identified that he was stuck in a rut of financial worry because of what his grandmother told him, he looked to the Bible and wrote down all the verses he could find that spoke about money. These included a verse from the book of Corinthians, which tells us that God is able to bless us abundantly, as well as the verse from the book of Acts, which teaches us that it's better to give than to receive. After finding the text, the author was ready to write down his declaration. This is a short written statement that sums up the message of the relevant verses. So, in the author's case, it stated that money would never be a problem for him, and that he would focus his efforts on giving generously rather than counting every penny. Your declaration forms the basis of your truth trench. It's also the foundation for the new mental pathways that will replace the old, negative ones. Once you've made your declaration, write it down everywhere you can, whether it's in your home, your car, or anywhere else you'll see it every day. You can also make an audio copy to listen to when you're working out or on the go. By constantly repeating your declaration, you're creating a new positive thought pattern and nourishing a healthy neural pathway. Of course, it's hard to break the habit of unhealthy thinking, so you won't start to believe your declaration right away. But that's okay. Even if your old beliefs feel stronger, and you feel silly saying something you don't really accept, keep going with your repetitions. Eventually, you'll come to know that God's word is your truth.

## **Your warped perspective blinds you to the truth.**

Imagine you're about to go to a party with a friend. Just before you go inside, your friend tells you that everyone at the party thinks you're stupid. Throughout the evening, you see people joking around, and assume they're laughing at you. After the party, your friend tells you she was just kidding, and that no one there thought you were stupid at all. Despite this confession, the lie she told ruined your night. The key message here is: Your warped perspective blinds you to the truth. A change in perspective can alter your life for the better, or for the worse. The reason for this is cognitive bias. This is the phenomenon that dictates that we see what we expect to see, and that our reality is shaped by how we think the world is, not how the world really is. So, when your friend made that comment, it was like you put on distorted reading glasses, and saw rejection

and humiliation in every social interaction you had. These cognitive biases may mean you're losing the war in your mind. For instance, thanks to the author's faulty thinking about money and security, he interpreted every demand on his wallet as a sign that he was about to lose everything. One year, when his accountant told him he owed some extra dollars in taxes, he panicked. He was convinced that this signaled the beginning of his financial meltdown. So, how can you take off your faulty glasses and view the world as the positive place that God always intended it to be? The answer lies in reframing your thoughts. When you're presented with a situation that would usually make you panic, like the author was with his tax return, identify what your automatic thoughts are. For instance, the author's automatic thought was that he would be ruined. But instead of running with that thought and letting yourself spiral downward, ask yourself whether it's really true. Search your mind for objective evidence that either supports or goes against that thought. This is a powerful exercise, because when you start thinking objectively, you align with reality and move away from your cognitive biases. For instance, the author remembered that everyone has to do tax returns, and that he had the money to pay what he owed. Suddenly, it didn't seem so obvious that he was about to be bankrupt, and he could breathe a little easier.

## **Thank God for what He didn't do for you.**

The author's childhood dream was to play professional baseball. By the time he was in eighth grade, he was the star of his little league team, and it was starting to look as if his dream might come true. But then disaster struck. The night before a big game, his fingers were crushed and broken by a fast ball. Traumatized by his experience, he didn't venture back onto the pitch. You might assume the author would be bitter about what happened that day, but that wasn't the case. As an adult, he thanks God that the accident happened. Here's the key message: Thank God for what He didn't do for you. All too often, when our thoughts turn to the past, we dwell on the sad things. We find ourselves focusing on regrets and missed opportunities. Before we know it, we feel miserable and start wishing that things had turned out differently. But when you begin reframing these negative experiences, you start seeing them in a new light. The author, for instance, began to tell himself that his baseball accident was a good thing. Because he was too traumatized to pick up a baseball bat again, he picked up a tennis racket instead. During high school, he became highly skilled on the court, and eventually won a full tennis scholarship to college. There, he met his future wife, who is now also the mother of his children. Today, the author is able to feel thankful for what happened because he's learned to reframe the past. By looking at his accident from a different perspective, he realizes that God was doing him a favor when that ball broke his fingers. When God doesn't answer your prayers, it's easy to believe that He's forsaken you and your dreams. But the Bible tells us that God's thoughts and ways are higher than ours. That means we can't always comprehend God's plan for us, because we can't see as far as He can. But have faith that God does have your best interests at heart. Sometimes, by not answering your prayers, He's preparing you for something more. You can start to reframe your past by making a list of all the things you've ever wished for that haven't come true. Ask yourself, how might your life have turned out worse if God had granted you these unfulfilled wishes? It just might make you realize that God really does work in mysterious ways.



# When you can't stand your suffering any longer, God will come to you.

Have you ever felt like you've just had enough? Sure, you can deal with one thing going wrong, or maybe even two, but sometimes the problems in life just keep coming until you feel suffocated. In our darkest moments, we often shout out to God, and all we want is for Him to shout back and let us know that He's there. But God doesn't shout, He whispers. You need to take a moment to be quiet so that you can hear Him. The key message here is: When you can't stand your suffering any longer, God will come to you. In the Bible, we're told of Elijah's endless problems. Elijah had the courage to confront King Ahab about his sinful life. In response, Ahab sent assassins to kill him. Elijah escaped but, soon after, Ahab's wife, Jezebel, came after him. When he heard of the bounty on his head, Elijah felt like he couldn't go on anymore. He prayed that God would just let him die. Elijah cried out to God in his despair, and God answered. He instructed Elijah to go to the mountaintop, and said He would reveal Himself to Elijah there. So Elijah waited for God on the mountain, and while he was waiting, a powerful wind came, so strong that it broke the mountain in two. Then an earthquake came, and after that, a devastating fire. But Elijah still couldn't see God. Then, when the fire died, Elijah heard a whisper in his ear. That whisper was God showing him that He was by Elijah's side. If the weight of the world is on your shoulders, and your burden feels too heavy, try this powerful exercise to remind yourself that God is there for you. Write down a new declaration. In it, declare that God is near you, and that you and He can never be separated. Declare that when you are feeling low, He is your strength - supporting you and pushing you forward in life. Finally, declare that when you can't face your problems alone, when you feel that you're not enough, God is enough. If you want to hear His whisper, all you have to do is lean toward Him and listen.

## Final summary

The key message in these blinks: Sometimes life gives us problems and suffering, so much so that it can feel hard to go on. You try to break free of Satan's negativity, but his lies keep you trapped in a rut. Things will only change when you turn to God, and bolster your strength with His truth. By challenging Satan's voice with God's word, you can start to reprogram your thoughts and master your life. Actionable advice: Pray for your relationships. If you're hoping to become a more compassionate and sociable person, one of the best ways to do it is to say a daily prayer. Neuroscientists have discovered that prayer, which can be thought of as a form of meditation, changes your brain chemistry and rewires your thinking. Research even shows that praying for just 12 minutes a day over a two-month period stimulates brain regions associated with social interaction and empathy. So, if you'd like to enjoy better relationships with those around you, offer up a prayer and watch as your life changes for the best. Got feedback? We'd love to hear what you think about our content! Just drop an email to [email protected] with Winning the War in Your Mind as the subject line and share your thoughts!