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What Does The Bible Say About Renewing of the Mind?

We recognize that all change, all spiritual transformation, is the result of a process. Events may instigate change in people; they may provide the motive, the occasion, and the venue for change to begin, but the changes that result in healthy spiritual transformation are the product of a process.

We can glean a description of the transformational process from the Apostle Paul's command in [Romans 12:2](#) (*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*)

NIV - 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.

This process of transformation asserts that the believer must no longer conform to what is false, the "pattern of this world" (its ideas and values, and the behaviors which express them - [Phil. 3:17-19](#) –

¹⁷*Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.*

¹⁸*(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:*

¹⁹*Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)*

Also, he must be transformed, which means his pattern must be changed, conformed to another pattern, (the truth), which is not "of this world." [Rom. 12:2](#) –(*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*) This is done by the process of "the renewing of your mind." What does it mean to renew something? To what is Paul referring when he says that the mind must undergo this renewal?

To renew something means to act upon something in ways that will cause it to be as it was when it was new. [II Cor. 4:16](#) – (*For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*)The principle idea is one of restoring something that is currently malfunctioning and breaking down to its fully functioning state, its original pristine state, the state it was in prior to it sustaining any damage. We must avoid the modern notion that renewing something means simply replacing the old thing with an entirely new thing - [II Cor. 5:17](#) (*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*)

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Paul, and the people to whom he wrote these words, would simply not understand renew to mean anything like what we moderns mean when we use the word replace. They would understand that renewing the wheels on one's cart meant repairing them to their fully functioning state. And so, what Paul means by "being transformed by the *renewing* of your mind" (emphasis ours) is that the mind must undergo changes, repairs that will restore it to its original condition, the fully functioning state it enjoyed when it was first created. As these repairs proceed in the restoration/renewal process and a detrimental modification to the original design is discovered, that modification must be removed. It must be removed so that it will not interfere with its operating as it was originally designed.

Further, to properly renew anything, we must understand its original design. The best way to renew something is with the direction and assistance of the original builder. A builder in Paul's day was not only the builder but also the designer and architect. With the expertise and help available through the builder, full renewal is best accomplished.

If you are renewing a house, that house's builder would best know how to go about it. If you are renewing an automobile, that automobile's builder would best know how to go about it. In our case, we are renewing the mind. It stands to reason then, that its renewal would best be accomplished in partnership with its Architect/Builder—God. [Hebrews 11:8-10](#)

⁸By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

⁹By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

¹⁰For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

We know that it is the mind that is to be renewed, and that we should partner with God to accomplish its renewal, but what is it about the mind that is being renewed? Is it broken, in need of new parts?

When Paul says that it is the mind which is being renewed when spiritual transformation is taking place, he means much more than what most of us think of when we use the word mind. Most of us think of the mind as some sort of calculator in our head, so, it's understandable that our idea of renewing it would start with the idea of replacing its broken parts. But for Paul, the mind is much more than a calculator in our head, and that to renew it means more than simply swapping out a sticky key, or a cracked screen, or replacing the batteries that have run low.

The Greek word that Paul uses and is translated as the English word mind is [vous - voose](#). Here it means the inner direction of one's thoughts and **will** and the orientation of one's moral consciousness. When Paul refers to our mind's renewal, he is saying that the current direction our thoughts and will must be changed. The way our mind currently directs our thoughts and will no longer leads to where the mind was originally designed to take our thoughts and will.

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Our mind no longer leads our thinking to know the will of God, to know what is good, pleasing, and perfect, and no longer directs our will to accomplish God's will, to do what is good, pleasing, and perfect. [Rom. 12:2](#) - (*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*) This is in large part what is meant by being lost.

If our minds are not renewed, then we cannot live a life directed toward doing what is pleasing to God - [Titus 3:3-5](#):

³*For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.*

⁴*But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,*

⁵*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;*

. We need to undergo the restoration process that will return our minds to operating as they were originally designed, allowing our minds to direct our thinking and will toward God-

[Col. 3:8-10](#)

⁸*But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.*

⁹*Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;*

¹⁰*And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:*

. The good news is that the original Builder/Architect—God—prescribed the renewing of the mind as the sure remedy to restoring us to spiritual health, and He intends to partner with us in this restoration process.

For spiritual transformation to occur there must be a partnership between the Holy Spirit and the person who is to undergo transformation - [Luke 12:12](#) (*For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.* - [John 14:26](#) - *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*) . It is good news that the Holy Spirit is involved in the process of our restoration because, unlike other things that undergo restoration, like houses, tables, and chairs, we are not just passive things. We are more. We are *beings*, *human* beings, *made* in the image of God. Being made in the image of God includes much more than I will (or even can) mention, but for our purposes it includes having thoughts, ideas, passions, desires, and a will of our own.

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Because these abilities in their current condition (i.e. before renewal) no longer lead us toward God's will, we do not have the ability to direct our own transformation. We need someone who is not "conformed to the pattern of this world," one who is completely conformed to the will of God, to direct the renewal. And because we are in this pre-renewal condition, we need someone to initiate, to enable us, and encourage us to continue the process, someone who is not subject to the same problems our condition allows. Who is better to direct than God? Who is better to enable and encourage than God? There is none better suited to the task than the Holy Spirit. That we are partnering with him is good news indeed!

With the initiating, enabling, and direction of the Holy Spirit, the process of renewal can begin. It is a two-stage process: the *appropriation of the truth* and the *application of truth-directed behavior*. The first stage, the *appropriation of the truth* takes place when:

1. we have the desire to pursue the Truth to be changed;
2. we then act upon that desire, choosing to pursue the Truth by setting our will.

The second stage, the *application of truth-directed behavior* takes place when:

1. we begin practicing behaviors, which we'll describe as spiritual disciplines, designed to halt our conformity to "the pattern of this world;"
2. we engage in transformational activities, which are designed to reorient our mind and direct it toward God's will;
3. we continue to practice transformational activities to introduce and establish new patterns of thinking and behavior which conforms our mind to the mind of Christ.

The same components in the process for renewing the mind that we gleaned from the Apostle Paul can also be seen in Jesus' call to anyone who would follow him.

Jesus commanded to all who would follow him (i.e. all disciples) to:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls ([Matthew 11:28-29](#))

²⁸*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

²⁹*Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*)

Jesus begins with a promise, "Come...and I will give you rest." [Matthew 11:28](#) (*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*) He kindles a desire to follow him. This is the first step in *the appropriation of truth*, the *desire* to pursue the Truth.

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We *desire* change. Next Jesus' command to take His yoke. This is the second step in the *appropriation of truth, choosing* to pursue the truth.

We set our *will* to change - [Eph. 4:23-24](#) (

²³*And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;*

²⁴*And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.)*

At this step, we can choose to pursue our desire for the truth and change or ignore it. If we choose to delay placing it upon our shoulders it is at the cost of rest to our souls. The choice precedes the action. Next, we read that we are to take His yoke.

To take His yoke is the first step of the second stage in the process of renewing the mind, the *application of truth-directed behavior*. At this step, as we saw before with Paul, we discontinue with our current ways, which conform us to the pattern of this world. We intentionally begin to dislodge the destructive patterns which have grown in us as a precursor to the second step, the taking-upon of a new way, God's way, His yoke.

The second step, the taking-upon of Jesus' yoke - [Phil. 2:5](#) (*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*) , is the part of the process of renewing the mind where the vacancy left from dislodging our old ways, "*the pattern of this world*," is being filled up with the new life-giving patterns by which we are to conform our lives - [Rom. 6:4](#) (*Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*) . It is this yoke, God's new way of living the life that Jesus lived, that is to be taken upon us. Just as the yoke for an oxen is placed upon its body, allowing the power of the oxen to perform its master's work (work the oxen would otherwise not be able to accomplish), so also Jesus' yoke must be placed upon our body to allow it to perform our Master's work, the renewing of our mind (work we would otherwise not be able to accomplish). [1 Pet. 1:13](#) – (*Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;*).

Finally, we see the third, and last step, in the *application of truth-directed behavior*. This is the final step in the process of renewal, but it is also the beginning step in the ongoing process of our spiritual transformation. It finally brings us all the way to our taking Jesus' yoke upon us. It also begins the continuing journey of knowing and doing God's good, pleasing, and perfect will.

While the second step trains the mind through establishing patterns, the third step lives out the new character that has replaced the old - [Jer 17:10](#). (*I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.*) This continuing journey begins once we take His yoke upon us. [1 Pet. 1:13](#) - (*Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;*) For then we begin to "learn from me [Jesus]" and thereby experience rest for our soul. This rest, this peacefulness that comes from learning from Jesus,

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is what it is to live with a renewed mind. It is experiencing the Spirit initiated, encouraged, enabled, and empowered life Jesus enjoyed with the peace that comes only by having the “mind of Christ” and by accomplishing his good, pleasing, and perfect will.

Experience the Life provides the disciple a structured process whereby he can engage in the process of spiritual renewal. *It* provides a daily regimen for practicing specific disciplines designed to displace those old destructive ideas and behaviors (i.e. “the patterns of the world) and replacing them with new, constructive, life-giving ideas and behaviors (i.e. the mind of Christ).

Experience the Life requires commitment to consistently practice the disciplines and to reserve the time required for transformation.

Most studies on change agree that displacing a current habit or idea and establishing a new one requires a minimum of about three months. Also, learning studies demonstrate the necessity of consistent application of the thing being learned to ensure its permanent retention.

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According to a leading learning researcher, people remember:

10% of what they read

20% of what they hear

30% of what they see

50% of what they see and hear

70% of what they say

95% of what they teach someone else

Simply put, we learn best not by passively hearing and seeing, but by actively “doing” the thing which we are learning.

The most relevant question a teacher can ask is, “Are my students learning?” For our purposes, the relevant question must be, “Am I engaged in a process that will result in my being changed from what I am into what I am to be? Am I being transformed into the image of Christ?”