

☞ How to Renew Your Mind

Last Week: The Key to Freedom... Truth sets us free (John 8:32). So, we need to know the truth. Proverbs 23:7 basically says you are what you think. So we need to think properly. This is possible by the grace of God because 1 Corinthians 2:16 says we have the mind of Christ. However, most of us know all too well that we still have our old mind too!

For example: Frank became a Christian two months ago. He regularly attends church, making new friends, but he is still struggling with anger. "I can't stop my outbursts. I get really irritated at the way people treat me," he states. "Every day I pray to God, but every day people still make me angry." He also confides that he is constantly struggling with lustful thoughts.

Harry, 67 years old, has been a Christian all his adult life. He grew up with a father who verbally abused him. "I can still hear my father saying, 'you'll never amount to anything! You're good for nothing!'" And the damage still hangs on even though Harry is now a grandfather and loves God.

The struggles may not be identical, but many Christians are caught up in major battles in their mind. The old way of thinking has not gone away. Many still struggle with temptations, bitterness, fear, hopelessness, frustration, and just plain evil thoughts. We want to be new, but this battle still rages in the mind.

☞ **At its heart, the worldly mind is selfish.** It's all about me! Things like this... "What do I get out of this? How can I get ahead and rise to the top? I don't like the way so and so does such and such. Gotta look out for number one!" Now, as Christians, we usually know that we shouldn't be thinking like this. However, the Bible gives other signs to indicate that you might have a worldly ☞ mind. Romans 1 mentions **pride, envy, gossip, slander, strife, greed, and deceit** among others. This kind of thinking leads to serious trouble...

Romans 1:28

since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind

Ephesians 4:18

...They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

☞ So, we need a completely renewed mind. **Romans 12:2** says, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will."

There's a promise here: if I renew my mind, God has some awesome benefits & rewards.

- I will be transformed - not just cleaned up on the outside, but completely changed on the inside, too.
- I will know and understand God's will for my life.
- The God of peace will be with me. When you have a renewed mind, the peace of God guards you (Phil. 4:7) and the God of peace guides you (Phil. 4:9).

So, we need to renew our minds. And, as 2 Corinthians 10:5 says, "We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." So, how do we actually get a renewed mind? How do we capture those thoughts? When it comes to renewing your mind, God will do His part...

God's Part

"For God did not give us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, of love and of a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:7) **God has given us a mind capable of being renewed.**

☞ He has given us **the Holy Spirit to guide us** into all truth. (John 16:13)

☞ God promises to bring us from darkness into light. (John 8:12) **God's word is light for us.** Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path."

☞ **God promises to give wisdom to those who ask.** (James 1:5)

Our Part

When it comes to renewing your mind God has already done His part. So, what's our part? If we are to experience the renewed mind, there are three basic things we need to do. When we get to the third one, we'll talk about specific steps we can take to be renewed in our minds...

1. ☞ **Pray. Philippians 4:6** says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

This is the J.O.Y. prayer.

☞ **Jesus:** *By prayer* – talk to God; a place for prayer (cf. Acts 16:13 – outside the city walls). This suggests **alone time with Jesus**, just talking and listening.

Others: *And petition* – supplication; ask, plead, seek. This is primarily focused on **other's needs**. *With thanksgiving* – grateful language. This gets you out of the self-focused mindset.

Yourself: *Present your requests* – ask with urgency. In the right order, it's okay to make requests for yourself. God cares about **your needs** and desires. Just keep the order right.

2. ☞ **Ponder. Philippians 4:8** says, “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.”

Think – thoughtful consideration; to meditate on. Ask yourself, “What have I been thinking about today? Is it true? Have I been thinking about something that is a lie? Am I worrying about what might happen? Am I speculating on the motives or thoughts of another person? Have I blown something out of proportion in my mind?” If so, I need to stop going down that thought path. Jesus made it clear in Matthew 5, that sin is not simply measured by our actions—we also sin when we embrace that thought and go down that path in our mind. Ponder and think about that which is...

☞ **True** – *a thing as it really is*. Satan is the liar ([John 8:44](#)), and he wants to corrupt our minds with his lies. The Holy Spirit controls our minds through truth ([John 17:17](#); [1 John 5:6](#)), but the devil tries to control them through lies. Whenever we believe a lie, Satan takes over!

☞ **Noble** – *honest; honorable; worthy of respect*.

Right – *innocent; approved by God*. This does not mean we hide our heads in the sand and avoid everything that is unpleasant and displeasing, but it does mean we do not focus our attention on dishonorable things and permit them to control our thoughts.

☞ **Pure** – *clean; modest; uncontaminated*.

Lovely – *pleasing; acceptable; friendly*.

Admirable – *deserving approval*. We must major on the high and noble thoughts, not the low and degraded thoughts of this corrupt world.

☞ **Excellent** – *virtuous; morally good*.

Praiseworthy – *commendable*. If it has virtue, it will motivate us to do better; and if it has praise, it is worth commending to others. We can't afford to waste "mind power" on thoughts that tear us down or that would tear others down if these thoughts were shared.

3. ☞ **Practice. Philippians 4:9** says, “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me — put it into practice.”

Practice – *to perform repeatedly and habitually; to be busy with*. Here are 8 specific steps we can take to renew our mind. In the Bible the number 8 is symbolic of new beginnings.

☞ **One: Take responsibility for your thought life**. Remember, 1 Corinthians 2:16 says, “We have the mind of Christ.” And, 2 Timothy 1:7 says, “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” While we all struggle with our thoughts, the bible makes it clear that we can win the battle in the mind. We need take responsibility for that.

☞ **Two: Read your Bible daily.** Fill your mind with his truth, not your own perception of truth. Remember, in John 17:17 Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." Get God's word into your mind. It will free you from the old mindset and begin the renewal process.

☞ **Three: Test your thoughts against God's word.** If a thought fails the test of being true, or noble, or right, or pure, then stop going down that path in your mind. Turn your thoughts toward God and His word. We need to put off our old way of thinking and develop a new way of thinking. Renewing your mind is a process, not a one time achievement. So, keep on applying God's word to your renewed way of thinking. Ask yourself, "What scriptures will help me apply this trait to my thought life?"

☞ **Four:** If you realize you have fallen short of one of these standards, don't beat yourself down - **Get back on the right path.** Focus your attention on renewing your mind right now. If you have a real struggle with one area then find scriptures that speak to that issue. Write them down, carry them with you, and read them throughout your day. A key issue here is, what do you want to think about?

☞ **Five: Resist the enemy.** Most of us face evil thoughts in our minds; they invade without our permission. In 2 Corinthians 10 God tells us to take on the mindset of a soldier fighting the enemy. These evil thoughts are not conquered by ignoring them, any more than a soldier ignores his enemy. The soldier faces his enemy and fights him.

You must speak God's truth to the evil thoughts that come to you... "This is a temptation from Satan to get me to lie, or to lust, (or whatever the thought focuses on.) And here is what God says about that issue," and then remind yourself of the specific truth that relates to that evil thought. When evil thoughts come into your mind, don't try to run from them; attack them! Once you have exposed what you are battling, then begin to focus on the positive things God speaks of in Philippians 4:8. Bring God into the battle.

☞ **Six: Be accountable to another godly person.** Give them permission to ask you how you are doing in the battles with evil thoughts. One of the devil's most powerful tools is secrecy. If he can get you to keep all your battles secret, then he has a much easier time defeating you. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 says, "Two are better than one... If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! ...Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

☞ **Seven: Simply focus on Jesus.** This idea is found in Hebrews 3:1. "Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess." Some of the situations we face simply do not have adequate answers. In times like that we can look to Jesus and focus our thoughts on Him. Everything else might be messed up,

but Jesus is not messed up or confused. He is seated at the right hand of the Father making intercession for us! We have to keep our thoughts fixed on Him. One way to help evaluate a thought is to ask yourself — If Jesus were in my shoes right now, what would He be thinking about this issue or person?

☞ **Eight: Put godly thoughts into action.** It is not enough to think pure thoughts. Philippians 4:9 takes it one step farther - we must put these thoughts into action. It's not enough to think kind thoughts, we must speak kind words, and live out kindness in our actions. If we think we are a generous person, what do our actions say? If our actions send the opposite message, then we may be living in denial or delusion – and that clearly does not reflect God's way of thinking.

☞ We often don't *feel* like doing the right thing. But, **"right thinking" leads to "right actions," which leads to "right feelings."** The priority is critical. If feelings are at the front, they will drive you wherever they feel like going. Your emotions will take you into all kinds of confusion. But "right thinking" guides us in responding with "right actions." "Right feelings" will follow. They may not come immediately, but they will come eventually.

Here's the bottom line for getting your mind renewed... When you are evaluating your thoughts, ☞ **bring God into the mental conversation.** Ask for His wisdom. Renewing our minds is a challenge that may take a lifetime. God has done his part to help us in this process. But the real ☞ key is to remember, **"This is my mind, and I must take full responsibility for renewing it. And with God's help I will!"**

Again this week, let's think about what we've been thinking about. Ask God for wisdom and guidance. Be encouraged by the words of this song.

☞ **Video: Who You Say I Am**