A Renewed Mind about **Living for God's Values**

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 struggle to live for what matters.

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 Living for God's Values

Put Off (Ephesians 4:22)

Renewing your mind about what you value begins with hearing God's Word. Your time spent reading *Help! I Want My Life to Count* helped start this process. As you heard what God says about what really matters (in this life and the next), what did the Lord show you needs to change in your life? Think about the various relationships 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?

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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. 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 in the way you are spending the life He has given you? In what ways are you rejecting God or His promises when you don't live by what He counts as important?_____

- **Ask Forgiveness:** Are there ways that you have sinned against God or others for which you need to seek forgiveness? 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. 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 Living for God's Values:

- Journal through **Psalm 90:1-11**, giving special attention to the contrast between God and man.
- Do a deeper study on **Psalm 90:12-17**. Use the inductive study guide from *Keys to Your Own God & I Time* to work through this verse in an in-depth way.
- Read through one of the **gospel** accounts (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John) and observe how Jesus spent his time.[2]
- Study **Romans 6:16-18**. What does it mean to be a "slave of sin"? How should being a "slave of righteousness" change the way a person lives.
- Read through the book of **Ecclesiastes**, highlighting every occurrence of the word "vanity" or "breath". What can you learn about life from the way Solomon uses these words?

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? _____

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 what He has shown you in His Word? 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? _____
  _____

[2] For help with this study, use the resource, "What Do I Know About Christ," at https://lifelineforteens.com/book/help-i-want-to-know-the-bible/.

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- **Opportunities:** How might God want you to use the life He has given you to invest in eternal ways in the lives of others around you? How can you use your God-given time, resources, and gifts 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 opportunities. 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 character more fully developed in your life.

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