



21 Days of Prayer & Fasting
Strength / Transformation / Breakthrough

Week 2 Devotional Guide



“Transformation begins with the renewal of the mind. Only surrender to the will of God can change us from the inside out.”



Renew Your Mind

“And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.”

(Romans 12:1-2)

“You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.” This is a timeless expression used to describe people who are so steadfastly committed to what they believe that they cannot – or *will* not – change the way they do things. No matter what you show them, or what evidence you provide that runs contrary to their perspective, they aren’t going to change. They call themselves dedicated. We typically call it being stubborn.

I have been called stubborn for most of my life. I can get so fixed on the way I see things that I sometimes lose sight of what may or may not be true. But on the positive side (and this is a BIG positive!), once I make my mind up about something I am fully committed. I cannot be dissuaded or discouraged away from the decision I have made, and I will stay the course until the job is done, the point is proven, or the outcome is accomplished.

Our minds hold the incredible power to transform us into brand new people. The Apostle Paul wrote about this as he encouraged us to let God change the way we think. This isn’t a passive decision – we have to physically *allow* God to speak to us through His Word (reading our Bibles), through his voice (spending time in prayer), and through His people (when we gather in church to worship together). Spending time with God can lead to incredible transformation if we allow it.

Today, Ask God to show you where you might need to change your mind about some things. As He begins to speak to you, make a list of these things and ask yourself “Am I willing to change my mind?” If the answer is yes, keep praying about how to change. If the answer is no – keep praying about how to change!



Renew your heart

“Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me—now let me rejoice. Don’t keep looking at my sins. Remove the stain of my guilt. Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. Do not banish me from your presence, and don’t take your Holy Spirit from me.”
(Psalm 51:7-11)

If you’ve ever been in a place of deep and dark depression – or misery and heartache, deep-seated anger, even crippling loneliness – then you know how hard it can be to come out of that place. Life can slow to a crawl, smothering your heart in a wet blanket of apathy. Every decision can be agonizing, every thought paralyzing, every moment a struggle to motivate yourself to do almost *anything*. It’s overwhelming and can make you want to give up. I almost did.

I made a total ruin of my life when I was much younger – it happens to be a huge part of my story. At just 23 years old, I was bankrupt, unemployed, divorced and separated from my child, and grieving the loss of my younger brother who had died from a drug overdose. I’m not exaggerating when I say those were the worst days of my life. Most mornings I didn’t want to get out of bed, let alone face the day ahead of me with any kind of hope or encouragement. I was going nowhere, but I hurt everywhere.

I think the most difficult part for me was that I had a relationship with Jesus. It wasn’t very strong, and I was often confused about what it meant to be a Christian. I couldn’t understand: If God was so good, why did my life look so bad?

There is a painful truth I learned during that season. *You can pretend to love someone all you want, but if they don’t have your heart the love isn’t real.* This sounds obvious, right? But how often have you declared your love for God while simultaneously holding back major areas of your life from Him? How many places have you kept “off limits” from God, when He’s the only one that can help?

No matter what your hurt, Jesus wants to walk with you through it. In fact, His word promises that He can renew our hearts and bring us back to that place of happiness, peace, and security. When my life fell apart, much of it was my fault; many things were not, however, and I was angry at God for allowing them to happen. It wasn’t God’s fault, but He was easy to blame. Maybe you can relate to this idea; I think most people can.

Today, ask God to help you look at your heart. Are you holding anything back from Him? Is the pain, anger, or sadness, worth holding on to? Instead, are you willing to let God renew your heart and make things right with Him again?



Renew your vision

“‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ says the Lord. ‘They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me. I will be found by you,’ says the Lord. ‘I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes. I will gather you out of the nations where I sent you and will bring you home again to your own land.’”

(Jeremiah 29:11-14)

For my ninth birthday, my parents got me tickets to see a professional wrestling show. I was ecstatic! I had been watching championship wrestling with my siblings every Friday night for as long as I could remember (admittedly not *that* long) and couldn’t wait to see the show live. Unfortunately, that never really happened.

Now, I don’t want to misrepresent. I still went to Arco Arena in Sacramento, CA to attend the show. But just two days prior I had been roughhousing with my little brother, perfecting some of the breathtaking moves that I was sure to see that weekend. I had terrible eyesight; I’d worn glasses since I was about five years old, and I knew better than to set my glasses on the ground when I took them off – especially when I was wrestling! But that’s exactly what I did, and it ended with a smashed pair of eyeglasses and a trip to the optometrist.

When the big night came, I was devastated. All around me I could hear the excitement of the crowd and saw glimpses of color and bright flashes of light. But I was severely nearsighted and everything around me was a blur. Life that night was moving full speed, but to me everything was out of focus. No matter how hard I squinted, I couldn’t tell what was going on. Have you ever felt that way?

I believe this is something we can all relate to. Life moves fast, and some days it seems like all we can do to just keep up, let alone have a good handle on what is happening. Just like some of us need to visit the eye doctor and renew our prescription (on a regular basis!), so too do we *all* need to renew the spiritual vision that God gives. This vision is the plan He has for all of us, and it’s special for each of us individually.

God’s word tells us that He wants to give us this special plan, but that we need to intentionally seek Him out. We need to ask Him specifically to give us this vision, and we need to do it regularly – a kind of “spiritual checkup.”

Today, ask God to check your vision. Do you know what He wants from you, or is it a blur? If you can see it clearly, thank Him for showing you. If you cannot, then ask Him to bring it all in to focus. In either case, be sure to schedule regular checkups with God.

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Rethink your priorities

“You know that from the day I set foot in the province of Asia until now I have done the Lord’s work humbly and with many tears. I have endured the trials that came to me from the plots of the Jews. I never shrank back from telling you what you needed to hear, either publicly or in your homes. I have had one message for Jews and Greeks alike—the necessity of repenting from sin and turning to God, and of having faith in our Lord Jesus.

“And now I am bound by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. I don’t know what awaits me, except that the Holy Spirit tells me in city after city that jail and suffering lie ahead. But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God.”

(Acts 20:18-24)

The Apostle Paul was absolutely clear on what His priorities were: his only desire was to be used by Jesus; everything else was simply peripheral. “But that’s easy,” you might say. “He had no wife, no family, no serious responsibilities to distract him. Besides, times were much simpler then!” Many of these statements are true. However, it’s all a matter of perspective.

Paul was highly trained and among the most educated and accomplished of his peers. He was “at the top of his game,” in his career, and had few rivals with regards to his talent or his intellect. Everything he did he excelled at, and he was driven constantly to do even more. But in the blink of an eye – quite literally! – everything changed for Paul.

While en route to a city called Damascus, where he was intent on arresting and killing more Christians, Paul was struck blind by Jesus. Paul was given a new mission, a new directive, a new set of priorities; he responded in obedience, never looking back. He became a devoted servant of Christ, the author of almost half of the New Testament, and was eventually killed for his belief in the Gospel – all because he allowed Jesus to change his priorities.

For most of us, our change won’t be quite that dramatic. We all have things in our lives that seem important: spouses, children, jobs, homes, relationships – all of these things matter to us, and they *should*. But the question is “Do they matter more than Jesus?” Would we be willing to give any of them up for the call of Christ, to sacrifice them in order to serve Him? For some, the immediate response is “No way!” A few might say “Yes Lord, of course.” But for most of us, the answer is likely “I don’t know.”

Today, take a few minutes to evaluate your priorities. What is most important to you? Would you be able to repeat the words of the Apostle Paul with conviction: “my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus.” If not, are you willing to let Him change your heart?



Rethink your relationships

“Don’t team up with those who are unbelievers. How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness? What harmony can there be between Christ and the devil? How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever? And what union can there be between God’s temple and idols? For we are the temple of the living God.”
(2 Corinthians 6:14-16)

Do you remember your first heartbreak? I do, and I think most everyone does. I was dating a girl from my college Bible study group, and I was convinced she was “the one.” I was so convinced, in fact, that I was devastated the day I heard the Lord tell me – very clearly, I might add – “No, not her. She’s meant for someone else, and so are you.” I argued and fought and bargained with God, but it was no use. With a heavy heart, I broke things off; immediately, however, I felt the relief that God gives when we stay true to His will.

So why did it happen again?

I had moved to a new city and was working for a Christian school, which fit perfectly with my career goals: I wanted to be the world’s greatest youth pastor. In fact, I would work a few hours in the morning, head to my Bible college classes for several hours, then trek back to work for another shift. They were long days, but I was chasing my dreams, and loving every minute of it. But then, it happened again – I fell in love.

The difference this time was that I didn’t ask God for His blessing. I didn’t want to because the girl I was dating wasn’t a believer, and I knew exactly what His Word said about that. *How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever?* They can’t, and my disobedience cost me greatly. I pursued someone I was never supposed to be with, pretending that I could somehow lead her to Jesus. It’s a tactic many people try, but it usually ends the way it did for me: misery. She became pregnant, I dropped out of Bible college, and three years later we were divorced, and I had to see my son on weekends.

There comes a point in our lives where we have to evaluate our partnerships with other people. Being “unequally yoked” isn’t exclusive to marriage – it’s any relationship that requires worthwhile investment. If Jesus isn’t a shared value, it’s not a relationship God wants us in. If this sounds difficult, just consider the alternative: stepping outside of God’s will with intentional disobedience. The consequences can be painful; I have suffered mine for almost 20 years.

Today’s task will be challenging. Ask God to show you the relationships in your life that are not honoring to Him...and then ask for the strength to end them. It won’t be easy, but if Jesus knows what’s best for us – *who* is best for us – it will be worth it.



Rethink your perspective

“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.”

(Phil 4:6-9)

I am one of the world’s biggest worriers. I can lay awake at night stressing over every single detail of situations, conversations, relationships – you name it, I can obsess over it. I used to wonder why I behaved this way; I chalked it up to being “the way I’m wired” and used that as an excuse to continue doing so. I call it being careful, but there’s another term for it: *control*.

When I fixate on all the things in my life that need attention, I’m replacing my faith in God with faith in myself: faith to handle problems on my own, or faith to make the best possible decisions for myself. In doing so, I am telling myself that I know better than God does. This is a natural result (read: consequence) of fixating my mind on all the wrong things, rather than the right ones. When all I do is worry, I take control of things. When I take control from God, things go badly.

However, when I decide to trust God and follow the instructions His Word gives me, things look drastically different. Rather than thinking about all the things that are wrong or stressing about all the things I need to fix, I instead turn my mind to what the Bible says are things “excellent and worthy of praise.”

What are these things? Look at verse eight above: things that are *true* (not the stories or situations I play over and again in my mind); *honorable* (is what consumes my thoughts worthy of honor and respect?); *right* (it’s fairly simple, when we consider this elementary rhyme: “right is right and wrong is wrong, the two will never get along”); *pure* (devoid of corruption or perversity); *lovely* (what the dictionary terms “delightful” or “highly pleasing”); *admirable* (is what I dwell on worthy of admiration from God’s perspective?).

When I force my mind to stay focused on these things, I relinquish control from my own actions and reactions and place things back into the hands of Jesus – where they belong. What’s more, God promises peace “which exceeds anything we can understand.”

Today, ask God to help turn your thoughts from anxiety and control to surrender and peace. It will be difficult, but He will help you!



Recommit Your Life

No matter what road you've walked, or how far off the path you may have gotten, you are never too far for God to reach you. Take a few moments to read this beautiful story of a child who ran far from his father, only to be welcomed back with open arms. Then read the prayer below it and ask God – your Heavenly Father – to bring you back to Him.

The Parable of the Lost Son - Luke 15:11-32

“There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

“Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

“When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

“The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

“But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.”

Lord, I need to find my way back to you. It doesn't matter how far I've gone – or how close I think I am – I need to be with you. Jesus, I recommit my life to you now, and ask that you would transform me into a brand-new person. I am willing to renew, rethink, and recommit all of me. Take everything, Jesus, and use it for your Name. Amen.