



THE ART OF RENEWING YOUR MIND

A STUDY ON ROMANS 12:2

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From the Author



For a long time, I didn't realize how powerful the minds God created for us were. I mean, I suppose it makes sense seeing that a little germ of evil thought can turn into an entire world war. But for me, I just believed I *was* what I thought—that I had no control over what popped into my mind, and instead of conquering those thoughts and submitting them to Christ, I allowed them to destroy me.

My prayer is that this book shows you how God's Word helps us to conquer evil via our "strongest muscle," removing distractions, actively listening to God's desire for our hearts, and putting aside our human wants in return for a beautiful future with Creator of the universe.

May your walk with Him become even stronger, my friend.

Yours in Jesus,

Ericka

"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." Romans 12:2

It's taken some deep prayer and quiet listening to write this study. The world is so noisy right now (and to a certain degree, has always been). But it feels more and more like there's a hovering megaphone over the evil in this world that serves to confuse us, dismay us, and more often than not, distract us.

And so just now, as I asked God how I should separate the sections of this study, He very clearly directed me to divide it up based on **Romans 12:2**¹:

- **Section 1 | The Pattern of This World:** We'll use this section to dissect the world we currently live in, the deceptive tactics Satan uses to trap our attention, and meaningful ways we can combat the noise and keep our eyes on Jesus.
- **Section 2 | Transformed by the Renewing of Your Mind:** We'll look at what "renewing of your mind" actually means from a Biblical perspective and how real, tangible transformation can take place in our lives.
- **Section 3 | Test and Approve God's Will:** Once we learn how to renew our minds, we'll be able to test and approve God's will, finally having the discernment and wisdom God has intended for us all along and using it to live our lives in His freedom and out of reach of Satan's deceptive tactics.

This study won't reveal anything new that isn't already completely mapped out in Scripture. And I believe it's important for you to know

1. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%2012%3A2&version=NIV>

that. In a day and age of distractions and "self-help" (a complete oxymoron in my opinion, but I digress), we all need to be turning back to God's pleasing and perfect will that we find outlined in His Word.

So, without further ado, let's dig in!

*Read all of **Romans 12**². Watch **Part I**³ and **Part II**⁴ of the Book of Romans by the Bible Project to get a more complete understanding of the entire book before we move on.*

2. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%2012&version=NIV>

3. https://youtu.be/ej_6dVdJSIU

4. <https://youtu.be/0SVTl4Xa5fY>

Part I: The Pattern of This World

What is the world like?

Before we can keep ourselves from conforming to the pattern of this world, we have to be aware of what this world is really like.

There are good and beautiful things (the things God intended in his original creation), and there are dark things too (the sinful things that have sprung forth from the fall).

Both of these categories are easy to spot, but what seems to be harder to see for most of us are the deceptive things of this world—the things that seem good, or at the very least, benign, and yet? They seem to do the most damage.

Those of us in the Western world would probably put "busyness" on that list. It's not a bad thing to have things to do, but when those things blind us to the brokenness in our homes and hearts, we've taken a turn down a road we were never meant to go down.

In that same category, we could probably put "ambition." For those of us who are from the U.S., we're more than well aware of the American Dream, the idea that anyone can be anything, and ultimately, we should strive to make more money, get better jobs, buy more things, because then? We'll be happy.

And when you break it down, those things aren't in and of themselves bad. More money can take care of our basic needs. A better job can bring security for our families. Things can help us function in our daily lives.

But if we're only focused on possessing, "more, more, more," then we're missing out on what God has already given us.

We fail to be content.

"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:11-13)

Paul points out that joy can be had in any and every situation. And so, if we're blinded by what we "should" be doing based on society's terms (which are often aligned with **the adversary's**¹), then we may be missing out on what God has provided specifically for us.

In the next lesson, we'll learn more about who runs the world.

1. <https://www.gotquestions.org/your-adversary-the-devil.html>

Who rules the world?

When it comes to the dark forces of this world (**Ephesians 6:12**¹), we need to know our enemy.

And it seems that Satan sometimes chooses the least path of resistance. Think of how He fooled Eve. He just needed to quietly whisper in her ear and pose a question that led to the fall of man.

Today, he doesn't even have to ask us anything. He just needs to bombard our online feeds with pictures and videos of things we don't have so we can question God's goodness.

And then he sits back and waits.

The world, then, it seems, is a place where envy and covetousness collide. It's a place where striving for what we want (or better yet, what we think we want) is a common goal, leaving us all depleted, exhausted, and void of Christ's peace.

If we can see the world for what it is—essentially the place where Satan rules (**John 12:31**², **14:30**³, **16:11**⁴, and **2 Corinthians 4:4**⁵)—we then know how to keep our eyes open to his deceptive ways within this world.

We no longer need to be afraid of the world because when we know the truth, we'll be able to conquer it through Jesus, our Lord.

1. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%206%3A12&version=NIV>

2. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2012%3A31&version=NIV>

3. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2014%3A30&version=NIV>

4. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2016%3A11&version=NIV>

5. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%204%3A4&version=NIV>

So, what do we know about Satan, our adversary?

- **1 Peter 5:8⁶**: *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*
- **2 Corinthians 11:14⁷**: *And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.*
- **1 John 3:8⁸**: *Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.*
- **2 Corinthians 11:3⁹**: *But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.*
- **1 John 5:19¹⁰**: *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.*
- **Genesis 3:1¹¹**: *Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”*
- **2 Corinthians 2:11¹²**: *So that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for*

6. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter%205%3A8&version=NIV>

7. <https://www.biblegateway.com/>

[passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%2011%3A14&version=NIV](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%2011%3A14&version=NIV)

8. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John%203%3A8&version=NIV>

9. <https://www.biblegateway.com/>

[passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%2011%3A3&version=NIV](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%2011%3A3&version=NIV)

10. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John%205%3A19&version=NIV>

11. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%203%3A1&version=NIV>

we are not ignorant of his designs.

He is cunning and is coming straight for the space where belief takes root—our minds. So our job? To protect them wholeheartedly and keep our eyes on Jesus.

In the next lesson, we'll take a look at several ways Satan tries to influence us in this current generation.

12. <https://www.biblegateway.com/>

[passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%20%3A11&cversion=NIV](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%20%3A11&cversion=NIV)

How does the adversary influence us?

You know the saying, "You are what you eat"? I think we can all agree that "You are what you think" is much more fitting in this day and age.

We receive information overload through our cell phones, computers, TVs—you name it! And if we're not bombarded online, we're often bombarded in person by somebody who watches Fox News on repeat.

It's...a lot.

Below are just a few places where Satan may be trying to entrap us. And let me be clear. I am in NO WAY saying these things are bad or evil in and of themselves. A lot of good can happen online. BUT if we find ourselves feeling depleted, overwhelmed, not good enough, etc., then chances are we're being fed lies through one of the following channels. And it's up to us to find the source and do something about it.

- **Social media:** Social media can be devastating to our self-worth in so many different ways. We can easily compare ourselves to others. We can be bombarded by viewpoints that don't align with our own, and even worse, feel like we're less than for believing what we do. Not to mention, social media is created to keep us scrolling, distracting us from what truly matters, like our families and the purpose God has given us (time flies when you're trapped watching cat videos ad nauseum). It's safe to say social media is often a hindrance to our relationship with Jesus and can leave us feeling exhausted and not good enough when comparing ourselves to an airbrushed world.
- **AI/Search engines:** The thought of going to a non-human entity for advice seems futuristically frightening, but as we're all aware, the future is now.

Blindly relying on information we gather online or through systems like ChatGPT is a major concern because if we're not discerning what we learn against Scripture, then we're falling prey to what could easily become an idol. It's up to us to pray for wisdom and direction when using such tools and not let the tools take precedence in our lives.

- **Videos:** YouTube (or video streaming in general) is a quick and easy way to deliver informational content, regardless of whether or not that information is actually accurate and worthy of our attention. With the rise of YouTube Shorts and TikTok, we're not only vulnerable to mind-numbing content, but we're also constantly in the practice of shortening our attention spans, greatly lessening our ability to be patient and gentle with others.
- **Music:** Music has certainly seemed to devolve over the years. I once came across a preacher who mentioned that Satan was originally the "**angel of music**"¹ and how ironic it is that many are led astray through music (heads up, this is his interpretation of **Ezekiel 28:13**², and many have contested the meaning of "timbrels and pipes" in this verse, but still, an interesting thought). I know I was a big fan of hardcore rap for many years (yes, I know lol), not realizing how it subverted my understanding of sex and male/female power dynamics. It's too easy to say, "Oh, I just like the beat," without realizing how the words could be corrupting our souls.
- **Podcasts:** I'll admit, this form of content-binging seems a little more innocuous than the others. And maybe because it's offered in a slower, long-form type of delivery. But it can be easy to slip out of discernment and into the lull of somebody else's thoughts. It's essential to remain open to diverse viewpoints. But it's also important to be aware of when our defenses might be slipping, and our values are being reshaped without our consent. I personally love listening to podcasts, but I also have to be aware of when it might be a good time to take a brain break from them.

1. <https://www.gotquestions.org/Satan-music.html>

2. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel%2028%3A13&version=NKJV>

- **Commercials:** If you assessed society's current state based on our commercials alone, you'd believe we were nothing but vapid individuals who are only concerned with our looks and making our lives easier. The amount of makeup, skin care, fancy cars, latest medications, and a deluge of other "necessities" that pop up on our screens is more than concerning. Eventually, we can start to believe we truly do *need* these things to survive, replacing our need for Jesus with an empty promise that never delivers. There's no amount of wrinkle cream in the world that can erase our sin, so when we fall victim to what other people try to sell us, we don't remain victorious in the ever-peaceful presence of Christ.
- **TV/Streaming/Movies:** As with other video content, we have to be careful not to fall victim to another person's agenda. A lot of movies and TV shows reflect specific ideologies, whether we're aware or not. And so, it's important to watch with a firm mind in Christ, knowing who we are in Him and not allowing our thoughts to be reshaped by the powers that be at some production company.
- **People we love:** This one may be the most surprising because we automatically assume the people we love (and who presumably love us) should speak nothing but encouraging words. However, often it's the people we're closest to who end up hurting us the most. Like in **Matthew 16:23**³, Jesus tells Peter to "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man." Peter was not allowing the Spirit to speak when telling Jesus, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you," after Jesus shares that he would be crucified. We have to remember the adversary will use anything and anyone to trip us up, and when we have that in mind, we're able to protect ourselves while still giving grace to those we love.
- **Our own thoughts:** It's evident that Satan knows what buttons to push, and he often does so through our thoughts. There have been a number of

3. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2016%3A23&version=NIV>

times when I'm "thinking" something I'm not actually thinking—a quick image or memory or whispered phrase that is altogether jarring. And that's why we're to take captive each thought to make it obedient to Christ (**2 Corinthians 10:5**⁴). There was a time in my life when I didn't know I could control my thoughts. I was under the impression that my thoughts controlled me, and if we already know that Satan uses our thoughts to tempt and deceive us, then it's a pretty frightening notion that I never attempted to guard my mind. Peter calls Satan "a prowling lion," bent on looking for someone to devour. And infiltrating our thoughts is a great way to do just that. We need to be vigilant in putting on the mind of Christ and keeping what we think safe from the enemy.

Again, I want to be clear here. I'm in no way demonizing the aforementioned points, and in fact, have personally discerned a number of beneficial things from online platforms, TV shows, podcasts, etc. **It's just a matter of knowing if any of these things are causing undue stress in our lives, and if so, what our next step is.** It may be to take a break or step away from them completely. It may be to instill certain guardrails to keep from hijacking our time.

Like Jesus says, "And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell." (Matthew 5:30). And if what we're consuming is having such an impact that we find ourselves on the precipice of sin, then we need to be mindful of how and what we're consuming.

This journal exercise⁵ will help you to reflect on the things of this world that may be currently distracting you. Treat this list not as an admonish-

4. <https://www.biblegateway.com/>

passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%2010%3A5&cversion=NIV

5. https://1drv.ms/b/c/3e8044110998eb33/IQAQY-luNSTNQbRIGVge3jWhAQso_OA4Yi-PIVOTb8Xtl288?e=TSs6vF

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