A Renewed Mind about **Authority**

Ephesians 4 explains that our relationship with Jesus changes the way we think about our life and circumstances. There is a way of thinking that is godless and self-absorbed—this kind of thinking is a temptation for every person, although it looks different from person to person. But in Christ we learn a new way of thinking and living:

> But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to **put off** your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to **be renewed** in the spirit of your minds, and to **put on** the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:20–24, emphasis mine)

Don't be fooled—the world is not passive. Rather, the world around us is actively discipling people to follow its thoughts, values, and actions. Add your own fleshly nature to the mix and you begin to better understand why the pull to rebel against authority and your desire for autonomy is so strong. This is the way it has been ever since the first I-want-my-own-way decision in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1-7). But there is hope—because God has overcome the world through Jesus Christ (John 16:33; 1 John 4:4). Christ is not passive. He actively disciples those who are in Him in an entirely different way from the world's way of doing things. And because you are in Christ, you have His Spirit powerfully working in you to change the way you think, what you value and desire, and how you live. This is good news when it comes to our personal struggle with submitting to authority in our lives.

Not only does God promise that in Christ we "overcome the world," He also tells us that "our faith" has a part to play in overcoming (1 John 4:4; 5:4). In other words, God invites us to cooperate with what He is doing in us. We cooperate by hearing His Words (listening), and then doing what He has said (obedience). This is discipleship according to Jesus: *hearing* and *doing* (Luke 6:46-49; 8:21; James 1:22).

How to do this study:

Use the guide to follow to cooperate with God as He disciples you in this area. How will you demonstrate your love for God through your obedience to His words and ways? Start with prayer—asking the Lord to enable you to be an *obedient listener*. Then think through each question and write down your answers. This process will be especially helpful if you can discuss it with a godly, trusted adult.

Renewing my Mind about Authority

Put Off (Ephesians 4:22)

Renewing your mind about authority begins with hearing God's Word. Your time spent reading *Help! How Do I Respond to Authority?* helped start this process. As you heard what God says about authority, what did the Lord show you needs to change in your life? Think about the various authorities God has placed in your life: at home, at church, at school, and/or at work. What do you need to *stop doing* to better conform to God's words and ways?

In Ephesians 4, the apostle Paul is reminding us of this wonderful reality: in Christ, the old way of life in Adam (the way we thought, what we desired and valued, and the choices of our will) has been put off.

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We are dead to sin, which means we are not slaves to sin anymore (Romans 6:6-7)! We do not have to believe lies. We do not have to obey our wrong desires. Because of what Christ has done for us, we can live like who we are in Christ: dead to sin and alive to God (Romans 6:11)! Take the time to confess and forsake any sin God has revealed in your life (Proverb 28:13; 1 John 1:9).

- **Confess to God:** In what specific ways has God shown you that you are not responding like Christ toward an authority in your life? In what ways are you rejecting God or His promises when you don't submit?_____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- **Ask Forgiveness:** Are there ways that you have sinned against an authority for which you need to seek forgiveness (e.g., bad attitude, slander, gossip, disrespect, lying, disobedience)? Use the space below to write out your plan for seeking forgiveness from those whom you have sinned against or with. _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- **Make it hard to sin:** What do you need to radically remove from your life to make it hard to sin in this area again? Are there any known triggers that you can avoid? _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

Renew (Ephesians 4:23)

After taking steps to *put off* the wrong things, you need to spend extra time *putting in* God's truth. You put in truth by meditating on God's Word—especially on God's character and promises. You could really describe the entire *put off* and *put on* process of change described in Ephesians 4 as the act of *renewing*. As God opens your eyes to truth, you respond by putting off what is not like Christ, and by putting on what is like Christ. This is the life of "faith" God calls all believers to continue walking throughout their lives. Each step is taken in loving obedience to the Lord—not in your own strength or wisdom, but in reliance on the strength and wisdom He provides through His Word and your relationship with Jesus Christ.

- **Read**, **study**, and **memorize** God's Word. Take time to prayerfully **meditate** (think about) the passage of Scripture you are reading.[1] Make a journal of what the passage teaches about God (Who God is) and what commands or promises He gives (What God says). As you study God's Word, apply it to your own life. Include in your journal how knowing God changes your thoughts and responses regarding your specific situation or your authorities. Consider: how does knowing this truth change what you believe, what you value and desire, and how you act? Some ideas from the mini-book are included below. Pick one; then create a plan for how you will put God's truth into your heart and mind. Remember, the renewal process is key to lasting change in the life of the believer.

[1] If you need help knowing how to do read, study, memorize, and apply Scripture see *Keys to Your Own God & I Time* (https://lifelineforteens.com/resources/?related-mini-book=general), or ask a trusted, godly adult for help.

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Ideas for Renewing my Mind about Authority:

- Read through one of the **gospel accounts** (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John) and observe how Jesus responded to authority.[2]
- Read the account of how Christ's first followers responded to authority after His death and resurrection. We would expect to see the example, character, and teaching of the Lord in the way His people submitted to authority. See especially **Acts 4:1-33, 5:17-42, 6:7-15.** This study might be especially helpful if you are working through a situation in which you think an authority is asking you to do something wrong. You may need help discerning if what you are being asked to do is clearly against God's will or simply something you don't want to do. God's Word can help bring clarity to your situation and teach you what it looks like to take a gracious stand while trusting the outcome and your reputation to the Lord's care. These passages also remind us that while God's people aren't always delivered from unjust authorities in this life, the Lord is always with His people when they suffer for His sake.
- Study the teaching of Peter in **1 Peter 2:13-25** about suffering for doing what is right. Notice how Peter ties in the believer's response to the example of Jesus Christ. Apply the specific commands and promises of this passage to your life.
- Soak in the first four chapters of the book of **Daniel** that describe the godly, trusting response of Daniel and his friends in the face of a godless authority. Notice how their attitudes and actions brought glory to God and impacted their pagan authorities.[3]
- Do a deeper study on **Proverb 21:1**. Use the inductive study guide from *Keys to Your Own God & I Time* to work through this verse in an in-depth way.
- Read and study verse by verse through **Romans 13:1-5**. (Review pages 9-14 in the mini-book for a general overview of this passage.) Ask God to enable you to adopt His view of authority as your own.
- Encourage your heart by reading about the ultimate authority of Jesus described in **Revelation 1:12-18, 5:1-14,** and **19:11-16**.[4] Like so many of the people recorded in Scripture, you can learn to rest and rejoice in His Sovereignty when you remember the end of the story.

My Plan:

- When and where will you spend time in God's Word? _____

  _____
- What will you prayerfully read, study, meditate on, and personally apply from God's Word? _____

  _____
- Choose a verse from the passage you are currently studying to commit to memory. What specific verse(s) will you memorize? _____

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[2] You can find this specific study, "Consider His Obedience," at https://lifelineforteens.com/book/help-how-do-i-respond-to-authority/.

[3] You can find this specific study, "Impact Through Submission," at https://lifelineforteens.com/book/help-how-do-i-respond-to-authority/.

[4] Hints of Christ's never-ending reign can be seen in Daniel 2:34-35, 44-45 where God reveals to King Nebuchadnezzar the reality that all earthly kingdoms (including his own) will ultimately fail and come to an end. But God's kingdom will last *forever*.

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Put On (Ephesians 4:24)

You don't have to wait to begin moving forward in obedience until you have mastered the other aspects of the renewing process. In fact, *putting off* and *putting on* should happen simultaneously. The pursuit of Christlikeness is actually essential to keeping the wrong things out of your life. And keep in mind that the pursuit of Christlikeness is really the pursuit of a Person. Just as Jesus demonstrated in His earthly life, your obedience is an expression of love for God.

God, through His Word and by His Spirit, is committed to making you more like His Son. He wants you to grow and change and invites you to be a part of this process! Obedience isn't always easy—but because of your union with Christ, it is possible. But God doesn't expect you to do it alone. He has provided His Word, His Spirit, and His people. We grow best in community with other believers who walk beside us on our journey to Christlikeness.

- **Replacement:** What positive steps of obedience does God want you to take in response to the authorities He has placed in your life? Consider obedience in the way you think, what you value and desire, and how you act. _____
- **Accountability**: Who in your life can you trust as a mentor to help you? _____
- **Opportunities:** How might God want you to use a position of authority He has given you to serve those around you? How can you use your delegated authority for the good of others? _____

You may find it helpful to revisit this worksheet multiple times over the next several weeks. Your thinking and responses may change as you face new circumstances and new authorities. You may see significant improvement in some areas or increased challenges in others. But overtime, as you cooperate with God's process of change in your life, He will give you the grace to grow in your relationship with Christ and see His submissive character more fully developed in your life.

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