

The Romans 12:2 Way to Totally Transform Your Thinking

Our heads get us into trouble. Feelings get triggered by anything and everything, and some of us are more diligent about managing our feelings than others. Our thoughts follow long-standing habit patterns that may not always serve us well. Thoughts and feelings can seem difficult to control. But God wants the transformation of your mind. It's what He calls us to. So how can you experience that?

Think of Jesus here on earth. He experienced all the temptations you and I do. He felt all the human feelings we have: sadness, loneliness, fatigue, joy, even anger. But can you imagine Him ever wasting time on worry, playing around with lustful images in His mind or nursing bitterness against someone who mistreated Him?

Clearly, we have a problem. Our minds are not like Jesus' mind right now, but we are called to have the "mind of Christ." (1 Cor. 2:16b). How do we get there?

The foundational Scripture this idea comes from is one you may have read or heard many times: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2). *Renewing* sounds like a process, one we must continue to engage in.

I know my thoughts and feelings are dramatically different than when I was trapped in my dysfunction 20 years ago. Here are some principles that explain how you can experience lasting transformation of your mind too.

GI-GO

In my high school computer class (I'm about to date myself), we were taught "garbage in, garbage out." Hence, GI-GO. If the holes in one of those 80-column paper punch cards weren't perfect, the program wouldn't run. And if you know anything about coding now, put one "<" or "/" out of place, and things go wonky.

Your mind works the same way. If you want the output of positive, godly, courageous, kind and helpful thoughts and emotions, it would be smart to pay attention to the kind of input you allow into your mind. That's not a new idea; you've probably heard preachers talk about Philippians 4:8 countless times. But what isn't talked about quite as much is how dramatically your thoughts and feelings can change based on what input you allow.

Research demonstrates the positive power of intentionally choosing gratitude every day. You can intentionally develop creativity and happiness. Three minutes of negative news can lower your effectiveness and happiness for hours. This kind of research relatively easily demonstrates the impact of the kind of input you allow into your mind. And God knew this all along; He created our minds, after all.

So examine the social media, magazines, music, TV shows and every other kind of input you allow into your mind. If you need to change your thoughts and feelings, changing what you feed your mind is a great place to start.

People Make a Difference

Jim Rohn famously said, "You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with." You are likely to display similar values, financial success, religious and political views, level of positivity and so forth as that of the people you hang out with the most.

Jesus did not spend His time equally with everyone. You too have a choice of what kind of people you allow to influence you. Some people drag you down simply by being in their presence; limit your time around them. Others lift you up and draw out the best in you; invest often in these kinds of relationships.

Yes, we are called to be a positive godly influence in a dark world. But pay attention to the kind of people you allow closest to you. Especially if you are struggling with negative or ungodly thoughts and feelings, look at your friends. Ensure that those you spend the most time with are the kind of people you want to be more like, who are going after the same godly things you desire.

Soak in God's Word

Prior to marrying my husband Al, I spent months soaking in Song of Solomon. I lost count of how many times I read and pondered the messages in that book prior to my marriage. Doing so dramatically changed my emotional and spiritual preparedness for the intimacy of marriage. After Al's death, I marinated in Paul's treatise on death and resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, and that greatly impacted my grief journey.

Following a prescribed Bible reading plan is fine. And I believe all of us should regularly read through the whole Bible. But when facing a challenge such as fear, bitterness, poor self-image, lack of courage, lust, money troubles, grief, worry, marriage conflict or any number of other issues, delving deeply into God's Word in a specific area can make a huge difference.

God's Word changes you if you spend enough time there. I'm not talking about five minutes on your way out the door in the morning, though that's better than not opening the Bible at all. I'm talking about an extended time of letting the bone-and-marrow-splitting power of Scripture penetrate your soul,

wash out the junk and fill it to overflowing with God's truth and grace. (See Heb. 4:12).

If your mind needs transformation, if you need different thoughts and feelings, you can get there. Pay attention to the media, the people and the Scripture you take in, and the output your mind produces will be transformed.

Your Turn: *What change do you need in your thoughts and feelings? Do you need to make any changes in the media, people or scriptural input you allow into your mind? Leave a comment below.* {eoa}

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