

# Taking Your Thoughts Captive

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As a children's ministry (CM) leader, you must remember that you are a direct threat to the enemy! He will do all he can to thwart you! He knows he can't get you to renounce Jesus, so his typical attacks involve discouragement, disillusion, and depression. These are the dangerous "3 Ds" of ministry attacks!

Even the most successful and blessed CM will encounter troubles. Whenever you have more than 1 person involved in something you'll have personality conflicts, and trouble. This is just the natural side-effects of our human nature. Paul describes believers as "new creations" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Ideally, this is true; but as Paul also states in Galatians 5: 16, 17 and in Romans 8:12, we continually battle the "flesh." It is our "flesh" that tends to listen to the enemy as he tells us to "just quit trying," or "you are not good at this!" So, even though we know we are called and gifted to lead the CM, we can easily become discouraged by the words or actions of others.



Jesus said, "in this life you will have tribulation" ((John 16:33). There isn't any "magical" protection from trouble for us as believers. The "tribulation" may come from people or from "stuff" that happens to us. Right after Jesus said that we will have "tribulation," He told us that we should "be of good cheer" because He has "overcome the world." What did Jesus mean by that?

Throughout scripture, God highlights people who endure "tribulation" with the help of God's Spirit. David's Psalms often begin with a clear description of the "tribulation" he's facing, but the Psalm almost always ends with praise for God. This "mental discipline" that David practiced is the same discipline that Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 10: 3-5.

*"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."*

Paul describes his own "mental discipline" as "taking captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." Paul's life and ministry was filled with "tribulation." He knew what it was to be discouraged or disillusioned. He might have even battled depression. He learned that his thoughts were the actual "battle ground" for the war between the "flesh" and the "Spirit." He practiced "taking his thoughts captive." He would experience something "bad," but he would take that "bad" thought and place it in the "jail" of God's goodness. He would keep that thought "captive," so it couldn't continue to cause discouragement, disillusion, or depression!



When you face challenges in the CM, your challenge is to "take your thoughts captive." When you have thoughts like, "I can't do this," or "I'm not good at this," or "Everyone hates me"; take those thoughts captive in light of God's goodness, His power, and the calling He placed on your life. Put those thoughts in your mental "jail," and change them to thoughts like, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," or "Jesus knows what it's like to face challenges, He will help me face this one," or "Thank you, God, for your Holy Spirit who gives me insight, wisdom, and protection in times like this!" Just a few changes in your thoughts can change your perspectives! This practice of taking your thoughts captive is an on-going discipline! In an afternoon, you may have to "lock up" your thoughts several times.

Make sure to talk with others about your challenges. If you are married, let your spouse help you capture your thoughts. If you are single, ask God to help you find "safe" people who can share your burden. You might find more "safety" in connecting with CM leaders at other churches.

May God help you "take your thoughts captive" and help you celebrate who you really are!