

Romans 12:1-2 Transformed by the Renewing of your Mind

Have hope! You can change

Take charge! You have a huge role to play in the process

Follow the plan! God's word is the key

Rom 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform 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.

For 11 chapters, Paul has been revealing God's mercy and explaining that God has given us Christ's perfect righteousness by faith. Now, in light of the fact that we stand before Christ redeemed, accepted, made right with God, Paul says:

Be a Living Sacrifice

Through several chapters, we could see this theme building. The sin that resides in our flesh must be done away with, and it can be by the Spirit of God. **[Next Slide]**

Rom 6:6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

Rom 6:12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

Rom 7:24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

(The Law can't do it, but Jesus can!)

*Rom 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. **[Next Slide]***

Gal 2:20 My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Here we go! How do we go about living a life that isn't controlled by our sinful patterns, our fleshly lusts, or our broken brains? **[Next Slide]**

12:2 Do not conform 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.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world...

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How is clay molded? Or aluminum or steel? There is a pattern or a mold that you pour or press the material into, and it comes out in the form of that mold. The material being molded is acted upon by outside forces and just goes along for the ride. Likewise, you don't have to do anything to be molded into the pattern of this world, because everything around you is working toward that end. **If you live passively**, absorb the media put in front of you, watch videos from various sources...you are being pressed into the mold the world wants you to look like. Don't be deceived; there is no neutral ground.

But be transformed...

The Greek word comes from metamorphose, which is to change, transfigure, transform. We are to go against the grain of the world, not passively be squeezed into a mold, but actively be transformed. You know what this means? **[Next Slide]**

YOU CAN CHANGE!

This is an extremely important and powerful thing to grasp onto.

- You are not just the product of your DNA.
- You are not just the result of how you were raised.
- You are not just "born this way"

If you are in Christ, you are a new creation, the old is gone, the new has come. You can be transformed! Made new. But this is where our part kicks in.

Jesus did all the work to purchase our redemption, to credit our account with RIGHTEOUSNESS.

But now we, as followers of Jesus **MUST** begin to do the part God has given us to do.

...by the Renewing of your Mind

Paul says it this way to the Ephesian church. **[Next Slide]**

*Eph 4:23 and to be **renewed in the spirit of your minds**, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

So how do we do this?

We have a new heart, an awakened spirit the moment that we are saved and surrendered to Jesus. But our mind is the same old pagan thinking mind. We have to renew our ways of thinking to align with God's will. **It is an active process that we participate in.**

If you don't take this seriously, you will be treading water, sinking back into sin, battling the same things over and over.

TAKE CHARGE!

[Next Slide] There is an active process of reprogramming and renewing that YOU must play an active role in. And there are two very exciting things about this. God gave his Word for everyone of us, and also made us in such a way that as we grow in obedience to God's word it rewires our brains. **[Next Slide]**

First – God gave us his word to everyone. It is written for the common person to be able to learn and follow. For much of history, many people did not know how to read that well, but yet you can **hear** the Word of God, **put it into practice**, and be changed all the same. You may not be a Bible scholar, but the more you take the Word into your mind, AND put it into practice, the more change you will see.

Second – Science has started to catch up to the truth of God's Word. I'm not going to go into excessive detail on these things, but through study of the brain by imaging and such, it has become clear that your brain actually changes in response to how you think.

To be clear – your brain is part of your physical body, but your mind is something separate, something above and beyond your physical brain. When you turned around from going your own way, surrendered your life to Jesus, got baptized, and pledged to follow Jesus, your Spirit was made new, and now that new Spirit man can choose to think differently by obeying God's Word.

There is overwhelming evidence that your physical brain changes according to how you think and what you think about. It is called Neuroplasticity. This quote is from Dr. Lee Warren, a Christian who is also an actual brain surgeon:

“Neuroplasticity rewires connections with every thought, habit, and practice. MRI studies show measurable changes in brain volume and connectivity after sustained mental training.”¹

It's not just a pun, but the more I read about this stuff, the more it blows my mind! Here is the simple truth: as we read and obey God's Word, it changes us spiritually and physically!

¹ Dr. Lee Warren, “The Ten Commandments of Self-Brain Surgery™”.

So let's talk through some scriptures and how they can be applied to help us in the process of renewing our minds. Key thoughts:

- Check your mindset
- Be Grateful, find reasons to rejoice
- Focus on the good
- Pray continuously about everything.
- Actively engage your thoughts

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Examine your Mindset – Direct your Attention

Col 3:2 **Set your minds** on things above, not on earthly things. Again, quoting the brain surgeon:

“Attention acts like a sculptor. What you focus on ... directs resources there, making those thoughts more real and more likely to guide behavior and outcomes.”

What does this mean?

- Are you focused on just the day-to-day?
- Or on things that eternally matter?
- And why is this important?

If we can only see the short-term we will struggle to get through hard times. Seeing the bigger picture makes us more resilient. Remember, God is working all things for the good of those who love him, and are called according to His purposes.

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Be Grateful, Rejoice

*1 Th 5:15 Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else. 16 **Rejoice always, 17 pray continually, 18 give thanks in all circumstances**; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

*Heb 13:15 Through him then let us **continually offer up a sacrifice of praise** to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. 16 Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.*

*Rom 12:12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, **be constant** in prayer.*

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“Repeated practice strengthens ... neural pathways, speeding signal conduction. This is why skills, habits, and even mindsets get easier the more you practice them. (This works in reverse too-negative thinking and bad habits get easier over time unless we work to manage them)”

[Next Slide] Simply put – Give Thanks and Pray in every situation.

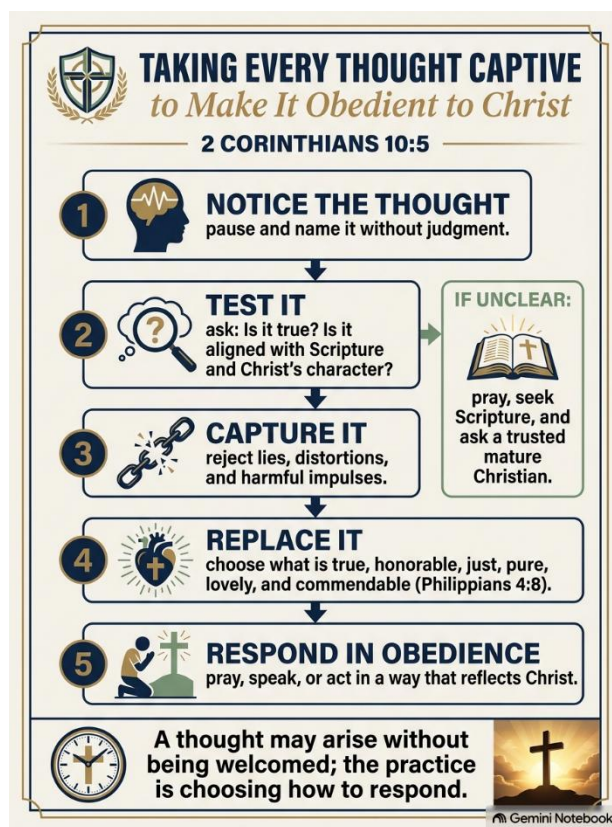
*Php 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, **but in every situation**, by prayer and petition, **with thanksgiving**, present your requests to God.*

Even in the worst circumstances, if I train my mind to consider what I can be thankful for and then talk to God about the things I cannot control, I put my mind and heart in the best possible position. I can think more clearly. My heart can hear the gentle voice of God more readily. And I can find joy in the middle of it all.

The 3rd thing is to: [Next Slide]

Take every thought captive...

2 Cor 10:15 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.



“Up to 80% of automatic thoughts are negative. This “negativity bias” is handy as a survival feature, but left unchecked it fuels anxiety and depression. Cognitive reframing (transplanting more accurate and true thoughts) activates new synaptic pathways, making healthier thoughts easier to access.”

Ps 139:23 Search me, God, and know my heart; **test me and know my anxious thoughts.** 24 See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Php 4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—**think on these things.**

[Next Slide] – Brie Lopez Testimony

Put it into practice

So how can you be transformed by the renewing of your mind?

1. Continually immerse yourself in God's word
2. Study God's word to understand it and obey it
3. Order your mind around God's word

I hope this little glimpse today helps us to see that every one of God's commands is not only good in theory, but good in practice.

I admit that in times past I had looked at commands like "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." And thought, well, that's just God's impossible standard that we are supposed to try and live up to. But the reality is that it's not only a perfect standard; by the power the Holy Spirit in us gives us to obey it is also the remedy by which God transforms us.

Every command God gives is not just good, but for our good.

And you don't have to know neurochemistry for God's principles to work for you. God wrote this so the common person can read it and obey it.

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