



BATTLE PLAN

Defeating Anxiety

Recognizing
the prison of
Anxiety and
the weapon
we have to
defeat it!

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MIRRORED PRISONS

Anxiety. Such a simple word, yet it packs a punch that will shake the very foundation of even the strongest of humans. As I sit at my computer, feverishly typing in between the lovely interruptions that come with being a mother of four, that's right, four loud beautifully energetic children, I am filled with anxiety. Anxiety about the future, anxiety over my family's financial situation, anxiety over my children's schooling and so much more. Anxieties that all scream at me that I'm not enough nor will I ever be. How I try to portray myself on the outside for all to see has no resemblance to the chaos of emotions churning like a stormy ocean within my head and my heart. I tell you this because as you read the words that follow I do not want you to think I speak as an expert who has it all figured out, but rather as a woman, seeking desperately for the face of God in the midst of life's storms. What I've found in my searching is that He truly does keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Him because when our mind is stayed on Him, we trust Him. Oh but how difficult it can be to keep our minds focused on Jesus. I

get it, the struggle is real! We wake up in the morning determined to cast all of our cares on Him because we know He cares for us. Then, five minutes later we stand in front of the mirror and instead of seeing the beautiful work in progress, we see the insecurities, the weaknesses, the fears of failure and disappointment. Despite our best effort and our 'we got this' attitude we quickly realize, 'we don't got this.'

You see, the reflection that we see is a distortion because the mirror we are looking into is distorted. That's right, anxiety itself is the distorted mirror that Fear craftily constructs in-between us and our Holy God. Where once we had clear vision of God, the creator of the universe, the Mighty One, the one ready and willing to vanquish any foe on our behalf; Fear slithers in and begins to build this distorted mirror. This mirror blocks our vision slowly and we begin to lose sight of the feet of God. Instead, we see our own gnarled feet, crippled by our own inability to navigate the path before us. Fear builds the mirror a little bit higher but continues to do so slowly so as not to draw attention to himself. He keeps us paralyzed by the horrifying image we see reflected. He builds the mirror

just a bit higher, just high enough now that instead of seeing the hand of God perfectly capable and ready to lead us, to provide for us, and to defend us, we now see our own weak hands that can hardly grasp a shield for battle, much less wield a sword to fight. Our disheartening grows deeper. Fear takes his opportunity to build the mirror higher. We no longer see the heart of God that tells us He has a purpose for us, a plan for our future that is for good and not evil. No, now we see our own hearts in which hope and faith are being choked out. And so, fear seals the deal and completes his mirror by blocking out the Face of God which looks on us with so much love and acceptance. We are left with a vision of the thoughts in our heads that tell us we are not enough, we will never be enough and no one will ever love us. This distorted view of our own gnarled feet, weak hands, withered heart and broken mind becomes our new reality. We no longer see the God with whom ALL things are possible. We lose sight of the one we can trust, the one we can put our faith in. We only see us. Our imperfections, our weaknesses. We don't realize that Fear is the one who has slithered around our feet tangling and anchoring them. Fear has

rung his slithering mess around our hands, leaving us to feel the lack of our own strength. Fear is the one that has encompassed our hearts and is trying to choke out the comfort of God's presence. And, Fear is the one that has poisoned our thoughts with lies! This is Anxiety. The distorted mirror of lies and fears that if we let them will side line us from the purpose God has given us. But don't lose heart! There is a way this mirror can be shattered. But, if we are going to be effective in our attempts to shatter it we must see it for what it is, a stronghold in a war waged against our heart and mind. A stronghold that has been built by faulty reasoning, tainted ideas, and desperate arguments that essentially have been raised against the knowledge of God. It's true, every piece of this mirror is made up of heinous lies that work to counteract the belief we have in God's grace and sufficiency in our lives. But we are in luck! God has already given us exactly what we need to find victory in the treacherous battle.

You see, in 2 Corinthians 10:4 we see Paul reminding the people of Corinth that "the weapons of our warfare are not of flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds." This weapon of which he speaks

is the knowledge of God, the truth of His character and the power of His written word. Now our battle-plan begins to form. The stronghold we are working to defeat is built of lies, the weapon we are wielding against it is absolute truth. If you are anything like me you hear those words and for a moment you get chills because you know the power of our God and the victory He has in store for us but then doubt settles over your heart as you feel overwhelmed at not knowing where in the world to start. So let's start right here, right where we stand in the midst of our weaknesses and our fears. This is where we recognize our enemy, who it is and what it is we are fighting.

ENEMY WEAPONS

How has fear crafted your mirror? I know that for a long time my own mirror was built on the lie that I wasn't enough. I wasn't pretty enough, I wasn't talented enough, I wasn't thin enough... My mirror grew higher as I believed that because I wasn't enough my value therefore was lacking. I became insecure in who I was and looked desperately for acceptance from those around me in order to determine my worth. I lost sight

of who God created me to be and what He thinks about me. I could only see that I wasn't enough, I didn't measure up, I was bound to disappoint and fall short of any and all expectations, I had very little value unless I was thin enough, talented enough, pretty enough. This is a lie. But for the better part of my adult life it is a lie that I have believed. It isn't something that I woke up one morning and decided to believe, it was something that developed over time, slowly. A word spoken here, a look of judgement there, rejection or disappointment from someone I cared about, truly hurtful and unfortunate situations and trials that left me scarred and damaged. No matter what it was, it was all craftily used to construct my mirror one awful lie at a time until the horrifying image reflected in front of me paralyzed me with fear and insecurities.

What lies can you recognize that have been used to construct your mirror? Be honest with yourself. Write them out. Only once we have recognized the weapon our enemy has used against us can we begin to have victory in our fight against it!

CONSEQUENCES OF CAPTIVITY

These lies, and many more, have been used to barricade us from the knowledge of God. This crafted mirror that fear has worked so diligently at has become a fortress that creates boundaries we were never meant to have, boundaries that keep us neatly in the box of our anxiety and never allow us to step out in faith. We are held captive within this fortress and the longer we are held captive the harder it is to recognize the walls of our prison. We settle in and accept that this is our reality. Our knowledge of God becomes more of a head knowledge rather than a heart knowledge as we begin

to believe that yes, Jesus saves, but He's more interested in doing it for others than for me. I'm too much of a mess, I've made too many poor decisions. We believe in the power of God to work in other people's lives but we don't truly believe He will work in our own. Sadly we are missing so much. The battle that is raging outside of our mirrored prison walls is one in which Jesus Christ is having victory! Victory that He promises to us if we will only dare to fight! There are so many opportunities and blessings, there is so much Hope beyond these walls that we are missing because we have allowed fear to paralyze us and hold us captive.

What opportunities or blessings are you missing as a captive to fear? What relationships have been damaged or unhealthy? What plans are you afraid to make and hope for?

Look back at the lies you've been believing. Look at how they have cut you off, held you back, and taken you captive. Now my question to you is; have you had enough? I know I have! So let's fight back. We see the enemy: the father of lies, we recognize his weapon: the lies he's fed us, we understand the consequence of not fighting back: total captivity. Now let's form our battle plan.

TURN YOUR EYES UPON JESUS

The first step in our own battle plan must bring us to our knees as we recognize who we are fighting for. In Isaiah 43:1-3a our 'who' is laid out quite clearly:

But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel:
"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have

called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through the fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

We are fighting for the one who has created us, who has formed us, the one who has redeemed us, the one who has called us by name, the one whom we belong to. We are fighting for the one who has promised to always be with us through the storms of life. We are fighting for the LORD our God, the Holy One, our Savior! Maybe you struggle with the thought that “I’m not worth it,” ok, so maybe we aren’t worth it as the fallen sinners that we are, but our Savior is worth it, our creator is worth it, our Redeemer. Is. Worth it! Isaiah 42:13 says; “The LORD goes out like a mighty man, like a man of war he stirs up his zeal; he cries out, he shouts aloud, he shows himself mighty against his foes.” That is who we are fighting for! I’d follow Him into battle, will you?

We cannot miss this step of our battle plan because there will be times, guaranteed, that our faith weakens, our flesh fails, and our hearts lose hope but if we remember who it is we are fighting for then all we must do is look around the battle field and see that He is right there fighting with us. His word is clear in Isaiah when it says he will be with us no matter what terrain the battle rages through! Don't focus on your weaknesses or your own inadequacies, focus on the one whom we are fighting for, the one who has determined our worth when he formed us in our mother's womb and told us we were fearfully and wonderfully made. Focus on the one who determined your worth so incredibly valuable that he died on a cross for you in order to give you the choice to spend eternity with him.

Don't give in to the lie that these are truths for everyone except for you, because his word tells us that he is not willing that *any* should perish but that *all* should come to repentance. "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16)." When we fight for our redeemer and we focus on him then, "in all things we are more

than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:37-39.)” The one whom we are fighting for is the one who will bring us victory. We must know him. We must trust him.

Read the following verses and write down what is revealed about who God is:

I John 4:8 _____

Ps 68:5 _____

Revelation 1:8 _____

Isaiah 46:9-10 _____

Colossians 1:16-17 _____

Psalm 90:1-2 _____

Genesis 17:1-2 _____

Psalm 111:7 _____

I Peter 5:7 _____

KNOW YOUR WEAPON

Knowing who we are fighting for and trusting Him will shift our focus from *our flesh* to *His power*. It renews our spirit, our resolve, and our desire to break free from our captivity and allow the glory of our Lord to shine through us. Is your heart awakening as you draw near to the throne of grace, as you see the one for whom you are fighting? Are you ready to fight? Then now is the time to pick up our weapon. As any good soldier will tell you, a weapon is not randomly chosen nor is it frivolously used. A weapon is chosen with great care and consideration. It is revered, it is practiced and it is used with precision. God has already provided a weapon for us; He has given us a sword. If we are to wield it effectively we must have reverence for it and we must practice with it. A soldier does not see that there is a battle raging and pick up his sword for the first time. He is ready for battle because he has been practicing daily with his weapon. He knows the feel of it in his hand, the weight of the hilt and the reach of the blade. He knows the balance required to control every move. He has practiced with it so diligently that it has

become a part of him, an extension of himself. It is no longer possible to see where the soldier ends and the sword begins. They work as one. What do we know about our own weapon?

Ephesians chapter 6 lays out the whole suit of armor we must put on for defensive protection but verse 17 specifically tells us what our main offensive weapon is: the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. This is the weapon with which we will see victory. It is a weapon that has withstood the sands of time. It's power has never been lost, broken or muted. "The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Hebrews 4:12.)" Scripture is very clear that our weapon is the Word of God and that it's power is unmatched. The security of this weapon once again reminds us of the love our Savior has for us. He knew what we would need before we ever knew we needed it and He made sure that it was ready for us. Do you see the power of our weapon? It is alive, it is active, it is sharp and precise able to pierce and divide even the things that our human eyes and minds see as

completely intertwined. It is able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart which means it can reveal good versus evil, truth versus lies.

Read the following verses, what further characteristics do we see regarding the word of God?

Psalm 119:105 _____

Psalm 33:4 _____

Proverbs 30:5 _____

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

The word of God is a light, it is upright and it is true. Remember, “we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12.)” Therefore, this weapon is powerful in the battle that rages because we now have light to defeat the darkness and upright truth to defeat the spiritual forces of evil. But, we cannot wait until we are in the thick of the battle before picking up our weapon to use it. We must practice with it. The Psalmist says

very simply, “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.” We must store, or hide, His word in our hearts so that it becomes a part of who we are.

As we meditate on God’s word and store it in our hearts it begins to shine light into dark situations and it gives us wisdom and direction so that we can live in a way that pleases the Lord and rebukes our enemy. So what does this look like in the heat of battle?

- When the enemy tells me I am weak, God’s word says that His power is made perfect in my weakness and I will therefore boast all the more gladly in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me (2 Cor 12:9).
- When the enemy says I am nothing, God’s word says that I am fearfully and wonderfully made and that He that is in me is greater than He that is in the world.
- The enemy tries to tell us we aren’t worth it, God says that He so loved the world that He gave His only Son to save us (Jn 3:16).

- When the enemy tries to use our past against us, God's word says to not ponder the things of the past because He is doing something new (Is 43:18-19) and that all those who are in Christ are a new creation (1 Cor 5:17)!
- The enemy tries to make us think we will always be a slave to our sin but God's word says we have not been given a spirit of slavery but the spirit of adoption to become the sons and daughters of God (Rom 8:15).
- And when the enemy tries to tell us that we are defeated and forsaken, God's word says that while we may be afflicted in every way we are not crushed; we may be persecuted but we are not forsaken, we may be struck down but we are not destroyed (2 Cor 4:8-9)!
- And when the anxieties of the 'what ifs' and the unknowns try to paralyze us, God's word reminds us that He knows the plans He has for us and they are for our good and

not for evil and to give us a future and a hope (Jer 29:11).

This is how we use our weapon! We hide it in our hearts, we meditate on it day and night and when the enemy attacks we strike back with the precision and power of truth!

SHATTER THE PRISON

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10:5 that “we are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” These speculations and lofty things are all of the reasons, ideas, philosophies and lies that man has used to create a fortress that cuts them off from the knowledge of God. These fortresses, our mirrored prisons, are the strongholds that the enemy is using to isolate us and paralyze us. To destroy these strongholds, means that we are tearing them down and bringing them to utter destruction and we do that by taking every thought captive! When we take every thought captive we are

defeating that which has enslaved us! Every one of those lies that has been used to craft our mirrored prison must be recognized and then destroyed by using the truth of God's word against it!

What truth do you need to claim as your own to defeat the lies that the enemy has used to cripple you? Are you held captive in a mirrored prison that needs to be shattered? Are you tired of seeing a distorted reflection that only focuses on our own weakness, inadequacies and failures and cuts us off from the truth and knowledge of God? It's time you recognize your enemy and the weapon he is using. Focus on the one you are fighting for and choose to follow Him into battle. Remember the weapon He has provided for you and practice with it daily and allow it to bring you victory!

Look back at the lies you recognized in the construction of your mirror. What truth of scripture can you store in your heart to take that lie captive and bring it to utter destruction? Write it here and begin to commit it to memory:

Our mirrored prisons can be shattered when we choose not to accept that we are in this alone, but realize and accept that in our weakness our God is made strong! Where our feet get tangled up, God clears a path. Where our hands fail, God's hands work on our behalf. Where our hearts lose hope, God restores it. And, where our thoughts defeat us, God strikes down the lies and renews our strength! Anxiety says we are on our own, but God says that, as we are His children, He will NEVER leave us! My strength may not be sufficient, but God's is!

I will shatter the mirror of distortion that Fear has tried to use to cripple me with the simple truth that my God can do anything and He will carry me through! I

am not alone. I do not have to rely on my own strength.
When I cast this anxiety before my God, the mirror is
shattered, Fear is defeated and the lies meant to disarm
me now lie powerless at the foot of the cross!