

*The New York Times Sunday Review* ran an article in August 2014 called “Hit the Reset Button in Your Brain.” The article, written by Daniel J. Levitin, author of *The Organized Mind: Thinking Straight in the Age of Information Overload*, explains that the human brain has evolved into two separate “attention” systems that help us sift through information and sort it into two areas: the task-positive and task-negative networks.

- The task-positive network is active when you’re focused on a specific task and engaged in it without distraction.
- The task-negative network, on the other hand, is active when your mind is wandering or daydreaming. That’s where inspiration and creativity come from.
- Then there’s a third component, an attention filter, which acts like a switch between the task-positive and task-negative networks. The filter helps orient us and tells us what to pay attention to and what to ignore in any given moment.

Over the years, we’ve developed shorter attention spans because we’re constantly being bombarded by incoming information, which, in effect, activates that switch. So if you’re constantly getting notifications for voicemail, email, texts, Facebook, and Twitter, you’re constantly see-sawing back and forth between what’s critical and what’s not.

Levitin suggests we need to lay off that switch by segmenting our daily activities into time slots and immersing ourselves in a single task for a sustained period, like 30 to 50 minutes without distractions. The same goes for immersing ourselves in task-negative activities like exercise, walking in the woods or listening to music, which all help trigger the mind-wandering, daydreaming mode that leads to creativity and resets our brain to provide perspective on what we’re doing. Carving out intentional, uninterrupted time for tasks might just be the way to reset life and renew our minds.

Believe it or not, the Bible agrees. The Apostle Paul stresses the importance of taking our thoughts captive for Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). When he wrote to the followers of Jesus in Philippi, he encouraged them to think about things and about ourselves the way God does – to have the mind of Christ (2:2) – in essence, to renew our minds by resetting them, reprogramming them, and realigning them with God’s thoughts and ways.

And to the believers in Rome, Paul wrote: *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God*

— *what is good and acceptable and perfect* (Rom. 12:2). Paul wanted the followers of Jesus to renew their minds so that they might discover how God sees and does things. Paul says that when we allow our minds to be transformed, we will know and be able to carry out the will of God, which is our calling as Christians.

Okay. So, here are some ways to hit the reset button on life and renew our minds by taking our thoughts captive to Christ. **Accept reality.** Stop fighting what is real. Stop wishing for the fantasy reset button and start seeing all the good around you in life. Remember, God has a plan, and you are part of it. Jesus calls you and the Spirit gifts you. Stop wishing for something different and start doing what God puts in front of you to do right now. Jesus probably wished he could end up somewhere other than a cross; but he accepted that reality and saw the blessing in it – by his sacrifice, you and I are made one with God. Renew your mind by accepting life as God gives it to you.

**Love yourself and be kind to yourself.** There’s an old adage that no one else can love you if you don’t love yourself. So cut yourself some slack. God did. God loved you and thought enough of you to send Jesus to forgive your sins and bring you home to God. If God loves you that much, you can probably like yourself a little more today. Renew your mind by seeing yourself through God’s eyes and loving yourself with God’s heart.

**Remember that most things are temporary.** “This too shall pass” is hard to accept when you live with chronic illness, or grief, or anxiety about money, or depression, or loneliness, or addiction, or over-work. While, by definition, such chronic maladies aren’t going away, most things that you encounter will pass: they are temporary. Jesus suffered and died and lay in the tomb for three days; but it was a temporary thing. On the third day he rose again, and nothing has been the same since. Remember that God works all things for good for those who love God. There is a greater plan. You may not know the details, but you do know the One in control. Renew your mind by trusting that God will get you through the tough days.

**Find a reason to be grateful.** There is always a reason that we can be grateful. There is a roof over our head (even if it’s leaking), there is someone willing to help (even if it’s not exactly the help we’d like), there is a songbird outside the window (even though the window needs to be washed), there is always the opportunity to enjoy God’s creation (even while raking the leaves off your lawn or blowing the snow off your driveway). God is constantly creating new blessings; having a mind captive to Christ means finding them in the midst of everything else. Renew your mind by remembering to say “thank you” to God at least once each day.

**Simplify Your Life.** There are a lot of things I'd love to get rid of in my house. There are days I'd love to just have a big dumpster dropped off so I can load everything up and start over again in a house about half the size. But, I'm not there yet. There are, however, other ways that I can simplify, starting with my "to do" list. I'm the king of over-packing my "to do" list with too many things. When I see it happening, I try to simplify: to pare that list down to the bare bones and start over again, listing only what's truly important. There are other ways we can simplify life, and often we can start with the clutter in our homes and in our brains that add anxiety and stress and that only make a chronic situation worse.

But the best way to simplify your life is to ask God to renew your mind, to reframe your mind, to reorient your mind, to reclaim your mind and make your mind captive to Christ. Invite God to transform your mind and your life into something that is good and faithful and fruitful.

Prayer: God, renew my mind. I surrender it to You. I invite You to transform me by the renewing of my thoughts. Moment by moment fill my thought life with images of Your reality. Enlighten me to know You and the power of Your resurrection and the fellowship of Your suffering. Enlighten me together with all the saints to grasp how high and deep and wide and long is Your love. I commit to being a spiritual mathematician, adding life up from Your perspective. When I face suffering, I promise to believe that though life is bad, You are my Supreme Good. When struggling against sin, I promise to believe that even when I am sinful, You are gracious. And I promise not to take Your grace for granted, for though I know that it is wonderful to be forgiven, I understand that it is horrible to sin. Empower me to aim my mind toward heavenly things and to rest in my new mindset in Christ. Amen.

Sources:

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## Renew My Mind

Sunday, November 1, 2015

The Federated Church, Fergus Falls, MN

*...and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

2 Corinthians 10:5, NIV

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God — what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.*

Romans 12:2-3

I wish life had a reset button. My computer has a reset button. My car has a reset button. My television has a set button. My alarm clock has a reset (snooze) button. Video games have a reset button. Why can't my life have a reset button, too?

Some days things are so crazy I really need a reset button. Some days, when I seem to be doing everything wrong, I need a "do over." Sometimes, if I don't like the sermon, I'd like to request a mulligan. Sometimes I say things I shouldn't, or the words come out all wrong, and I'd like to say, "Wait! Wait. Let me try again." It's hard keeping up and getting it right.

Every day, we take in about 174 newspapers' worth of information (five times as much as we did 20 years ago), and watch an average of five hours of TV. That's a lot to process, and our brains have a hard time taking it all in. On top of that, thanks to our plugged-in lifestyle, we take less true vacation time and work more hours. We sleep less, eat poorly, and ingest more caffeine; none of which helps us be more productive or creative. The treadmill of life is set on "high" and we're racing just to keep up. We need a reset button to realign our priorities and our lives, to get things back on track.