



**TODAY'S TOPIC:**  
**The Garden of Your Mind**  
 You are welcome to use this lesson to inspire spiritual conversation in your family or youth classroom. It is written for elementary age but could be adjusted as needed.

**THINKING JOB:** Ask a "thinking job question" to get everyone thinking about something pertinent to the lesson. This could be asked moments or hours before your conversation.

***Have you ever seen a pink elephant?***

**Lesson**

Materials	Things to Prepare	Today's Goal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set the timer for 30 seconds</li> </ul>	Pay attention to your thoughts.

**SAY:** Can you imagine a pink elephant? Is it big or small? Hot pink or pastel pink? Does it look happy, sad, tired, or excited? Give your pink elephant as much detail as you can. Now that you have got your pink elephant clear in your head, it is time to stop thinking about it.

**ASK:** *Set a timer for 30 seconds.* Now let's think about something else – not pink elephants - and notice where your thoughts take you. You can think about movies or books or whatever you want for the next 30 seconds. *Start the timer and quietly think for 30 seconds.*

**ASK:** How long did you last without the pink elephant creeping back into your mind? For most of us, that pink elephant will come back in our thoughts within seconds. The same is true of unwanted and intrusive thoughts: the more you try not to think them, the more they will bother you. This is called the **Pink Elephant Paradox**.

**SAY:** Scientists did an experiment where they took two groups of people. The first group they told to think of a white bear. The second group they told not to think of a white bear. Guess what. The second group they told not to actually thought about the white bear more than the first group!

How crazy is it that the more you try not to think about something makes you think about it more!?

**ASK:** Has that ever happened to you? Where something happens and you keep thinking about it over and over? Do people ever give you advice and say “Just stop thinking about it”?

**EXAMPLE:** Here’s an example. I did not do well on a test at school. Now I keep thinking about how I did not do well on that test over and over again. And now it’s time to take another test.

**ASK:** What do you think will happen when you take the next test?

**ASK:** Is there a way to change our thinking? What could you say instead? **I will do my very best on this test. I got this!**

**ASK:** Can you do this anytime you are having negative thoughts, especially the ones that repeat over and over in your head? Yes! And the more you practice having positive thoughts the easier it gets.

**AFFIRMATION** – I pay attention to my thoughts. repeat 4X

Note: Printable affirmations and coloring sheets for this lesson are available at <https://www.milehichurch.org/youth-family/> .