

the
PROVERBS 31
MINISTRIES
podcast

Biblical truth for any girl in any season.

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Jennie Allen: I can't wait. I believe I can do it. In fact, I believe all these things go together. God has a sense of humor and God loves the everyday mundane things that make up our lives and I'm so grateful for a God that is that way. Oh, I love you guys and I'm so grateful to be here. P31 is our sister ministry, we feel that way. Whenever we're with you, it is so fun to run beside people that love God and have a similar mission. And honestly, it's cool talking about this project specifically, because Lysa and your team walked beside me as I created this, and a lot of what I'm going to share today, and a lot of this book was, was processed with you. And so, it just feels exciting to be partnering with, with your team this summer and talking about this project.

So, when we dive in, if you don't know, we're talking about our minds, and I really believe that the greatest battle that we have, right now in the world, specifically, the spiritual world, is happening on the forefront of our minds. There is, really, there's really no arguing this, you can look at the numbers. Coming out of COVID, one in every three persons over the, or under the age of 25 has struggled with suicidal thoughts coming out of COVID. We have an epidemic and, and this was a problem, I mean, you think about anxiety and depression and the things that people were struggling about before COVID. So, coming out of COVID is just exacerbate or exacerbate —sorry guys, exacerbated. And so, we've got an issue and we know it, and you know it because you all know people that are struggling with their minds. You all know somebody that is open and talking about the anxiety they felt. But honestly, probably every single person listening today struggles in some form or fashion with anxiety today.

Like today, you will have some thought that feels out of control. And so, what we're going to talk about today specifically is we're going to look at a passage, First Corinthians 10. And we're going to talk about that war because the problem is, we haven't seen it as a spiritual war primarily, and we haven't fought it with the spiritual weapons that God has given us. And in Second Corinthians 10 is a beautiful passage, and it ends, I'll go ahead and give you a hint, it ends with the phrase, the passage we're going to look at today, ends with the phrase “take every thought captive”. So, the context of the passage is actually set in, in our minds. He's talking about the war for our minds.

And he begins the passage by saying that we do not fight spirit with fleshly weapons. So, I want to actually read this passage to you because what I know is, for all of you listening there's a little bit of helplessness when it comes to our brains. There's a little bit of a sense of, can I really change the way I think? Because honestly, before I set into this, maybe I knew the answer to that, the right answer that it was, yes, I can change my brain, but I don't think I actually ever did it. Like I don't think I actually moved into the recesses of my brain and actually interrupted my thoughts and changed them. But this passage changed everything for me. So, let's look at it.

Second Corinthians 10 verse 4, *“The weapons we fight with are not of the world, they're not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to destroy strongholds.”* Now what we know is that there are weapons that Christians are given that fight spiritual things. They're not of this world, although there are lots of useful weapons of the world that I believe in when we're fighting the fight of our, of our minds. Number one, medicine; number two, counseling; number three, the people that God's put in your life, right? We need some of those weapons sometimes to fight, and the church hasn't done the best job of talking about this and saying that it's okay. Medicine, counseling, those things have been tools that God has used in our family's life, that I cannot imagine where we would be without those things, and there are times and places for those things.

But what I want to talk about and what Paul is talking about in this passage, is actually the spiritual fight that we have. And this is the, this is the way that we've confused it is, is we've simplified it down to this idea that, oh, you don't have enough faith or just pray about it. And the truth is, this is war, like the enemy hates you and this is the best place for him to get you. And he did it to me for 18 months, and I talked about this in the book, that for 18 months in the middle of the night - 3am - I woke up and I began to question my faith in the dark with really little to no resistance from me or anybody that that loves me because I never talked about it. And I literally just sat there, and I didn't even think much of it at first, it was just these questions of: Is this true? Do I really believe this? And I would just spin around this idea and this doubt that was growing in me about my faith. And for 18 months that happened every single night.

I finally mentioned it to two dear friends, some of you know these two friends. One of them is Esther Havens, who's an incredible humanitarian photographer, the other one was Anne Voskamp. We were actually in Uganda, traveling together and telling stories over there and, and it was just one of those days where I, I was confronted with how difficult this had become for me, and how I felt like my faith was just slipping through my fingers. And, and I finally, you know, say, hey, this is what's been going on in my life the last few months. And it was more than a few months, I mean, it was, it was a year and a half.

And so, I told them that day. And it was the first time that I'd said it out loud. And, guys, number one, the first thing that happened was they rose up in truth against that lie and they said, you are a person of faith, Jennie, we have watched you live in these 18 months, and you actually really love God. Like it's not pretend. You're not faking it. You love Jesus. I see it in your life, I know that's true. So, there was

that immediate truth telling of that's not even true. You are, you are full of faith. God has given you faith, gifted you with it and you're full of it. The second thing they made clear was, this is spiritual attack. Now, now I'm kind of laughing at that, even at the time because it was so obvious the moment, I said it out loud, that I had been under spiritual attack but for 18 months alone in the dark with the devil that never crossed my mind. And I don't even know what to make of that. I'm a Bible teacher, like I don't even, other than he's good, right? He's a good liar. He's not, he's not bad at it or he wouldn't be so effective. And so, you know, this really lit under me a passion for our minds because it scared me. It scared me that for so long, someone who is in the Word of God, surrounded by Godly people, fighting for other people to be free, could be lied to for 18 months about my faith and about the existence of God. And my faith began to erode just because I did not fight and protect and guard my mind.

And so, 2 Corinthians 10 has become these fighter verses for me, these verses that I've memorized, that I hold to, that I say regularly to myself, that I fight for my own mind regularly because what I know to be true now is that I let the enemy beat me up for 18 months, and I didn't so much as even mention it to anyone, more or less fight back. And then I read 2 Corinthians 10 and Paul saying, we have weapons, and those weapons they actually destroy, demolish is the version I'm looking at right now, demolish strongholds. Demolish them. And if that doesn't excite you, if you're listening to this and you're thinking, I don't know if I believe this, the great news is God had me walk through this in a way that was so visceral, that I felt like I was losing my faith.

Now, that sounds good months later, but what it looked like at the time was a fear of death that grew to where I would be, I would be near a panic attack, when I would be confronted with that with death. Because all of a sudden, if God wasn't real, I didn't believe there was another religion, I just thought it went to black and that scared me to death. So, this was very real. And what happened the minute that I rose up to fight it, with the power of God and the weapons that he's given me, that I'll mention in a minute, there was victory. And there was a complete change, not just in the middle of the night in my thought life, but in the anxiety in the fear, fears that had grown in me. And then, you know, the next verse says, *"We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God"*, which was what was happening in my mind, and I would say, is at the root of so much of our anxiety, and so much of our fear is what we believe about God, the knowledge of God. It's why Paul talks about so many times in Scripture, controlling our thoughts, and, and choosing to think about what is lovely, what is true, what is good, you see that in Philippians. And so, you see these constant commands, command language given to the way that we think. And then he says, *"We demolish these arguments that are lifted up against the knowledge of God and we take captive, every thought to make it obedient to Christ."*

The power of what we're talking about today, the power of, of what we're going to look at in this book is that God's Word makes very, I will call them severe promises, promises that that we have been given spiritual authority over a lot of things, but specifically spiritual authority over our minds, that we do not have to let them control us. We control them. And I think about this spirals that that I let myself get into,

some of them are really small, right? Some of them, I'll have one today I haven't had it yet. But oh, wait, what am I saying, I have had it. I woke up, let's go to that one, I woke up cranky, because I have had two nights where I just didn't get a lot of sleep and I woke up today, and I looked at my calendar and I began to panic because I looked at my calendar, and I saw too much. It was all squeezed in. This is just a little example. And so, I got anxious. So that anxious spiral began to make me feel like okay, I need to control this, and I need to fix this situation. And so, I text one of my teammates, and I was like, can you do this today? Can you change this? Can you, and I just start bossing her and being mean, and then now, so now what? Well, you know, what, when I woke up is just a little bitty thought, led to my emotions and my mood, right? I got anxious at my day, I was already a little bit cranky, now I'm kind of angry. Now that affects the relationship. And then I have to apologize and clean that up. And so all that happened, of course, I thought it was really lovely and holy, just a minute ago when I was saying, yeah, I haven't had anything today. But all that happened just like an hour ago.

So, all that happens and then now my relationship with my teammates is injured, my mood, my relationship with God is distant, because I'm just not in a good mood, and I'm cranky about the work that He's put before me in this very full day. All of that happened and what God has given me power over is to interrupt that spiral. And the most powerful and most helpful place to interrupt it is at the moment of thought. So, when I look at my calendar just this morning, a different way to do that would be to submit that to the Lord and say, you know what, I don't have to worry, He gives daily bread. I don't have to be afraid that He won't give me what I need for this day, He will give it to me. And, and I know truth. And when Paul talks about things like think about whatever, think about things that are true in Philippians. What he's saying is, don't spiral about things you can't control. Don't spiral about things that aren't even real. How much of what makes us anxious is pretend, it's not even real. The truth is my day is going to work out just fine. All of it's going to happen, and I'm probably going to be smiling at the end of it because it was a great day, because I had a great time. Because God, I was around great people and I have awesome meetings on my day. But my mood affected my thoughts. And my thoughts affected my relationships and my words, and what God says is the power I give you, it's okay that you woke up cranky, right? That's harder to control. It's harder to just not feel cranky, right? If I say to all of you, like hey, quit being cranky, that's just not helpful. But if I say to you, that thought pattern that you have been thinking all day that has made you cranky, that has fed your crankiness, that can be interrupted. And that can be interrupted with truth that's real, and tangible and the Word of God is clear and living an active and has put in black and white for you to interrupt pretend spiraling thoughts that no longer have to control you.

The weapons that Paul's talking about here are so powerful and you see it throughout Scripture. He doesn't spell them out exactly right here, but you see them throughout Scripture. We know the weapons that we have to fight with. Number one, it is the Word of God. We know that is our most powerful weapon. It is the Sword of Truth. This pierces joint and marrow and bone into our soul and changes us. The Word of God is the first weapon. The second weapon, and I love this one and we don't talk about this one enough, is the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God is our helper, our counselor, our friend, our

promise, our reminder, constantly reminding us of the truth. He walks with you. The Word of God is living and active, but the Spirit of God is alive and He's inside of you and with you if you believe in Jesus Christ. And that Spirit changes us from the inside. I've seen him do it again and again and again. He's done it today in me. He is, He is wooing us back to God. He is with us, and He loves us and He's fighting for us. And I think that idea that that He is a God that is not just alive in heaven on a throne, but He is a God that is alive in us, with us. That is a world changing truth. If you don't understand that and believe that that right now as you drive as a believer in Jesus Christ, and you're listening to this, the Spirit of God is with. He is for you. He's equipping you for every good work that He prepared in advance for you to do. And I think because we don't actually believe that, and we don't take that in, and we don't dwell on that, and we don't ask Him for help, right? I mean, that's the thing. It's like, okay, maybe you today believe that He is, He is with you. But have you asked Him to help you? Have you asked Him to fight for you?

And, and that's where that relationship with God actually takes root, because no longer are we just slapping a verse on it but we're talking to our God that's with us and alive and for us and we're saying, hey, help! My most favorite regular prayer is "help". I say it all the time. And you know what, He does, because what I'm doing in that moment is, I'm turning my eyes to Him and saying, I can't do this, and I need your help. And He loves those prayers. God loves those prayers. So, the Word of God, the Spirit of God, and lastly, the people of God. And guys, this is where I'm going to challenge you today. This is your takeaway. If somebody needs to know what you're struggling with, somebody, those thoughts, those spirals, some of you have had those spirals for a decade, like you've had the same anxious feeling and thought that has paralyzed you for a decade. And I wish I were kidding or being facetious, or this is an exaggeration, but it's not. Because I've had too many women come up and tell me, hey, I have bought this lie in my life since I was a child. So, for some of you, it's more than one decade, right? And, and what I would say to you is, is that the stronghold? That that lie that you believe that the enemy has given you, that's a stronghold. It can be fought and the way we fight it is by saying it out loud, not living in the dark alone with the devil, which is what I did for way too long. We don't have to be in bondage for 18 months, we don't have to be in bondage for 18 years, we don't have to be in bondage for 18 minutes. Our God is more powerful than the devil. And so now what it looks like in my life, what it looks like in my life is I turn to that lie, and I fight back. If the enemy is coming for me, I am going to go on the offensive, not the defensive, and I'm going to, to protect my inputs, I'm going to believe truth, I'm going to quickly let people into the dark recesses of my mind where the enemy lies to me, and I'm going to say it out loud and I am going to trust and pray and depend on the Spirit in deeper ways. And guys, it changes everything.

Kaley Olson: Wow. So good, Jennie. Those points at the end were so helpful.

Meredith Brock: I have a question based on, just at the beginning you were talking about that 18 months struggle that you had where you woke up at 3am, and I think everybody listening has either had those moments or maybe they're in it, or they're nervous about it coming up. But a question that I have is I

thought, why did Jennie wait 18 months to tell somebody about this? Like, and I heard you say, sometimes whenever spiritual attack is happening to you, you're blind to it, but like, is there a reason that you didn't invite someone in sooner? And why do you think that there's a reason that we don't trust people with this? Like, are we embarrassed? Like, what's happening?

JA: Yeah, I definitely think for a lot of people that that shame, right, we were afraid to say the thing out loud, I have a friend that struggles with lust. And, you know, she forever did not tell anybody that because she was just embarrassed. And she didn't, she just didn't know that that was an okay thing to tell people and, and that was that's a real reason, and I think that the enemy uses that a lot of times to cause us not to share. But I would say, you know, the main reason that I didn't in this case, was I didn't think it was a big deal. I didn't realize how much of my mind was changing. Because it's the middle of the night, right? Like I'm not overly thinking about my thoughts. I don't think we regularly overly think about our thoughts. I think that's a common problem. But especially in the night, I think it's a really strategic time for the enemy to attack us because our guards aren't up, we're tired, we're trying to go back to sleep. It's just, it's passing thoughts that you're not giving a lot of attention to. I don't think I saw the theme until I saw the anxiety developing about death, and about, you know, I think in the daytime, I was okay and so it just didn't come up. But looking back, that, that's why I felt so passionate about this project was because I accidentally fell into such a dark thing so quickly.

MB: Yeah, I think you said something really important there is that oftentimes it's the symptoms that we don't recognize start back at your thoughts. So, for you, Jennie it was, the symptom was all of a sudden you had this terrible fear of death. But you had, it took a minute to lead it back to... it was these thoughts that I was having in the middle of the night that were then following me through? What other kind of symptoms do we see from negative unhealthy things?

JA: Well, Proverbs says that "as a man thinketh so he is", is the most terrifying verse, that we are literally what we think. So, I would say any thing about you is somehow rooted back in your thoughts. That there is a place where you either believed a lie or that fear or fed doubt. And again, I don't think we're doing it intentionally. Jesus, when he laid out who the devil was in John 8, it's such a powerful passage. As a writer, I think it's fascinating. He actually says the same thing four times. I don't know if I've ever done that in a paragraph in my life, like said the exact same thing four times. But he says, "The truth is not in him, he was a liar from the beginning." He only lies like he said, I can't remember exactly what it says right now but over and over again he says exactly the same thing, four different ways. You know, it's, it's that he is a liar. And so, I think this idea, you know, again, I come from a side of the church that we just don't talk about the devil very much. And so, I don't, I, you know, I don't know. I don't know why, because it's very, Jesus talked about him and it's very clear throughout Scripture that, that there's an enemy. So, I think that the results that we see right now in the world all began in our thought lives somewhere. The darkness, the fear, the pressure that we're all living under, the desire to please people and to measure up to people's opinions, the sin we accidentally fall into and then it turns

into something that takes over our lives, right? All those things are symptoms that began in our thought lives, and all began with probably a thought somewhere. Sometimes you can even pinpoint it. Sometimes, you know, like, one thought I can pinpoint was when I was 12 years old, with my daddy on a recliner and I was looking at the ceiling and he began to ask me questions about my life. Super innocent moment but I felt pressure and I began to realize I'm not measuring up to my dad, and it was that moment I began to strive in life. Like, I remember it, it was a moment that I said, I have to measure up to his expectations. And, and that was a moment for me. And I think we all can look back at our lives and go, gosh, I remember the first time I believed that lie, which is, which is powerful, but also scary that the enemy can, can give us a little lie, plan it, and feed it over so many years.

MB: And weave it almost into the fabric of who we become, you know, where it is something I look back on my childhood and even like, I became a believer at, like, 17. So I had 17 years of not knowing the Lord, of believing lies of, in taking my environment and you know, my flesh filtering that into the lies that I believed about myself and the lies I believed about the world. And I look back prior to, and it even followed me into after I became a believer, but I really believed because of my childhood and all the things that happened that I was a piece of trash. Like no one cared, nobody would want me, nobody would possibly ever like me. And so out of that belief, I chose, I made a lot of really bad decisions about boys. Like, I went for guys that were mean to me, and treated me like trash, because I believed I was trash and I deserved nothing more than that, you know. And as I became a believer, and went to a lot of therapy, really unearthed that that was my belief, you know, and unraveling that honestly took me years. And when, even to the point where when I met my husband, I was like, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, you like me. I tried to push him away, because I was like, guys like you don't like girls like me, you know. And the Lord used that to, again, show me the lie that I had believed for so long about who I was, you know, and that Scripture verses that I had to memorize during that period of my life when I was actively fighting that lie, and y'all I still have to actively fight that. I mean, it's so deeply ingrained deep down into the recesses of my heart, that it doesn't just, you don't just fight at once and it goes away, you know. And so, I guess I would want to challenge Jennie, this has been so good, but I want to, I want to challenge our listeners beyond maybe the anxiety that you're feeling right now. Look at the choice patterns that you've made in your life. Look at that, look at those patterns and see if those patterns are a symptom of some kind of belief that you have grabbed on to somewhere and start to peel back the layers. And I think you'll find something there that you believe that wasn't true and the Lord wants to disassemble that so that He can speak His truth to you.

KO: This has been, wow. I have a whole page of notes. I actually, you were explaining your moment this morning and I very much felt convicted. I have some apology texts to send.

MB: It was a little convicting moment for all of us, but also like, just a reminder, it's, it happens so quickly. It's such a reminder to be like, you know what, as soon as my feet hit the floor, I gotta be on

guard, because I know, like, if I'm not, something could happen, and then I'm going to have to apologize to someone which happens every day.

JA: Yes. And I do want to just close with this, that, that we have a God that forgives. And this is not, this is not something that we have to measure up in, right? This is something that Jesus died for. And, and what I love is that He wants us to be free. He wants us to enjoy the freedom that He died for, but that's going to be a messy road. And sometimes we, we think, oh gosh, I've got to fix this in my life. Right? And honestly, it's more of a journey. I love *Pilgrims Progress*, that book, because it shows that as a Christian, we're just going to keep kind of falling off to the side and fallen in this pit and, you know, but God will keep lifting us out and part of that is what's going to show people how forgiving and awesome Our God is. So, I hope nobody leaves here feeling any pressure, but they feel excited that there is grace for the cranky morning, praise God.

KO: Thank you. Thank you so much for coming on the show today Jennie. That was so good. And thank you for bringing the Gospel back into that. I mean, that's why we do what we do here every day here at Proverbs and you guys over at If Gathering. And we're grateful for your teaching, and I know somebody is out there thinking give me more of this, please, I need more teaching on this and friends we mentioned at the top of the show that we want you to join us for the *Get Out of Your Head* online Bible study happening from June 28 to August 6, 2021. Meredith, you want to tell them how to get signed up?

MB: Absolutely. Registration is totally free. Just head over to Proverbs31.org/study to get signed up. And if you don't have a copy of Jennie's book, make sure you pick it up. It's called *Get Out of Your Head*. And will you do me a favor? And it would be, it would mean so much to us if you purchase that at the P31 bookstore. You can go to P31bookstore.com because it helps us do our ministry here at Proverbs 31. It funds what we do here as a ministry.

KO: Yeah. And finally, we want to remind you that She Speaks Online 2021 is happening June 24 through the 26th, we don't have very many weeks until it's happening. So, if you are an aspiring writer, speaker, leader, and you're wanting to like get started, this is the conference for you. We believe She Speaks is the conference you want to attend and learn to communicate the message God has placed on your heart and you can find more about She Speaks at shespeaksconference.com.

MB: Well, thanks for tuning in today friends at Proverbs 31 Ministries. We believe that when you know the truth and you live that truth out, it will change everything.