

DAY 1 - (week beginning Mon 18 Feb 2019)**Read - Romans 12:1-2**

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” v 2

This verse from Romans is the theme verse for our current series on Renewing the Mind. It is an amazingly powerful verse because it says that our lives can be ‘transformed’ simply by changing the way our mind works.

Our mind is where we think, feel and decide and so it is where our outlook on life and the world around us affects the choices we make in life.

The best example in the Bible is in Numbers 13 and 14 where the Israelites, after escaping from Egypt under the leadership of Moses, come to the river Jordan to cross into the Promised Land. They send 12 spies, one from each tribe, to go and explore the land.

These twelve young men, who all grew up under slavery in Egypt; all saw the miracles of the plagues; all crossed the Red Sea on dry land; all were brought up in the same Jewish tradition – yet they return with two very different outlooks.

10 are afraid of the people who live there, but 2 (Joshua and Caleb) trust in God and know that God will give them victory. The nation faces a choice, and they choose to go with the 10. As a result of this choice they wander in the desert for 40 years, and all die off, before their descendants finally reach the Promised Land.

One choice can make a huge difference in our lives. A renewed mind can transform our lives! Have you been wandering in the desert?

Prayer: Father help me to think like You.

DAY 2**Read - John 1:35-42**

“Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter).” v 42

Two weeks ago, we looked how we need to change the way we look at ourselves and rather see ourselves the way God sees us.

The Peter we see in the gospels is not a very inspiring character: he seems to blurt out the wrong things at the wrong times; he often doesn’t understand Jesus; and then he denies knowing Jesus at the end. Not what we would pick as a leader.

But Jesus sees something we don’t see in Peter and so He says to him: Other people call you Simon, but I will call you Peter because you are a rock and on you I will build my church. It took Peter a while to see that for himself but when he did, he proved he was the right choice to see the church through those difficult early years.

We need to see what Jesus sees in us, because it will transform us and our lives. What does Jesus call you – not what others do, nor what you call yourself, but something loving and special.

Last week, we saw that just like the wise and foolish builders (Matt 7:24-27) difficult times will come to all of us. But like the wise builder, we can withstand those trials if our house is built on a good foundation. This needs to be done before the storm comes, and is done when we prepare for the storms, not naively thinking that all will be easy once we become a Christian.

Prayer: Father please guide me into having a sensible outlook on life – Your outlook.

DAY 3**Read - John 10:1-18**

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” v 10

This week we look at another area of our lives where we need to learn to think differently and make better choices.

Jesus said that He came to earth so that we might have real life, ‘abundant life’ as some translations have it. The Christian life is not meant to be a life of drudgery and hoping that we get to heaven as soon as possible. It is Jesus’ intention that we should experience real life, right here and now.

Now this might sound like a bit of a contradiction to what we said last week – that we must be prepared for difficult times! It may seem like it but it is not a contradiction at all.

I am sure we all know people who seem to have it all – wealth, power, prestige – but yet life seems to be a real irritation and they moan non-stop. But there are others that we know who seem to get so many knocks from life and yet always seem to be full of joy and life! They may both even be Christians!

The difference is in their minds, their outlook on life and decisions they have made about their life. Paul says that the ‘peace of God passes understanding’ (Phil 4:7) which means it does not depend on our outward circumstances.

Peace is an important part of abundant life, and it becomes real to us when we see life the way Jesus does.

Prayer: Help me discover real life, Lord.

DAY 4**Read - Deuteronomy 30:11-20**

“This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.” v 19

Now we might be tempted to respond to Jesus saying that He came to bring us life by asking: “Well then why am I not seeing that abundant life?”

If we go back our reading in Deuteronomy we see God, after having given the Israelites the law, saying that He has laid before them the way to life and the way to death. He then pleads with them to “choose life” so that they and their descendants “may live”.

We are talking about this under the overall theme of renewing the mind because it is a choice we all have to make – between God’s way and our way; God’s way and the world’s way; life and death!

True abundant life does not come to us automatically when we decide to give our lives to God – that saves our souls. But true life here on earth comes only from living our lives under the guidance of what God wants – what would Jesus do? That has become such a trite phrase on people’s wrist bangles, but it is the secret to true life.

It is a choice that many of us get wrong because we prefer our way, or our friends way and thus it requires us to think differently (renew our mind) in order to experience true life. Most people think God’s way is deadly boring – nothing could be further from the truth.

Prayer: Father please show me Your way.

DAY 5**Read - Luke 4:14-21**

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.” v 18-19

When Jesus was in the synagogue, He proclaimed this passage as being the reason why He came to earth. We all, quite rightly, think that it is wonderful that he came to bring life in this way to the poor people He mentioned.

But if we are able to see this differently, we begin to see two different ways to true life. Firstly we begin to see that we are the prisoners (in our way of thinking), the blind (who don’t see God’s way), the oppressed (by peer pressure and the rat race of life). Jesus also wants to bring true life to us.

But, on the other hand, He brings life to those people not mainly through miraculous interventions, but more commonly through the actions of other Christians who reach out to the poor, imprisoned, blind and oppressed.

In our human way of thinking we are inclined to feel grateful for these folk, but also a bit sorry because they ‘have so much on their plate’.

In God’s way of thinking (and in reality) those that are serving the needs of others are the one’s that are experiencing true life. They feel empowered, uplifted and enlivened by their service (ask any of them). To find abundant life, we have got to start thinking differently with a renewed mind.

Prayer: Lord, I realise that so often I choose death instead of life. Open my eyes and mind!

DAY 6**Read - Ephesians 3:14-21**

“And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge —that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” v 17-19

Paul writes here of his prayer for the Ephesians and ultimately it is that they “may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God”. This sounds to me a lot like abundant life.

But Paul first indicates a few things that are necessary to get to true life. Firstly he prays that they will be “rooted and established in love” – God’s love. If we are going to renew our minds, we must change so that we are aligned with God’s way of thinking. In the show Joseph and His Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat, they sang: “Any dream will do” – Absolutely not! Only following God’s dream will do.

Secondly, in this passage, Paul prays that they will “grasp” how extensive God’s love is. The challenge here is to get our minds around God’s love; that He wants only the best for us; that His way is the only way to real life – to really trust.

We need to grasp that we can’t make much progress if we don’t allow God to influence the decisions we make every day: should I do this or that; should I say this or that.

God prompts us every day in the direction of abundant life, we need to notice and obey.

Prayer: Trust and obey, for there’s no other Way to be happy in Jesus.