

Renewing the Mind and Why it Matters

5 practical steps to help you renew your mind

By Nancy Williams



Romans 12:1-2 (CSB)

Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

This is a verse that everyone of us needs to meditate on to remind us that our true worship is to be a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. We are called to glorify God.

To do this, verse 2 tells us that we are not to be conformed to this age. In other translation it says world and I like this translation of age to remind us that society, culture, popular opinion changes over generations and that is not what we are to follow.

We are told in verse 2 to not be conformed to this age but to be transformed by the renewing of our mind.

Our mind should not be like the world around us. Because we live in a sin fallen world, we need to remember that our minds are also sin fallen. Which means, our minds do not think correctly about our own sin and can have dark thoughts about the goodness of God. Just like our personality and emotions all of these parts of who we are, are in need of transformation. We are being made into His image which means, mind, personality and emotions need to be transformed which is part of the sanctification process. We are being transformed so that we can be pleasing to God.

Our minds, because they are sin fallen or corrupted by sin, do not need more education or knowledge – knowing more is not what will transform us. Let me say that again, knowing more is not what will transform our sinful mind. Just like our hearts our minds need the gospel to transform us.

When God created the heavens and earth He spoke, and it happened. Adam and Eve wanted to be like God and ate of the fruit allowing sin to enter the world separating us from knowing God until Christ came, lived a sinless life, died on the cross and rose again to pay the price so that we can have a right relationship with God. Until we have a right relationship with God fully surrender to the Lord, our minds cannot be renewed spiritually.

Isaiah 14:12-14 is an example of how we live our life apart from God. Some believe this passage is the fall of Lucifer, but it doesn't fit with all of 14 so is probably talking about King Nebuchadnezzar who is a perfect example of someone who is not spiritually renewed. Let me read Isaiah 14:12-14

12 Shining morning star,
how you have fallen from the heavens!
You destroyer of nations,
you have been cut down to the ground.

13 You said to yourself,
“I will ascend to the heavens;
I will set up my throne
above the stars of God.
I will sit on the mount of the gods’ assembly,
in the remotest parts of the North.

14 I will ascend above the highest clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.”

The phrase “I will” is interesting, in the sense that every time it is said in Isaiah 14, it is being said by this king who wills to be like God. When the king said he will ascend to the heavens and set his throne by God or make himself like the Most High. It did not happen, even though he declared it and wanted the glory, the worship and fame. This is important because we still make these “I will statements” for our own glory but they look more like seeking myself-will, self-glory, self- gratification, self-righteousness and self-sufficiency. We make it all about us so it is easy to buy into this age’s thinking that you can have it your way, you deserve better, you can be whatever you want to be, be your own boss, maker of your destiny or no one has the right to tell you how to live.

This is why renewing the mind matters because the mind is sin fallen and needs the gospel verse 2 of Roman 12 reminds us that

“Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.”

We need to transform our minds so that we know the good pleasing and perfect will of God. The word transform is the Greek word “*Metamawfao*” which is also used in Mark

9:2, Matthew 17:2 and 2 Corinthians 3:12-18. In the Mark and Matthew passages it is used for the English word transfigured. In Matthew 17:2, He was transfigured in front of them, and his face shone like the sun; his clothes became as white as the light. This type of transformation or transfiguration is from the inside out. It is a spiritual transformation and needs spiritual things to help transform it.

2 Corinthians 3:12-18

“12 Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness. 13 We are not like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from gazing steadily until the end of the glory of what was being set aside, 14 but their minds were hardened. For to this day, at the reading of the old covenant, the same veil remains; it is not lifted, because it is set aside only in Christ. 15 Yet still today, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts, 16 but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.”

You see we are all born spiritually blind, we have a veil like Moses covering our face, until we understand what Christ did on the cross. We walk around dead in our trespass (spiritually blind). When we surrender our life and ask Jesus to be Lord of our life He replaces our veil with a helmet of salvation. This helmet of salvation helps us to seek and hunger for spiritual things. And one day Christ promises to come back and He is looking at those with veils and helmets and He is seeking all those with helmet of Salvation on to replace them with the crown of life. This is the Sanctification process making us more like Him.

Being Sanctified is an important part of our walk with God and one many of us do not understand.

There is a great quote by G.K. Chesterton “A dead thing can go with the stream, but only a living thing can go against it.” If we want to go against this age, we need to be

alive in Christ and that happens with the renewing of our minds by putting our faith in Christ to remove our veil.

Romans 12:2

“Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.”

So how do we spiritually renew our mind so that we can discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

It all starts with prayer.

Your first step is to pray – this is just not asking the Lord to help you with your wants and needs, but to help you in your transformation.

Specifically pray, for God to remove the blinders

Lord show me where I am still blind to my own sin.

Lord where am I aligned to this age and not your word?

Help me to be teachable, dying to my ways, seeking your ways

Lord where is my heart still hardened to your word

Lord where do I not want to obey

What I wills or self-wills do I need to repent of to the Lord

Where am I still seeking to be worshipped – help me to die to this

Renew me from the inside out

Give me eyes to see you, ears to hear you and a heart to love you more than anything else

Lord help me to be Kingdom minded

Help me to be humble

Lord why does this bother or frustrates me

How often do you truly pray like this? We should be praying this out of our breath daily, in every circumstance, minute by minute. In Paul E. Miller's Praying life book, He calls these breath prayers, and they are part of our spiritual transformation.

Another type of prayer is a lament. What do you do with the grief, sorrow, or anguish you have? God's word teaches us to lament. Do you know how to lament? This is a different type of prayer. The four elements of a good lament are (1) turning to God, (2) complaining to God, (3) asking God, and (4) trusting God. There are great examples of how to do this in Dark Cloud, Deep Mercy. During Covid I was frustrated with all the complaints on Facebook, so I wrote and posted this lament.

How long oh Lord, will many live in fear? Seeking to hoard, and not share, forgetting to love you and others. How long oh Lord will men and women of God forget whom they worship? Is this what Moses felt with stiff neck people who do not worship or trust your name? Or Noah when he built an ark, did people see only the world not You. When will we fall on our knees and repent? Lord teach us to worship you apart from gathering in a building but gathering as family, friends and neighbors. Lord show us how to be faithful in worship, tithe and studying of your word without a building. Lord use the weeks we are apart to draw us closer to you. May this time bring us to a place where we will worship You and You alone. Use this time of isolation to heal our families, to help us think of others and most importantly draw us to trust you more. Lord use this time to prepare us for what is to come, may we have a better understanding of how our brothers and sisters in persecuted countries do life without a building. Lord may we be stronger, faithful, bold encouragers of Your word, so that the day you bring us back together will be an amazing time of celebration of who You are and what You have done. May it give us a glimpse of what heaven will be like when all your children, from every tribe and nation are together to worship You and only You.

Lamenting should help us to turn to God, complain only to God, asking God for help and trusting Him with the outcome.

Second Be in the Word

- Read daily and as you read pray – ask the Lord to show you His glory, His plan, His attributes, who He says He is
- Read a different translation – so that you don't say I already know this
- Ask God to show you your own sin, where you need to grow, where do I need to repent, what do I need to obey and then do it.
- When reading a passage ask yourself How does this help me to love God more, and in light of this how should I be living and then start living this way. We are called to not just be hearers of the word but also doers. If you read something about unforgiveness, do you stop and then pray and go ask for forgiveness.
- Memorize Scripture – I have hidden your word in my heart so that I might not sin against you. I have attached a list of 26 verses you should know. Like 1 Corinthians 10:31 “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.” Then whenever you are doing something, ask yourself am I doing this for the glory of God? Or 2 Corinthians 5:9 So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. Am I pleasing God?

Third, preach the Gospel to yourself daily

- Know the Gospel- Jesus lived a sinless life, died on the Cross and rose again and is the Son of God. Do you understand elements of the gospel: Like dying? Trees in the fall are the most beautiful during the dying process. We are most beautiful when we die to self. Or that you are being made new. Who we are today is not who we will be tomorrow and not who we will be in heaven.

- Read the gospel Primer – the poem or a section. One of my favorites is page 39 that takes about all things crucified. If we read this daily there would be more things we would die to, to be like Him.
- Remind yourself that Jesus died even for this
- Read from Valley of vision – sin, repentance, humility
- Listen to Gospel center music or old hymns. What can wash away my sins, nothing but the blood of Jesus, His mercies are new every morning, be hold our God or Come their fount of every blessing, bind my wandering heart to Thee Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it Prone to leave the God I love Here's my heart, oh take and seal it Seal it for Thy courts above

We all need things like Valley of Vision, Gospel primer, Sovereign Grace Ministries for kids and adults, Shane and Shane hymns to help us be reminded of God's truth to our heart, soul, and mind.

Fourth, Watch or listen to biblically sound sermons

- Pray before you watch or listen ask God to teach you to be more like Him Make sure that the people you are listening to exegesis scripture
- Take notes – review them ask questions like how does this help me love God more and in light of this how should I be living and then do it

Whenever the Pastor asks you to do something, do it as long as it is not sin, little steps of obedience like for Easter Pastor Steve ask you to give to our Global Partners did you do it? We all have something to give. Being faithful not only to hearing the word but doing the word.

Fifth, Be in an accountability/lifegroup

- Be willing to put yourself under authority- church membership, lifegroup, spouse, boss- if you are single like I am, ask someone to speak truth into you
- Pray that you will receive correction well, do not be defensive – Lord show me where this is true, where it is not, what do I need to change to be more like you.
- Share what you are struggling with and what you are putting off and putting on – be honest do not under exaggerate your sin or over exaggerate your feelings or situation.
- Share what you are learning, what you are struggling with and encourage others. When was the last time you had a conversation with someone about what God is teaching you or are you more excited to share about something that happened on a TV show?
- We all need to be Paul, and need a Paul in our life, we also need to be Barnabas and need to have Barnabas in our life. Who are you speaking truth to and who are you encouraging?

These five steps should help you to renew your mind so that you can be more like Christ by the renewing of your mind on spiritual matters so that you can be transformed from the inside out.

Some books that are helpful –

Praying life – Paul E. Miller

Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy - Mark Vroegop Gospel Primer – Milton Vincent

Valley of Vision – Puritan Prayers

Conscience: What It Is, How to Train It, and Loving Those Who Differ -Andrew David Naselli, J.D. Crowley

That little voice in your head – Andrew David Naselli

The Gospel Bible Study – She Reads the Truth Apps

She reads the truth New City Catechism

Verses to know

1 Corinthians 10:31 – Life is all about giving God glory

2 Corinthians 5:9 – The one we want to please is God

Philippians 2:3-4 – Focus on others, not yourself

John 15:5 – We are totally dependent on God for success

Jeremiah 17:5,7 – Trusting in people will ruin you, trusting in God brings blessing

Romans 12:18 – Do all you can do to seek resolution. Even then, you may not succeed.

Philippians 4:11-13 – The key to joy is not changing your circumstances but in being content

Hebrews 12:15 - Bitterness will ruin you

Philippians 4:8 – We are responsible for what we think about

Ephesians 2:10 – Christ saved us that we might do good works

John 10:27-28 -If we belong to Christ, He keeps us safe

Hebrew 13:17 – We are accountable to our church leaders

1 Timothy 6:10 – The love of money leads to other bad behavior Proverbs 24:26 – Truthful and gracious comments of a brother are gentle John 3:27 – God provides for our daily needs

James 4:1-3 – This is why we fight and quarrel

Psalm 84:11 - God's overall provision and protection

Proverbs 13:15,21 – Life gets harder when we continue in sin Colossians 1:19,20 – God reconciles all things through Christ

James 1:2-4 – Consider all things joy

1 Peter 3:18 – Christ died once for all

Galatians 6:7-8 – The sowing and reaping principle.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 – Christ's love motivates my personal change Luke 6:43-45 - You say what you say because it's in your heart to say it Proverbs 4:23 – Your heart is control center

Psalm 63:3 – God is better than life itself