



Captives to Conquerors

REDEFINING "MOM BRAIN"



Moms

ON A MISSION

ROMANS 8:5–39



Captives to Conquerors

Romans 8:5-39

We've spent a lot of time talking about how much we are influenced by our thoughts. We live with them and can't very well escape them. Our thoughts bust through the monotony of our daily routines, through tantrums, and quiet times. Sometimes the thoughts are harmless enough – a reminder to pick up milk on the way home today. Other times, they are far more intrusive, as in the case of postpartum anxiety, in which my thoughts surrounded all of the ways my new helpless babies could be unintentionally harmed by the world around us.

Usually, our thoughts are a mixture of all of these, swayed by the influencers we scroll past and the interests of the day. If we're not careful, we'll pay much more attention to these thoughts and find ourselves down rabbit holes ensnaring our thoughts on which lunchbox is the most cost effective but keeps food coldest longest but also looks best, rather than chasing the thoughts of the father.

What thoughts keep swirling in your mind? How much do they distract you from your day to day activities?

Circle the thoughts that most captivate your mind on a daily basis.

- Stress at work
- Stress over finances
- Choosing joy
- Am I good enough?
- Am I worthy?
- Good memories
- Failures
- Rejection
- Strength
- Pain
- Others' opinions

Depending on which you chose from the list above, Jennie Allen says that we can understand our assumptions about ourselves based on how they play out. *"If people knew how badly I'd failed, they'd never love me and My worth comes from my ability to be perfect. No wonder I am not worthy of much."*

Jennie points out the key emotions that these assumptions are tied to: frustration, anger, despondency, hopelessness, embarrassment, inadequacy, shame. These shape our beliefs about ourselves: *I'll never thrive in my career. I'll never be good enough. I'll never be accepted and loved. I'll never get out of debt.* And we begin to spiral downwards, numbing our pain, hiding our fears, and faking our happiness.

I find so much comfort in the words in Isaiah 55:8-9 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

Yall, God ain't hung up on who got a new car or how we're going to pay our mortgage this month. By definition, He doesn't worry in the way we do nor does He get so sidetracked trying to save His children that He forgets about the prayers we whisper in our rooms.

What prayers have you been whispering into your pillow or repeating during your quiet time that feel like they've gone unanswered? Does this lead you to give up on these prayers, or pray them all the more fervently?

God does urge us to take **responsibility**. He is there for us and wants the best for us (which doesn't always mean a life of rainbows and butterflies), but He wants us to move from a *consumer* attitude to a *conqueror* attitude. God wants us to live fully in Him, not just once and a while when the music hits just right on Sunday.

So, let's start with our thoughts. Let's figure out how to replace all of the junk and all of the drama the enemy knows we are quick to swipe on with better, higher thoughts – ones that are focused on Jesus.

Paul is the OG when it comes to radically changing one's mind. His letters are littered with how his old ways are in direct contradiction with his ways after being saved by Christ. Although he is as bull-headed as they come, he's got some apt insight on how our thoughts hold us captive.

Want to know the good news? God gave you a choice. Galatians 4:7 tells us we are “no longer slaves”, meaning moment by moment, we have the choice to change our thoughts.

Read Romans 8:5-39.

Paul begins by making the distinction between those who live according to the flesh and those who live in accordance with the Spirit, emphasizing that the end goal is death or peace respectively. Obviously, we want peace (more than just “me time” or another vacation), but peace that surpasses all understanding. But, in case you haven't heard, this sometimes comes through suffering and perseverance.

If we skip over to v. 26, Paul offers us some insight into the battle most of us find ourselves in today. We want to do the things of God and live a life of righteousness, but we are constantly distracted by things that need to be done. I don't mean frivolous things, like staying up with the latest fashions; things that legit need to be done – like going to work at your 9-5 or feeding your family dinner. Those things inevitably take up space in our minds, weakening our defenses, if you will.

But in v. 26, we are reminded that even in times of burnout when we don't even really know what or how to pray, the spirit intercedes for us. How refreshing! Yall, we don't have to have it all together and we don't have to have perfectly crafted prayers. God is not waiting for us to wipe the snot from our nose or have the perfect playlist before we come to Him. Some of the most profound moments in my faith

relationship have been when my makeup is smudged off from wringing my hands against my face and I have no words left to pray because it felt like they were all falling on deaf ears. But on the heels of Paul saying that in those times, the spirit intercedes for us, he goes on the say in v. 28 “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

It didn't say in the good things, He works. It says in **all** things. In all the sleepless nights. In all of the failed Bible in a year reading plans. In all the mornings we were going to get up early and spend quiet time with Jesus. In all the times we were going to try gentle parenting. In all of the times our relationships or jobs failed. In all the times we were 10 lbs heavier than we thought we should be. In ALL things, God works for the good of those who have been called.

That's good news. It takes some of the weight off of us, knowing that God is always in control. Yes, it's my job to keep my life and work clean and tidy. Yes, I've got to make a decision every day to put in the work to make the meals, do the workouts, and read my Bible. But He will handle the rest. He's not waiting on me to figure it out; He's waiting on me to fall at his feet.

Let's pause and consider some of the mind work that Jennie Allen describes.

1. *Jot down a list of the ten things you've spent the most time thinking about today.*

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

2. *What are the primary emotions you associate with those things? (ex. Responsibility, stress, overwhelmed, anger)*

3. *Talk to God about these things. Pray with your list in front of you and talk through each thing you've written down. Ask Him to show you what you are believing wrongly about Him and yourself.*

4. *If you were to make one shift in the way you think, what would it be?*

Paul tells us that there's nothing we have done to earn or deserve the love of god, but that because God loves US, He calls us, justifies us, and invites us into His glory. NOTHING can separate us from the love of God. What an amazing gift.

We don't have to let our circumstances dictate our thoughts.

If we can shift our perspective from striving to surrendering, we will see that God's plan for our lives involves moving from a life of captivation to lives as conquerors. Scripture says in v.31 "If God is for us, who can be against us?" I think we need this tattooed somewhere. We are so quick to believe the lies that others say about us. We give in to the idea that we'll never heal from that trauma or that we'll never be as good of a mom as so-and-so. Because, deep down, we kinda already believe that about ourselves anyway.

But this says again that NOTHING can separate us from the love of God. So all of these fillers are just that – things we have to work through and move past to see God's thoughts and ways that are so vastly different from our finite view from our porch.

Mamas, it's time to change our mindset to that of conquerors. V. 25 says no trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword will be enough to separate us from God and his plan. In 2023, maybe that could read no anxiety or financial instability or shade from your coworkers or dieting or not being in style or exes or pills will be enough to separate us from God and His ultimate plan of redemption.

V. 37-39 "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Read Philippians 1:12. What circumstances has God put in your life that might be difficult, but could "advance the gospel"?

Ladies, we've got to take ownership of our thoughts and actions and start living like conquerors. There's nothing meek about us. We're out here killing it – from work, to shuttling our kids, to cleaning our homes, to serving in our communities, to side businesses, to working out, to being present with our families. And we need to start seeing the worth in that. We need to live each day in surrender to whatever God wants for us each day. Some days, it really is us stopping everything else to talk to our older kids about what's bothering them. Some days, it's dropping a letter in the mail to someone God laid on your heart. Other days, it's forgiving that person that hurt you who you don't feel like even acknowledging.

"The enemy's strategy is to flood our thoughts with visions of all that is wrong in this broken, fallen world to the point we don't even think to look for the positive anymore. We get cynical. But God has an abundance of joy and delight for us, and we're missing it with arms crossed." (Jennie Allen)

We've been given so many tools for this battle, including this group of warrior women. We've got an opportunity today to make the decision to lead our lives with the confidence that God is using our stories and our struggles to advance the gospel. Let's leave all of our not-good-enough in 2022 and walk boldly into this new year with a new mindset – not getting to a good place, but to a God place.

Read the following verses and consider how being in a community of other believers impacts your ability to change your thoughts and fix your mind on Jesus.

Ephesians 5:21

Romans 12:10

Ephesians 4:2

A few years ago, I challenged my Bible study group to choose a single word to focus on throughout the entire year. Here we are on the cusp of yet another year (they just keep flying by, amiright?), and I think the idea still holds true. The word I've seen and chosen for myself time and again is **intentionality**.

"The questions driving our thought patterns are no longer *How will God use me today?* and *How can I give Jesus to someone?* Instead, we're focused on things like "What will make me feel better? What will make me look better? How can I feel okay and content?"

Our weapon against complacency is intentionality. Where are we giving our attention, time, and money?

Let's take inventory of our minds.

1. What inputs in your life are stealing your joy? How did the things you "consumed" this week actually make you feel?

2. What happens in your mind when you dwell on Scripture and on what Christ has done for you?

3. What happens in your mind when you move outward, toward other people?

M.O.M.s Call to Action

What service project can we participate in as a group to intentionally serve others in our community?

Lastly, I want to leave you with one of the most powerful tools that Paul teaches. Jennie Allen puts it this way:

"Paul's single-minded goal was what motivated him to forget, to leave behind his past. Paul's new motivation was so consuming that he gave no value to his past – thus leaving no room for his past to define him. As long as we leave room in our minds for the past, we will allow it to define us."

