

The New Normal | New Thoughts | Discussion Guide – Romans 12:1, 2 Cor 4:7,16-18; 5:16

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David in Saul's Armor. **1 Samuel 17:38-39** give a bit of a comical glimpse into the story of David and Goliath. In the scene David is girded in Saul's armor. He tries to move in it, but can't. In the end, he discards the armor in favor of a slingshot and 5 smooth stones. David was to be the NEW King and Saul's old armor would not help the NEW King.

A New Life Requires New Thoughts. Following Christ isn't a new life wrapped in mere religion. Following Jesus as an add on to the life you had before Him really isn't going to work. True, Christianity is something new and will require a new way of thinking.

Our Human Point of View is Faulty

2 Corinthians 5:16 (NLT) *So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now!*

Christ from a Human Point of View. Think about the Paul who considered Christ from a Human point of View. He was an angry and violent man. He hurt a lot of people when he held this view. Paul's example should demonstrate that Christ, considered from a human point of view, is not a good thing. So, we must not allow circumstances and life experience to determine our understanding of Christ.

We Must Fix Our Point of View

Colossians 3:1-2 (NLT) *Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. 2 Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth.*

We can fix our perspective. Why live in the Rat Race? It's stressful. The wheel goes faster and faster. We keep telling ourselves that it will slow down, but it doesn't. Who told us this was the way to do life? Who told us to do what everyone else is doing?

Hebrews 4:16 (NLT) *So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.*

Why not live in the throne room? We enter into that reality through prayer and worship. Prayer and worship are so much more than asking God for stuff. Prayer and worship find God's presence, and in that presence discover that the stuff isn't important any more.

Romans 12:1b-2a (NLT) *...be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. 2 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.*

We can Surrender. There are a lot of altars in the Bible. Those altars represented places and circumstances that set people on new paths and new ways of thinking. As we reflect upon our thoughts and feelings, we are likely to encounter an "altar". When presented with an altar in life a

sacrifice is necessary. Our ways, habits, and old thoughts must be laid down in order to embrace something new.

We Are Redeemed for Treasure

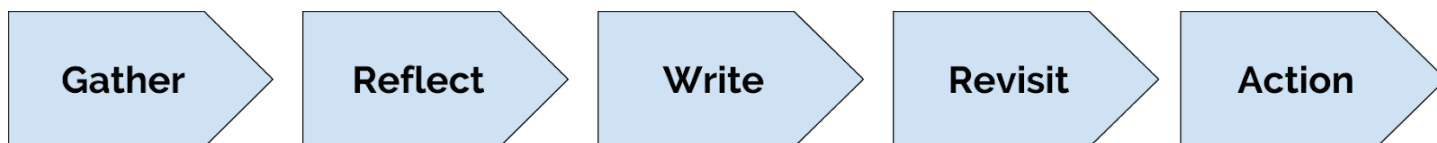
2 Corinthians 4:7 (NLT) *We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.*

We are not the sum of our mistakes, but rather the sum of our contents. And what is within us?

We have been redeemed to contain Great Treasure. To be sure, we are all Jars of Clay. We are fragile, easily broken, leaky, and worse. And, for most of our lives, someone or something has told us what we are supposed to be filled with. We have been told money is the answer. Or that sex will satisfy us. Or, maybe that the perfect little family will give us some of the "american" dream. So, we have filled our fragile lives with whatever we were told we needed. But now we know all of that is temporary. It is mere dust. And, we weren't created or redeemed to contain dust. We are redeemed to hold the essence of the Divine.

Five Steps to Retrain your Brain for New Thoughts

(From Dr. Caroline Leaf's book *Switching On Your Brain*. She is a christian neuroscientist and can be found on YouTube.)



1. We *gather* our thoughts. Identifying the junk thoughts and replace them. (With Scripture)
2. We *reflect* or think deeply about the good stuff.
3. We process the good stuff by *writing* it down.
4. We *revisit* that good stuff and reinforce the truth.
5. We turn thoughts into *actions* to further reinforce the good stuff.

Dr. Leaf's ground breaking research suggests that we do not have to be victims to our genes, chemistry, or family history. We have the ability to reshape our brains by intentionally pursuing good and true thoughts. (She recommends a 21 day focus per toxic thought about 10 minutes a day)

Discussion:

- Are there thoughts in your head that restrict you or that keep you from experiencing the real freedom promised by Jesus Christ?
- Discuss some "human" points of view regarding Jesus Christ or God.
- Read **Matthew 6:31-33**. What dominates your thoughts?
- Discuss **Colossians 3:1-2**, **Hebrews 4:16**. How might we live our lives from the Throne room?
- What would be the benefits of keeping a "journal for your journey"?
- Discuss the "treasure" intended for your "jar of clay".
- Discuss **James 2:14**. How might we put our "treasure" in action?
- Did anything stand out in your reading today that you could share with someone else?