

And we proclaim Him (Christ in you, the hope of glory), warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect (complete) in Christ Jesus.

## THE RENEWING OF THE MIND: God's Truth Shaping How We Think

*"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God"* (Romans 12:1-2)

God directs us in Romans 12:2 to *"be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* This touches upon another crucial foundational truth for counseling God's way. The renewing of the mind is a biblical issue that should be given consistent attention in Christian living and personal ministry. This involves learning to think God's way, whereas we had formerly filled our minds with man's way of thinking. Without this truth, our lives and the lives we minister to cannot be increasingly changed into what God wants them to be. Conversely, as believers grow in this transforming work of God, the impact can be experienced simultaneously in multiple arenas of spiritual development.

### The Need for Minds to be Renewed

The stark description of the unredeemed mind in Ephesians 4:17-19 shows us why human minds so desperately need to be renewed. *"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to licentiousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."*

These accurate phrases depict humans who exist without a knowledge of God: *"The futility of their mind . . . having their understanding darkened . . . alienated from the life of God . . . the ignorance that is in them . . . the hardening of their heart . . . past feeling . . . given over to licentiousness . . . to work all uncleanness with greediness."* This is what characterized our thinking before we came to Jesus Christ. Our reasonings were vain and empty. There was no spiritual enlightenment in our comprehensions. We were isolated from God's life, from whence alone comes all true insight. We had dwelling within us an intrinsic spiritual ignorance. The inner core of our being was resistant to the things of the kingdom of heaven. We were calloused to the convicting work of the Spirit of God. Our lives were committed to indulgence, without godly restraint. With covetous motivations we plunged into profane pursuits. All of this emphatically indicates the desperate need we all have to find a new way of thinking, once we come to Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

As new creatures in Christ, we must deal with all that was pumped into our physical brain by the old man that we once were in Adam. Memories from the old life, logged in our brain, can influence our perspectives now. Values and priorities, learned in the days before Jesus became our Lord and Master, tend to cloud our evaluations, as we consider how to please and serve Christ

today. Wandering thoughts can easily drift into the unwholesome areas of worldly thinking developed over years of existing here on earth without Christ in our lives.

It is as though the previous tenant, our old man in Adam, painted the walls of our brain with gross, self-centered, flesh-indulgent murals. Then, we are born again and begin to live in the dwelling place of this physical tent, and we sense a radical need to do some major redecorating. These mental murals urgently need to be repainted. They are repainted as we increasingly and comprehensively are learning to think God's way in all matters that we address.

### Renewed Spirit of the Mind

One aspect of our minds that needs renewing is the general mind-set. In Ephesians 4:23 we are told to *"be renewed in the spirit of your mind."* The spirit of our mind involves the basic framework of our thinking, the basic disposition or focus or overall controlling perspective of our minds. This is a good place to begin in having our minds restored to their proper condition, that is, in having our minds functioning as God intended.

Contrasting examples can help us see what the Lord might want to do here. The spirit of some folk's mind is very skeptical concerning the things of God, while others are essentially open to learn the truth about Him. The basic disposition of mind in some people is that they admit only that God exists, while others are eager to know Him and respond to Him. The mind-set that God desires us to have includes both the acknowledgment that He exists as well as the yearning to become one who wants to love Him with all of our being. Any other *"spirit of the mind"* needs to be renewed unto this framework that pleases God.

Often, in personal ministry and counseling, the real problem that a person needs to deal with is not the narrow circumstance or issue that is dominating their attention. Rather, they need to give consideration to a renewing of their entire mental framework, the *"spirit of their mind."* When the overall controlling perspective of our mind is wrong, our perception of every individual matter of thinking will be clouded. The great theme verses of Proverbs come to bear at this point. *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction"* (Proverbs 1:7). *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding"* (Proverbs 9:10).

Unless the *"spirit of our mind,"* our basic mental disposition, includes a respectful, reverent acknowledging of the Lord God Almighty, we cannot even begin to operate by any real knowledge and wisdom.

### Renewing of All of the Mind

In Romans 12:1-2, the Lord takes the range of this subject far beyond the important issue of our mind-set and on into the entire scope of any and all of our thinking. *"I beseech you therefore,*

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*brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."*

Yes, we need to be renewed in the spirit of our minds. Yet further, we need every aspect of our minds renewed. *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* No limiting terms are introduced here. God's renewing work is to deal with the entire mind.

### Avoiding Conformity to This World

Followers of the Lord Jesus Christ are not to have their thinking pressured and molded and shaped by the world, by man's ways. *"Do not be conformed to this world."* This single, solitary injunction should be enough in itself to prevent the Lord's church from patterning any of her counseling after the ideas of human psychological theoreticians.

Of course, this command is much larger than the issue of how we counsel. This command would cover every area of a person's thinking, as well as how one's thinking shapes all of life in general. Those who are in the world, separated from Christ and His truth, have their lives molded by the thoughts of the world. Christians are not only to be avoiding worldly patterns of thinking and living, we are also to be undergoing a transformation of life from the old ways of man to the new ways of God.

### Being Transformed

Instead of having the world shape us by external pressures, we are to have our lives made increasingly and genuinely new by the renewing of our minds. This process is an internal working of God. It involves the Lord giving us, through His word by the work of His Holy Spirit, an entirely new way to think. Then, the more we learn to think the Lord's way in all areas of life, to that degree we have our lives transformed. In this process, God is developing within us a new heavenly set of understandings and values and priorities and resources for living.

Sadly, many Christians never seem to have their lives significantly changed. They continue to live much like they did when they were dead in trespasses and sins. They still live by their wits. They still have a self-made life. Their confidence is not in God, but rather in themselves. Why is this so? The answer is right here in our present text. Such Christians are not having their minds renewed. They are still holding onto and living by too many of their old ways of thinking. Consequently, they generally persist in talking and acting and deciding much like they had typically done before.

Another question is in order. Why are some Christians not having their minds renewed? Again, our text offers the necessary insight. Such stagnant lives are not in the spiritual place where minds get renewed.

### Living Sacrifices

The preceding verse indicates the spiritual setting in which minds can be made new. *"Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God."* It is in lives that are on the altar of God that

the renewing of the mind will be occurring. Many believers wrongly consider that the title to ownership of their lives is rightly their own. They are unaware of, or have not responded to, the truth of 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. *"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."*

God redeemed our lives by the precious blood of His dear Son. We now belong to the Lord. When we view our lives as our own, we do not pursue earnestly after the mind of the Lord. We are willing to settle for a life directed by our own understanding. When we acknowledge God's ownership of our lives, we have a yearning to know what He desires to do with this life that is really His, and not ours.

Yet another question is now warranted. Why is it that some Christians are not placing their lives on the altar of God, agreeing with Him about His ownership of their very existence? Once more, our text suggests the answer. They may be unaware of the appropriate biblical appeal that makes the altar of God the only spiritually reasonable place to lay down our lives.

### The Mercies of God

God's appeal to us to become living sacrifices unto Him is based upon His great mercies. *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God."* Throughout eleven chapters of this powerful epistle, the Lord unfolds His glorious mercies toward those who only deserve condemnation and judgment. An understanding of, and appreciation for God's kind and gracious dealings with us are what stirs our hearts to present our lives to Him.

In Chapter One, God's mercy is seen in *"the gospel of Christ,"* which is *"the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes"* (verse 16). In Chapter Two, His mercy is inferred through a piercing question: *"Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?"* (verse 4). Chapter Three adds the merciful work of the Lord in His providing justification for us *"freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"* (verse 24).

God's merciful ways are revealed in Chapter Four by linking together faith and grace and the promises of God. *"Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed."* The redeemed, trusting heart can thereby rest in complete certainty regarding the promises of the Lord's saving work on his behalf.

Chapter Five is overflowing with heavenly declarations of the mercy of God. *"We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand"* (verses 1-2). *"The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us"* (verse 5). *"For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ"* (verse 17). *"But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more"* (verse 20). This one chapter alone offers divine, undeserved provisions for peace with God, access to grace, hearts

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filled with love, victory for living, and sufficient grace to cover (and to recover from) abounding sin!

In Chapter Six, further mercies are proclaimed, concerning freedom from the domination of sin: *“For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace”* (verse 14). In Chapter Seven, God’s mercy holds forth more freedom from the law: *“But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter”* (verse 6).

Chapter Eight stands out bold and rich in describing the mercies of God. *“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death”* (verse 2). *“For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son . . . that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit”* (verses 3-4). *“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you”* (verse 11). *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”* (verse 18). *“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose”* (verse 28). *“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”* (verse 32). *“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (verse 38-39).

In Chapters Nine through Eleven, God’s mercy is proclaimed in His faithfulness toward Israel, His stubborn and stiff-necked people. *“Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame”* (9:33). *“All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people”* (10:21). *“The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob”* (11:26).

Only after an extended elaboration of God’s glorious mercies toward all who believe is the appeal given to respond appropriately.

### Your Reasonable Service

Since God has been so merciful to us, the only spiritually reasonable thing to do is to say, “Lord, here is my life; it is yours to use as You please.” No other response makes any sense at all. Nonetheless, we cannot coerce people to lay their lives upon the altar of God. We cannot effectively badger them to such a commitment of their lives. The motivation that softens the heart unto this necessary abandonment to the Lord is the reality of His compelling mercies toward us.

This is the type of life that undergoes a continual renewing of the mind. This is the person that has a passion to know how to think God’s way more and more in every matter. Consequently, this is the Christian who will be experiencing transformation of life, increasingly being brought unto line with the will of God.

### Demonstrations of God’s Will

For too many believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, the will of God becomes of interest only in times of difficulty or dilemma. Now, it is a wonderful thing when anyone at any time becomes concerned about God’s will. However, there is a far better path available than a sporadic chasing after the will of God from crisis to crisis. Our lives can actually become a day-by-day demonstration of that divine will.

The sequence that leads to such a delightful result is laid out here. First, the heart is touched by the magnitude of the mercies of God. Next, that worshipping life is placed upon the altar of God for His use and His glory. Then, the renewing of the mind can consistently proceed, as that person seeks to know what God wants to do with his life. More and more that life undergoes spiritual transformation, as his thinking is made increasingly like the Lord’s. The result is a life that day-by-day proves, or demonstrates, *“what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”*

### Conclusion and Warning

Many a person who is seeking a word of counsel from a family member or a friend or a church leader or a pastor needs to discover what God has provided for producing necessary changes in their lives. This means that they would benefit immeasurably from a consideration of this foundational truth about the renewing of the mind.

However, we should be alert to, and be ready to alert others about, counseling which sounds somewhat like the renewing of the mind, but is actually just a psychological mind game. One popular example of this would be the attempt to heal memories by visualizing Jesus entering into our bad memories and dealing with the situation and/or comforting us back there in the midst of it.

Such counseling approaches are often held forth as Christian, but are based upon a psychological mind-set. Trying to manipulate reality or develop it through the powers of our imagination involves drawing upon the resources of the flesh. This does not produce Christlikeness. Rather, it strengthens the self-life instead of considering it as dead.

Instead of humanistic groping through “backwards imagining,” the Lord desires to deal with us today. He wants to touch us in the reality of our present living. He intends for us to think as He thinks about any past memories, any present experiences, and any future concerns. He wants to teach us to trust in Him now and to follow Him today. He is aiming at renewing our minds currently, by helping us to think His way in every arena of life.

{This article on Christian living and personal discipleship is excerpted from our book on *How to Counsel God’s Way.*}



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**Messages from our Ministry Friends**  
 ~for the glory of God and the encouragement of His people~

**Subject: Loved Your “Counseling God’s Way” Book**

Loved the counseling book! Thank you so much from someone who believed lies for so long! I have my Master’s degree in social work, so I was taught and believed many lies. But the truth has set me free! (I am now home-schooling my three children.)

*Overseas Military Family, Pacific Region*

**Subject: Biblical Counseling Inspiration**

I hope you remember me; you were a real inspiration for me; if you recall I relocated to (Southern California) after hearing several of your “Counseling God’s Way” segments on the radio. I was on your website this evening while researching biblical counseling and remembered your “Counseling God’s Way” series; it was great. I’m becoming increasingly interested in counseling training. I’m going to review the resources on your website. Grace and peace,

*Brother in Christ, Internet*

**Subject: Praise the Lord for LICM Radio**

Dearest Brother, the work you are doing is 100% invaluable. I was born again 5 years ago. I was blessed to have a job where I could listen to the radio at work, so I’ve been listening daily for 5 years now. The Holy Spirit came and got me late in life. I sadly regret that, but God is making up for those lost years by letting me hear your teaching daily. I am so blessed that He uses you to teach me. I am so thankful that our radio station has stuck to teaching the Word, Monday through Friday during my working hours (KWVE). I pray that He keeps you in the Word, in integrity and His Truth and that in doing so that He can bless your ministry financially so that you keep reaching the whole world. Thank you for being available for Him to use to teach all of us out here in “radio land.”

*Sister in Jesus, California*

**Subject: Thank You for Focusing on Christ (Tasmania)**

I’m encouraged to find Christians on the web that know something about “living in Christ” and being strengthened by Him daily to do the works that God has planned in advance for us. I live on an island at the bottom of Australia called Tasmania. In a town of 90 people, God is here! I’ve finally found the rest and victory that I had for so long sought. And it’s simply in trusting that what God said is true, even for me. I just wanted to write and say thanks for teaching the truth.

*Brother in Christ, Tasmania*

**Subject: Thank God for “Day by Day by Grace” (Tanzania)**

Dear Brother Bob Hoekstra, Praise the Lord our God and Jesus Christ our Savior. I thank God for the Ministry he has given you to minister to people’s hearts. With every opportunity I have been reading your “Day by Day by Grace” messages in the Blue Letter Bible and most times these messages have spoken to me in a very special and a personal way. In many cases the messages have spoken to my current situation and complemented what the Spirit led me to read earlier in my morning prayer. I’m a Tanzanian! May God continue blessing you and the ministry He has given you.

*Sister in Christ, Tanzania*

**Subject: Blessed at Bible College**

As a Bible College graduate – I sure enjoyed and was blessed by your teaching.

*Former Student, Oklahoma*

**LICM Radio Schedule:**

**Monday through Friday (Quarter-Hour format):**

KWVE	Southern California (107.9 FM)	10:00am
KRTM	Murrieta, CA (88.9 FM)	10:00am
KGPS	Kingman, AZ (97.1 FM)	10:00am
KLWG	Lompoc, CA (88.1 FM)	7:45am, 9:30pm
KGDM	Merced, CA (105.5 FM)	10:30am
KHJC	Lihue, Kauai, HI (88.9 FM)	6:15pm
KRTK	Pocatello, ID (1490 AM)	5am, 11am, 9pm
WQKO	Howe, IN (91.9 FM)	10:00am
WWCC	Lafayette, IN (97.3 FM)	2:45am
WJCX	Bangor, ME (99.5 FM)	11:00am
WFGL	Fitchburg, MA (960 AM)	9:00am, 8:15pm
KNIF	Scottsbluff, NE (107.9 FM)	3am, 4pm, 11pm
WZXV	Finger Lakes, NY (99.7 FM)	11:15am
WTLL	Zainesville, OH (98.9 FM)	6:00am, 11:00am
KHRB	Harrisburg, OR (92.3 FM)	6:00am, 12:00pm
KKJC	McMinnville, OR (96.3 FM)	11:15am, 6:15pm
KDKR	Dallas, TX (91.3 FM)	1:00pm, 7:00pm

**Saturday and/or Sunday (Half-Hour format):**

KGPS	Kingman, AZ (97.1 FM)	Sun. 11:00am
KGMS	Tucson, AZ (940 AM)	Sat. 7:30am; Sun. 3:30pm
KVOI	Tucson, AZ (690 AM)	Sat. 4:30pm; Sun. 5:30am 3:30pm
WLVN	Heartland, GA (97.1 FM)	Sat. 9:00am, 4:00pm
KHJC	Lihue, Kauai, HI (88.9 FM)	Sat. 5:00am
KTWD	Wallace, ID	Sat. and Sun. 8:00am
WVLN	Olney, IL (740 AM)	Sat. 9am, 4pm; Sun. 5pm
WWCC	Lafayette, IN (97.3 FM)	Sat/Sun 12:30am, 4:30am, 6am, 9:30am, 2:30pm
KRSS	Tarkio, MO (93.5 FM)	Sat. 6:30am
KYHW	Gardnerville, NV(94.7 FM)	Sat. 5:30am 1:30pm 9:30pm
WRDR	Old Bridge, NJ (89.7FM; 103.1FM)	Sun. 12:30pm
KDKR	Dallas, TX (91.3 FM)	Sat. 9:30pm, Sun. 6:30pm
KKRS	Spokane, WA (97.3 FM)	Sat. and Sun. 8:00am
CRN	(nationally - details on Calvary Radio Network website)	

**SOME UPDATES FOR LICM WEBSITE:**

- A variety of new studies added to the website
- A new Online Donation Page now on the website
- Weekly Staff Devotions in archives on the website
- Ministry Schedule is on the Prayer Calendar page