

ThinkBetter LiveBetter

A Victorious Life Begins in Your Mind

Joel Osteen



New York Boston Nashville

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CHAPTER ONE

Reprogram Your Mind

Our mind is like a computer. How we program it is the way it's going to function. You can have the most powerful computer ever made, the latest and fastest model, with the maximum amount of memory available, but if you put the wrong software in it, it's not going to function as it was designed. We've all had to deal with computer viruses. They can get into a perfectly good computer and start to contaminate the software. Before long the computer is slow, then you can't access your files. None of these problems occur because it's defective or poorly made. The computer's hardware is fine. It's because somebody reprogrammed the software. Somehow the insides got messed up. Now the software is contaminated.

In a similar way, when God created you, He

stepped back and said, “Another masterpiece.” Your hardware is perfect. You’re the right size, the right nationality, and you have the right gifts. Not only that, God put the right software in you. From the very beginning, He programmed you to be victorious, healthy, strong, and creative. Your original software says, “You can do all things through Christ.” He programmed, “Whatever you touch will prosper and succeed.” He programmed, “You are the head and not the tail. You will lend and not borrow. You are a victor and not a victim.” You were programmed to live an abundant, victorious, faith-filled life. That’s how your Creator designed you.

*You were programmed
to live an abundant,
victorious, faith-filled life.*

The reason we don’t always experience this abundant life is that we’ve allowed viruses to contaminate our software.

We say to ourselves, “I’ll never be successful. I’m not that talented.” “I’ll never break this addiction. I’ve had it too long.” “I’m slow, clumsy, and unattractive. Nothing good is in my future.” Because our software is infected, we go around with low self-esteem, we’re negative, we don’t believe our dreams will come to pass, and we don’t expect problems to turn around.

Here's the good news, though. There is nothing wrong with you. Like that computer, you're not a mistake. You're not defective or faulty. The problem is in your software. You have to get rid of the viruses. All through the day, dwell on what your Creator says about you. "I'm blessed. I'm strong. I'm healthy. I'm confident. I'm attractive. I'm valuable. I'm victorious." You have to get back to your original software. If your thinking is limited, your life will be limited. When you think better, you'll live better.

Learn to Hit the Delete Button

To restore our original software, one of the best things we can learn to do is hit the delete button. When negative, discouraging thoughts come trying to contaminate your software, just hit delete before they start affecting how you live. That thought says, *You've seen your best days. It's all downhill from here.* Recognize that's a virus trying to keep you from your destiny. It's real simple. Delete. Say to yourself, "I'm not dwelling on that. My software says, 'The path of the righteous gets brighter and brighter.'"

You'll never get well. You saw the medical report.

Delete. Replace it by saying, “God is restoring health back to me. The number of my days He will fulfill.”

You’ll never accomplish your dreams. You’re not that talented. You don’t have what it takes. Delete. Delete. Delete. “I am fearfully and wonderfully made. I have the favor of God. Whatever I touch prospers and succeeds.”

You’ll never break that addiction. Your father was an alcoholic, and you’ll be one, too. Delete. “No weapon formed against me will prosper. Whom the Son sets free is free indeed, and I am free.”

If you’re going to reach your highest potential, you have to get good at hitting the delete button.

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When I stepped up to pastor the church, every thought told me, *You can’t do this, Joel. You don’t know how to minister. You’re too young. You don’t have the experience. Nobody is going to come.* It would have been easy to let that virus take root and keep me from my destiny. I did what I’m asking you to do. I kept hitting the delete button. *You can’t do it.* Delete. *You’re too young.* Delete. *Nobody is going to come.* Delete. *You don’t have the experience.* Delete.

It's not going to work out. Delete. I wouldn't be where I am today if I hadn't become an expert at hitting the delete button.

Guard Your Mind

The Scripture tells us to guard our mind. You control the doorway to what you allow in. You can dwell on every negative thought and every derogatory comment, or you can choose to delete it and dwell on what God says about you. If I had let those negative thoughts play over and over in my mind, they would have contaminated my confidence, contaminated my self-esteem, and contaminated my future.

Why don't you start hitting the delete button? Quit dwelling on every negative thought that comes to your mind. That's the enemy trying to contaminate your software. If he can control your thinking, he can control your whole life. If the thought is negative, discouraging, pushing you down, don't dwell on it. Delete it. Pay attention to what you're thinking. If you go around thinking that you're not talented, you'll never have the confidence to step into your destiny. If you think you're unattractive, you'll never

meet the people you were supposed to meet. If you think you can't break the addiction, you can't. If you think you've reached your limits, you have. It's not because you can't go further. You've just convinced yourself that you can't.

The good news is that it's not too late. You can still become everything God created you to be. Here's a key: You have to clear out all the negative things people have said about you. You are not who people say you are. You are who God says you are. Clear out the negative things that the coach or the teacher said about you. "You're too small. You don't have what it takes." Delete it. Quit dwelling on that. You're the right size. You have exactly what you need for the race that's been designed for you.

You have to clear out all the negative things people have said about you.

Clear out what the counselor said. "You're just a C student. You're not college material." Delete it. You're an A student.

You have seeds of greatness.

Clear out what the ex-boyfriend or the ex-spouse said. "You're not attractive. You're not good enough for me." Delete it. You're a masterpiece, one of a kind, beautiful, attractive, a prized possession.

You may have to clear out what a parent said about you. “You’re so undisciplined. You’re never going to amount to much. You can’t do anything right.” Delete it. You are destined to do great things. You’re destined to leave your mark on this generation.

Water the Right Seeds

I read a report about children who had been bullied in school. It talked about how, years later, those negative words from bullies were still having an effect on many of them. The researchers interviewed one man who was in his forties. He looked to be a bright, intelligent man, but he had not been able to hold down a good job, he struggled in his relationships, and he just couldn’t seem to get his life on course. He told how as a child he was chubby, and some of the other children made fun of him and called him names such as “loser” and “failure.” He made the mistake of letting those words take root in his thinking, and it had a dramatic impact on his life. It was keeping him in mediocrity.

When somebody calls you something, either good or bad, that seed is planted in your soil. Now you get

to determine whether or not that seed takes root and grows. When you dwell on what was said, you are watering the seed. You're giving it a right to become a reality. That's why it's so important that we're disciplined in our thought life. It's great when people tell you, "You're blessed. You're talented. You're going to do great things." Water those seeds. Meditate on those throughout the day. That's what you want to become a reality.

But too often we make the mistake of watering the wrong seeds. If you allow negative things that other people say about you to take root, it's not their fault. They can't make a seed take root in you. All they can do is sow the seed. You have complete control over what seeds are going to grow in your own soil. A lot of times we blame others. "They were talking about me. They tried to make me look bad. They were criticizing me." Let them talk all they want. You control your own soil. Don't dwell on the negative. Don't replay what they said over and over. Guard your mind. Those are viruses trying to infiltrate your software.

This is what the Lord told Joshua after Moses had died and he was to lead the Israelites into the

Promised Land: “If you will meditate on what God says about you day and night, you will have good success and prosper in everything you do.” When your mind is filled with thoughts of faith, thoughts of hope, and thoughts of victory, that’s what will become a reality.

Do you know why that man who was in his forties was still struggling? He let those derogatory comments play over and over in his mind. Every time he thought about it, he was watering that seed year after year. It’s sad to say, but it became a reality. How different would his life be if he had just learned to hit the delete button? Instead of constantly playing the negative, he should have gone around thinking, *I’m a masterpiece. I’m one of a kind. I’m talented. I’ve got seeds of greatness.* It would have been a whole different story.

Reprogram Your Software

Are there any viruses that are contaminating your computer? Are you allowing what people have spoken over you to hold you back? We can’t stop the negative

voices from speaking, but we can choose whether or not we're going to dwell on what they say. God has given each of us a delete button.

I talked with a man who was raised by a very negative father. His father was always putting him down, telling him what he couldn't become. Not surprisingly, this son, when he was in his twenties and even through his thirties, couldn't seem to ever get ahead. Life was always a struggle. He had a college degree, but he couldn't get a good job and couldn't keep a steady relationship. He told how his father's words were always playing in the back of his mind: "You'll never be successful. You don't have what it takes." Even when his father was on his deathbed, he looked at him and said, "Your brother never amounted to anything, and you won't either." Those were the last words he ever heard his father speak. For years he went around with a smoldering anger, feeling inferior, and all of that negativity acted like an anchor on his life. He wouldn't take a new position. He didn't feel qualified. He was too afraid. All these bondages were the result of the words that were spoken over him. We know the importance of a father's blessing, what weight that carries, but unfortunately some people don't receive that blessing.

One day this man heard me talking about wrong mind-sets and making sure you don't have things that are holding you back. He realized that his father's words had become a stronghold in his mind. He started hitting the delete button, reprogramming his software. When he heard, "You don't have what it takes," he hit delete and said, "I'm equipped. I'm empowered. I'm well able." When he heard, "You'll never amount to anything," he hit delete and declared, "I will fulfill my destiny. I will become all that God has created me to be."

Today this gentleman is extremely successful and has a beautiful family. They volunteer at our services. Everything changed when he started hitting the delete button. Maybe you are like him and you didn't receive your earthly father's blessing. The good news is that you have your Heavenly Father's blessing. Almighty God is saying to you, "You are My masterpiece. You are one of a kind. You have seeds of greatness. You are equipped, strong, talented, and beautiful." That's what should be playing in your mind. No matter who tried to tell you otherwise—a parent, a friend, a coach, a neighbor—delete that and reprogram your software. You are not defective. You

are not flawed. You have been fearfully and wonderfully made.

*You are not defective.
You are not flawed. You
have been fearfully and
wonderfully made.*

You may have been through unfair situations. People have spoken things over you that they had no business saying. You could easily go around feeling bad, having low self-esteem, low self-worth. But don't ever let what someone said or what someone did keep you from knowing who you really are. You are a child of the Most High God. You have royal blood flowing through your veins. God has crowned you with His favor. People may have tried to push you down and make you feel insignificant, but that does not change who you are. You are still the apple of God's eye. You are still His most prized possession. God still has an amazing future in front of you. If you will hit that delete button and get rid of any strongholds, God will take what was meant for your harm and He will use it to your advantage. The psalmist said, "Even if my father and mother forsake me, God will adopt me as His very own child."

The Battle Takes Place in Your Mind

I know a lady who struggled with her self-worth for many years. Growing up, she never felt she was good enough or that she fit in. These insecurities stemmed from being a child born out of wedlock. Her mother and father weren't married. One day, as a little girl, she saw her birth certificate and noticed the box was checked that said, "Illegitimate." That phrase became ingrained in her thinking. All through her childhood and her teenage years, anytime she tried to move forward, these words would come up in her mind once again. "You're a mistake. Nobody even wanted you. You're not valuable." She believed the lies, which dramatically affected her personality, her attitude, and even her marriage.

One day she discovered that our worth and value doesn't come from people; it comes from Almighty God. She said, "It was like something exploded on the inside." She decided to start hitting the delete button. When thoughts came saying, *You're not valuable. You have no future*, instead of dwelling on them and letting them depress her, she reprogrammed her

software. “I’m not a mistake. I’m not an accident. God chose me to be here before the foundation of the world. I’m accepted. I’m approved. I’m valuable.” Her attitude was, *No matter what my birth certificate says, I know I am legitimate. Almighty God breathed His life into me.* Today, now that her thinking is better, she is living a blessed, free, confident life.

Make sure there are no strongholds in your mind that are keeping you back. I’ve learned that anytime we try to move forward in faith, there will always be people trying to contaminate our software. They may not do it on purpose, but they’ll tell you what you can’t do and why it’s not going to work out. “My cousin tried and failed.” “My grandmother died of that same disease.” The negative voices will come out of the woodwork. But remember, God didn’t put the promise in them. God put the promise in you. Don’t let people talk you out of your destiny.

That’s why we start off every message by saying, “I am who God says I am.” We’re saying in effect, “I am not who my history teacher says I am. I am not who my ex-spouse says I am. I am not who the critics say I am. I am who God says I am.” I like to take it one step further. “Not only am I who God says I am, but I can do what God says I can

do.” That means we know we’ve been programmed for victory. We’ve been programmed to reign in life. We’ve been programmed to overcome obstacles. We will accomplish our dreams. We will meet the right people. We will step into the fullness of our destiny. When you think like that, all the forces of darkness cannot stop you.

The real battle is taking place in your mind. If you’re defeated in your thoughts, you’ve already lost. You have to get rid of the viruses if you want to live better. If you will get back to the original software that was installed in you by your Creator, you’ll go places that you’ve never dreamed.

Consider How You Were Programmed

It’s interesting how little children start off so excited about life. They have big dreams. They’re going to become a scientist, an astronaut, a singer, a teacher, a ballplayer, even the president. They’re not intimidated. They’re not insecure. They believe they can do anything. It’s because they just came from their Creator. Their thinking has not been contaminated. They can

still feel the seeds of greatness. But over time, too often they start to get reprogrammed. Somebody tells them what they *can't* become, what they *can't* do. Little by little their environment starts to squeeze down on them. A coach says, "You're not good enough. You're too small." Their self-esteem goes down. They see somebody more attractive, who is getting all sorts of attention, and they start to feel inferior. All these things begin to distort their thinking about who they really are. Before long, instead of dreaming big and believing possibility thoughts, they think, *I'll never do anything great. I'm not that talented. I'm just average.*

When we find ourselves stuck in these ruts, not believing we can rise any higher, we need to ask, "Why do I think this way? Who programmed me to think that I'm average? Who programmed me to give up on my dreams? Who programmed me to think I can't lose this weight, I can't break this addiction, I've gone as far as I can? Where did those thoughts come from?" Could it be that you have accepted a wrong mind-set because of the environment you were raised in, from the people you were around? Just because it seems normal to you doesn't necessarily mean that it *is* normal.

Sometimes we've just learned to function in our dysfunction. Maybe everybody you grew up with was negative, but you're not supposed to be negative. Negative is

Could it be that you have accepted a wrong mind-set because of the environment you were raised in?

not normal thinking. Maybe your friends didn't have big dreams. They didn't do anything great in life, but that's not okay for you. That's not normal. Just because family members had addictions and bad habits, don't make the mistake of thinking that it's okay for you to live that way. Those are viruses that have been passed down, that keep infiltrating your thinking and affecting your living. God created you to go further, to live confidently, to be free, to be healthy, positive, and happy. You have greatness on the inside. Get it started by reprogramming your thinking.

I heard a story about a German shepherd that was pregnant with puppies. One day she was walking across the street and got hit by a car. Both her back legs were broken, but she was able to drag herself off the street and back to her house. As the weeks went by, she slowly recovered. Her legs finally healed, but

because they weren't properly reset, all she could do was drag her back legs. She couldn't walk properly. Her joints had been messed up. Eventually she had her puppies. They seemed healthy and whole, but several weeks later, when they started walking, they dragged their back legs just like their mother did. The owner was amazed. He thought maybe they had been injured in the accident as well. He took them to the veterinarian to have them checked out. The doctor discovered there was nothing wrong with their back legs. They were perfectly healthy. The puppies were simply copying their mother. That's all they had seen modeled. In their minds, that was the way they were supposed to walk.

That's what has happened to many of us—we copied what we saw modeled growing up. The people who raised us were good people. They were doing their best, but in some ways they were dragging their back legs. They were negative, discouraged. Now we live negative, discouraged. They had addictions and low self-esteem. Now we struggle in those same areas. Maybe they made poor choices in relationships and became involved with the wrong people. Now we're dealing with the same issues. We saw them accept mediocrity. Mediocrity has become normal to us.

The good news is, just like with those puppies, there is nothing wrong with your back legs. Those are simply wrong mind-sets you've developed. As you get your thinking straightened out, your legs will straighten out. God didn't make you faulty. He didn't create you subpar. He created you in His image. You are His masterpiece, crowned with favor, equipped with talent and gifts. You are destined to live a healthy, abundant, happy, faith-filled life. Don't go around dragging your back legs. You are not supposed to go through life feeling inferior, held down by low self-esteem, addicted, having small goals and small dreams. That's not who you are. Start reprogramming your mind as the head and not the tail. Program it with excellence, not mediocrity. Program it with abundance, not lack and poverty. Program it with freedom, not addictions.

Strongholds Are Coming Down

This is what my father did. He grew up in a very poor environment. His parents lost everything during the Great Depression. He had no money, a poor education, and no future to speak of. He had been

programmed with poverty, defeat, and mediocrity. That's all he had ever seen. He could have settled and lived there, thinking, *This is my lot in life. We're just poor defeated people.* But at seventeen years old, when he gave his life to Christ, he started reprogramming his thinking. Deep down, something said, "You were made for more than this. You're not supposed to constantly struggle, to barely make it through life." He could feel those seeds of greatness stirring on the inside. His attitude was, *This may be where I am, but this is not who I am. I may be in defeat, but I am not defeated. I'm a child of the Most High God.*

Day after day, he kept hitting the delete button. A thought told him, *You have no future.* Delete. "God's plans for me are for good, to give me a future and a hope."

You have no money. Delete. "I'm blessed. Whatever I touch prospers."

You didn't even finish school. You'll never get out of here. It's impossible. Delete. Delete. Delete. "God is making a way where I don't see a way. He is opening doors that no man can shut. He is bringing the right people across my path. I will step into the fullness of my destiny."

He reprogrammed his thinking with thoughts of faith, thoughts of hope, and thoughts of victory. As

his thinking improved, he rose up out of that poverty and set a new standard for our family.

You may have been raised in a limited environment. All you saw modeled was strife, addictions, conflict, low self-esteem, and mediocrity. Don't let that set the limits for your life. Don't go around dragging your back legs. God wants you to go further. It starts by getting rid of viruses. Hit the delete button. A thought tells you, *You've gone as far as you can.* Delete. *You'll never get well.* Delete. *You'll always be addicted.* Delete. *This is as good as it gets.* Delete.

If you will get good at hitting the delete button, you will break out of bondages and step into freedom. You will break out of lack and poverty and step into abundance. You will break out of mediocrity and step up to excellence. This is a new day. Strongholds are coming down. Wrong mind-sets are being broken. Viruses are being cleared out. Get ready for God to do something new. Get ready to see His goodness in amazing ways.

Clear Out Every Virus

When Carl Lewis was training for the Olympic Games, the experts said no person can jump over

thirty feet. Scientists had run their calculations, done all their research. According to their data, no one could ever jump that far. A reporter asked Carl Lewis what he thought about it. He responded, “Yes, I know the experts say it can’t be done, but I don’t listen to that kind of talk. Thoughts like that have a way of sinking into your feet.” He went on later that same year to jump over thirty feet and break the world record.

Are you allowing negative thoughts to sink into your feet, to stifle your potential, to handicap your life’s race? Why don’t you do what he did? Start hitting the delete button. God has the final say. He wouldn’t have put the dream in your heart or given you that promise if He didn’t have a way to bring it to pass.

Are you allowing negative thoughts to sink into your feet, to stifle your potential?

Delete what the naysayers have told you. Delete the discouraging words. Delete the negative reports. You have to get back to your original

software. Who told you that you can’t be successful? Who told you that you can only make Cs in school? Who told you you’re not tall enough, not smart enough,

that you've reached your limits? I can assure you those words did not come from your Creator. Those are viruses trying to contaminate your software. Don't let what anyone told you or what anyone modeled for you limit your life. There is nothing wrong with your back legs. Start reprogramming your mind. All through the day, dwell on what your Creator says about you. "I'm blessed. I'm healthy. I'm talented. I'm valuable. My best days are still out in front of me."

If you'll do this, I believe and declare, every virus is being cleared out, even right now. Strongholds are coming down. Wrong mind-sets that have held you back for years will no longer have any effect on you. As Joshua was promised, you will have good success and prosper in everything you do.