

How to Defeat the Temptations You Can't Seem to Escape

What kinds of weapons does Satan use to build a stronghold? Almost always he will use an attack on the mind. Satan attacks through getting you to believe a lie, which leads to a sinful attitude or action. When you indulge in those attitudes or actions long enough, they turn into habits, which he uses to build strongholds. In this way, he makes a man his servant—and a servant obeys his master.

Training our minds to think biblically can feel like a lot of work, however. So sometimes we attempt to bypass that work by trying other strategies. Maybe we move to a new place, change jobs or surround ourselves with a different environment.

A fellow came to my office one day and told me that to escape some persistent temptation, he had traveled to Israel. He thought he'd be safe there, because he was going to walk where Jesus had walked. "I went to Israel twice," he said, "and had an affair there both times."

Think about it: Judas walked in Israel too.

When the devil builds a stronghold in your mind, it doesn't matter if you visit Israel. It doesn't matter if you decide to walk where Jesus walked. It doesn't matter if you buy an old church building and make it your home. When you don't destroy the stronghold, the devil can attack you from within your own territory.

All of Satan's strongholds begin in a shabby and undisciplined thought life. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep your heart [or mind] with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." This is the language of a fighter. "Keep" means "be diligent"; fight for it.

The battle for your life is really a battle for your mind. If you want to win, then you must take aim at the real target—your mind.

How God's Word Shapes Your Mind

Repeated, prolonged exposure to God's Word shapes your mind in at least four ways.

1. *It exposes the sinfulness of what you are tempted to do.*
One of Satan's subtle snares is to convince you that sin is really not so bad after all. The Word of God, however, exposes the sinfulness of what you feel tempted to do. When we bring something out of darkness and into the light, it doesn't look nearly as pretty in His shining presence as it did in the dark.
2. *You gain God's viewpoint.*
Because many temptations carry a strong emotional punch, you tend to get caught up in your feelings. Once you identify with those feelings, it becomes increasingly difficult to respond correctly. But the truth of Scripture allows you to separate yourself just far enough mentally to successfully deal with the temptation.
3. *You apply the principle of displacement.*
Once a seductive topic enters your mind, it's virtually impossible not to think of it unless you purposefully turn your attention elsewhere. When you refocus your thoughts to the Word of God, you turn your attention away from the temptation and toward something productive. That's the strategy presented in Philippians 4:8. To effectively combat the onslaught of the enemy, you need an arsenal of verses on the tip of your tongue, verses so familiar to you that they come to mind without any conscious effort.
4. *You express faith when you turn your attention to it.*
When you turn to God's Word, you're saying, "I believe God is able to get me through this" (see 1 John 4:4). I

never want to get to the point where I believe there is something in my life God can't handle. When you consciously put your attention on the Word of God, you're affirming His limitless power.

Don't allow the devil to corrupt your thinking. Be diligent. Press into Jesus. Get into the Word, and let the Word get into you. Learn to do spiritual battle so you can think biblically.

Be sure of this: You'll never change the things you're doing until you change the way you think. {eoa}

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Johnny Hunt is the senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Woodstock and a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention. He holds an . from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and has received several honorary doctorate degrees. Johnny and his wife, Janet, have two daughters and four grandchildren. Visit Johnny's website at .