

## The Battle for Our Minds

By Harold & Bette Gillogly

Look out! Danger! You've got an enemy who is ready to pounce like a lion on the hunt. And you look mighty tasty to him. Scripture says your enemy wants to **devour you**. To eat you up! (1 Peter 5:8)

Does he want to nibble on your nose? Does he want to nibble on your toes? Oh, no...he wants the tastiest morsel of them all. **He wants your mind!** For if he devours your mind, the rest of you is his without the slightest struggle. That is why your biggest spiritual battles are **in** your mind – they are **for** your mind.

Is it any wonder that the Bible talks about our minds, our thoughts, our thinking processes over 300 times? God puts a lot of importance on this subject because it *is* important. And it's about time we started believing how important it is, so that we can **prepare for the battle!**

### The Battle for Our Thoughts

*As a man thinks within himself, so is he.* (Proverbs 23:7) That's right. Whatever thoughts you marinate in, that's the way you are going to taste. If you **marinate in grateful thoughts**, you are going to feel **grateful**. You are going to have an attitude of gratitude, and everything you do is going to show it. If you **marinate in bitter**, "poor me" thoughts, you are going to taste bitter. You are going to **feel and act bitter**. And your enemy craves the taste of bitterness.

### Elijah Thinking

The devil uses four basic techniques to season your mind to his liking. The first one is called "Elijah Thinking." In 1 Kings 18, Elijah experienced one of the greatest times of ministry in his life as he defeated the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. He fought on the front lines of spiritual battle all day, and even though he had glorious victory, afterwards he was tired and vulnerable. This great man, who had stood against

850 of Baal's prophets, caved in when threatened by *one* woman...Jezebel.

1 Kings 19 describes Elijah's downward spiral of thoughts. He tells God over and over what a failure he is. He says he's been zealous for God, but it didn't do any good. He's the only one left. He even asks God to take his life. Poor Elijah. The enemy took advantage of his vulnerability, and Elijah succumbed to marinating in self-pity. He disregarded the mighty things God did for him the day before, and focused only on the negative, blowing Jezebel's threats all out of proportion. He minimized the good and maximized the bad.

**Focus on negatives and end up in pit like Elijah.**

When we disregard the positives in our lives, and focus only on the negatives, we will spiral down into the same pit as Elijah. And we will marinate in the same "poor me" thoughts, viewing every inconvenience as a personal catastrophe.

"Why do these things always happen to me?" "It's all your fault!" "I can't take it anymore!" Sound familiar? That's Elijah thinking!

### King Saul Thinking

King Saul thought everything was **all about him**. In 1 Samuel 18, as David returned from fighting the Philistines, Israeli women lined the streets and sang songs about David's victories: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." Saul blazed with jealousy. And the more successfully David fought the enemies of Israel, the more jealous Saul became. Every thing David did was all about Saul. "He's defeating the Philistines to make me look bad. He wants my kingdom."

When you think situations revolve around you, you are marinating in the same stuff as King Saul. When your

mate is upset, you think, "What did **I** do now?" When it rains, you think, "Why did God let it rain today when He knew **I** wanted to work in the garden?" Everything is about you! That's **personalizing** – that's King Saul thinking!

### Esau Thinking

Esau was an **all-or-nothing** kind of guy, and that led him into some very poor choices. Genesis 25 relates how he had been out all day and was very hungry. His brother Jacob took advantage of his impulsiveness, and offered to sell him some stew in exchange for his birthright. Esau replied, "I am about to die! What good is my birthright to me anyway?" So Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a measly bowl of stew. And then later, in chapter 27, he complains that Jacob "took" his birthright. No, no, Esau – remember? You sold it.

Look at the thinking Esau is marinating in. '**Either** I eat that stew *right now* or I'll die!' It's all or nothing – total success, or total failure (**Either/Or Thinking**). No in-between. No small victories. No baby-step progress. Esau thinking steals our hope, because it steals our ability to celebrate small victories. And as a result, we **discount and blame** ourselves, our spouses and our children. "I never do it right" "You'll never change." "Why do I bother?" "Won't you ever learn?" That's Esau thinking!

**There's much territory between all and nothing.**

### Abraham Thinking

The only exercise some people get is **jumping to conclusions!** That's what Abraham did in Genesis 12, when he and Sarah journeyed to Egypt to escape the famine back home. "I know what a beautiful woman you are. When the Egyptians see you, they will say,

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'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me but will let you live." Based on his made-up scenario, Abraham made a foolish and reckless decision – he had Sarah pose as his sister. When Pharaoh saw Sarah, he was smitten by her beauty and was just about to marry her, when God intervened to save her. Abraham's conclusion jumping got them into so much trouble, only God could bail them out!

When we marinate in Abraham thinking, we get ourselves **all worked up** over what we *think* will happen, and then react to our made-up scenario instead of waiting to see what reality is. Because your father wasn't patient with you, you assume your husband will be impatient with you. Because your parent's love was based on your performance, you think you have to earn your wife's love too. Because your mate reacted in a harsh manner to something that happened last month, you fear they will react the same way this month. The problem is, we behave in response to what we *assume* our mate will do, **before** giving them a chance to respond differently. To jump to the *right* conclusions we would have to be able to **read people's minds** – and who can consistently do that? Like Abraham, we get ourselves into trouble – trouble of our own making. That's Abraham thinking!

## Winning the Battle

So, how do we keep from marinating in all this negative thinking? How do we win the battle for our mind? It isn't easy – battles never are. We must be as determined

to change our way of thinking, as our enemy the devil is determined to keep us bound by it. We can't do this by sheer will power. We have to cooperate with God in renewing our minds, so that we can be transformed...changed! (Romans 12:2: ...*be transformed by the renewing of your mind...* NIV)

### Gird up loins of our minds and stand firm.

How do we do that? Well, we have to **engage in the battle** – we have to “take up our arms” and “stand our ground.” Letting our enemy win the battle for our minds without a fight should never be an option. We are to *take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ* (see 2 Corinthians 10:5b NIV). That means we are to actively **challenge** every negative thought we have – to take it to the truth of God's Word and to weigh it there. When the negative thought is found to be void of truth (like any of the four patterns of thinking explored above), we are to discard it and replace it with the truth. (i.e. “No, that is not the truth – I **refuse** to believe it. I **choose** to replace it with the truth”)

When in 1 Peter 1:13 (KJV) we are told to *gird up the loins of our minds* it is referring to the Jewish warrior's tradition of taking his flowing (full-length) garment and tucking it into his belt, so he would be unencumbered in battle (in other words he would not get “tripped up” when he engaged the enemy). Likewise, we must take all those “stray” and “negative” thoughts

and tuck them into our “belt of truth” (Ephesians 6:11-17: ...*Stand firm then, with the **belt of truth** buckled around your waist....Take the helmet of salvation and the **sword** of the Spirit, which is the **word of God**.* NIV)

So the next time you are tempted to voice that criticism, that bitter complaint, that “poor me” attitude – **STOP!** First take those thoughts to your “belt of truth” and, if called for, “run them through” with the “sword” of the Word – “slice them to pieces” with God's Word just like Jesus did when tempted by Satan in the wilderness. If we win the battle for our minds, then our attitudes, words and **actions** are going to be a LOT different! (Satan recognizes this – that's why he is so intent on winning the battle for our minds, because that is where our beliefs, attitudes, emotions and behaviors come from – **our thinking!** If he gets our minds – he gets **US!**

### Step onto the battlefield and engage.

One final application of this battle plan to win the war for our minds: When we see our brothers and sisters in the Lord engaged in criticism, gossip, negative attitudes and the like, we must be **willing to step onto the battlefield and confront them**, remembering to do it with gentleness and carefulness. (Gal. 6:1 ....*gently help make him right again. But be careful, because you might be tempted to sin, too.* NCV). We all need help in the battle for our minds!

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