

# How to Know the Will of God

by John Piper

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*John Piper's sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding and discerning God's will through the renewal of our minds and living as sacrifices to Him.*

**Duration:** 52:58

**Scripture:** Titus 3:5

**Topics:** "Gods Will", "Holy Spirit"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of discerning and following the will of God in our lives. It delves into the distinction between God's sovereign will, which always comes to pass, and His moral will, which involves His commands for us to follow. The speaker highlights the need for a renewed mind to discern God's will through Scripture, conscious application, and spontaneous actions, ultimately seeking the Holy Spirit's transformation to live in alignment with God's commands.

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## Transcript

Father in heaven, we now behold our God, high, seated on the throne, lifted up. We behold our King and we say, nothing can compare, nothing can compare with you. So come and I pray that one of the things you would do in this time is that in so revealing your glory through your word, by your spirit, people would get guidance for their lives.

There's some people in this room right now facing some really significant decisions. And they didn't know that they were coming here to get that guidance and I pray that they would get it. That you would stand forth from your word in such a way that when they walk out, light would be on the path to be chosen, bright, attractive, beautiful, Christ-dense light.

And they would know. And I pray for the rest of us, Lord, who may not have such a decision in front of us, the millions of decisions we make in our lives that don't even enter the process of thought but just happen, that they would be made pure, godly, Christ-exalting. So come, I pray, do those things and far more abundantly than I'm able to ask right now.

I ask in Jesus' name, amen. So if you have a Bible and you'd like to follow along with me, we're going to look at a verse in Romans 12 and I'll read two verses, namely the first two verses of the chapter, Romans 12, 1 and 2. We're going to talk about the will of God, what it means, how to find it, what it means to have your mind renewed to find it, that very familiar passage of Scripture I want to linger over with you for a

while here. So Romans 12, I'll read verses 1 and 2. And as you know, 12 follows 1 to 11.

It's not rocket science to figure that out and it begins with a glorious, therefore, I appeal to you, therefore, and therefore the wonders that he's calling us into in walking with Christ in a renewed way is built on massive theology in chapters 1 to 11. It doesn't get any bigger than Romans 1 to 11. It doesn't get any deeper than Romans 1 to 11.

And this is what it was all building towards, new minds discerning the will of God, lives of worship. So let's read verses 1 and 2. I appeal to you, therefore, on the basis of Romans 1 to 11 and all the glories there and the pillars that sunk down into the bottomless foundations there. I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by those mercies, the mercies of God that I've unfolded for 11 chapters, I appeal to you, present your bodies, that is, your whole bodily life.

Your bodies are what you are around the world. Everywhere you go, you're in your body. So everywhere you go, whatever you're doing, that bodily existence, present it as a living sacrifice.

It's not going to die. It goes up on the altar, but it won't die so that it can't live. It just dies so that it lives a different way.

As a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, it is possible, sinner Christian, to live pleasing to God. Don't overstate the justification of the ungodly. It's a glorious doctrine.

Don't make it cancel other scriptures. There are people doing that today. They are taking the doctrine of justification of the ungodly, a beautiful Romans-taught doctrine, and extrapolating from it, you can't please God.

You can't be acceptable to God day by day. All you can do is confess that you're ungodly and bank on the righteousness of Jesus. That's false.

You are called, built on justification by faith alone, accepted on the basis of the righteousness of Christ alone, now to offer sacrifices to God in your body that please Him, that He smiles upon. This afternoon, you can do something that pleases God. You can make a phone call that pleases God.

You can speak a word of sweetness and kindness to your spouse that pleases God. Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that attesting that you may approve or discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect, and thus live a life of worship.

So, the aim of these two verses is that all of life becomes worship, right? Present your bodies, your bodily life as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. In other words, the aim of all life, the aim of human life, is that God in Christ be displayed as infinitely valuable, right? That's what life is for. To live your life in such a way that by what you say, what you think, what you feel, what you do with your arms and your lips and your eyes and your legs and your hands will show He's more valuable than anything.

That's what worship is, showing God's value, supreme value, over all other things. So, if you have a job, do your job in a way that shows that Christ is supremely valuable. And if you can't do that at your job, either change jobs or do verse 2 better.

Let's look at verse 2 now. Do not be conformed to this world, but, positively, be transformed in the renewing of your mind so that something different happens at work. That by testing you can discern the will of God that is good and acceptable and perfect and God begins to look valuable in your life to other people.

He looks valuable. God looks valuable when I look at you. God looks infinitely worthy when I look at you.

When I look at you, it looks like you value God more than money. It looks like you value God more than power. It looks like you value God more than illicit sex.

So, what's with you? I want to know the reason for the hope that is in you. You probably don't have to change jobs. That would probably be a mistake.

That's not going to solve the problem. But verse 2 will solve the problem. And that's what we're going to think about for a while here.

Verse 2 is Paul's answer to the question, how all of life becomes worship in verse 1. So, don't just change your external behavior. It says, be renewed in your minds. Be, verse 2, in the middle of the verse, be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

Now, get a step back and get a little Paul theology in here so that being renewed is understood in the context of what's really happened to you, Christians. If anyone is in Christ, this is 2 Corinthians 5.17, he is a new creation. Okay? That's just a rock-solid statement about you.

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. So, now the new gets renewed, right? I mean, verse 2 of Romans 12 says, be renewed in the spirit of your mind. So, you're already new, now get new.

That's the Christian life, right? Those of you who are familiar with the way Paul talks, that's the way he talks. For example, 1 Corinthians 5.7, cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump of dough because you are really unleavened. What a paradoxical way to talk, right? You are unleavened, get the leaven out.

Well, if I'm unleavened, I don't have leaven to get out. Yes, you do, unleavened. You are perfectly unleavened, so get the leaven out.

That's the genius and the mystery of the Christian life. That's how justification and sanctification work, right? Because I'm justified and seen as unleavened in Christ, get the leaven out. If you're not getting the leaven out, that is the leaven of sin, out of your life, you're probably bearing witness that you're not justified by faith.

You're very content with your sin. Okay, so when he says, be renewed, he doesn't mean like, well, get something good started in your life. No, a miracle has happened in your life.

You are new. You're a new creation in Christ. And on that glorious, confident basis, rooted in Christ and his saving work for us, now we have some work to do.

And we do it with joy and with confidence. We're children of God. We're not trying to be children of God or get into God's favor.

We're in his favor, rock solid through faith in Christ. But now we've got some renewing. We've got some renewing to do, because this old head of John Piper at age 69 still has got some renewing to do.

Isn't that awful? That's awful, but that's true. Colossians 3.10, you have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. You have already put on the new person.

You're a new person. Now you are being renewed. Okay, so now you see verse 2 in the context of your identity in Christ based on other things that Paul said.

And we're back at verse 2 now, and I want us to linger here. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that by testing you might discern, that you might prove or approve. It's just a wonderful word there in Greek, *akimazo*, not just to know what something is, but to approve it.

Both ideas are there. That's the will of God, and I like it. Both of those are happening in this word here.

To prove what is the will of God means, I detect it, I discern it, this is the way to go, and I'm going there, I like it. He's not saying, I want you to know the will of God and snub your nose at it. So it's not just know the will of God, it's know it and approve it that's going on here in verse 2. So the first question I have is what does the will of God mean? And this is review now and expansion from the weekend, and for those of you who weren't there, not a problem, you will catch on pretty quick to this.

What does the will of God mean? Because that's the goal here in verse 2, right? So that you can discern what is the will of God. What's that mean, will of God? And in the Bible, there are these two big meanings of the will of God, and we need to know which one is here. Which one does this verse mean when it comes to the will of God? We need to know whether it's the will of God that is His sovereign will that always comes to pass without fail, or whether it is the will of God which is His command to do what's right, which is often disobeyed and doesn't come to pass.

And the Bible uses the term will of God both ways. One of the biggest problems that distinction creates for us is that it appears then that God ordains to come to pass things that He disapproves of. Or, put it another way, He forbids that you do some things that He brings about.

Or, put it another way, He commands some things that He hinders. Or, to put it most paradoxically, He wills some things that He does not will, because there are two different meanings for His will. Now, I want to show you that in the Bible, and then we'll try to decide which one is meant in verse 2, and then we'll try to decide, OK, how do I get my mind renewed so I can go there? So, texts, a few texts that show what I mean by the sovereign will of God, namely the will that always comes to pass no matter what.

Let's take Matthew 26, 39, where we're in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus is crying out to His Father, My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.

What does that mean? As You will. Your will be done. That means God's sovereign plan, which is going to happen.

Jesus is going to die. And Jesus, in His human nature, is simply saying, In my human nature, I don't relish the thought of nails going through my hands tomorrow. So, if the plan could be adjusted, that would please my flesh, because I'm just an ordinary person who doesn't like nails in my hands.

That's not sin to talk like that. But then He says, Your will be done, meaning you've got a plan, do your plan. So, the will of God is God's sovereign plan that He always executes.

The text that we looked at most in a focused way on the weekend was Acts 4, verses 27 and 28. This one ought to be marked in your Bible, because this text unlocks more light on the dark places of theological problems than many texts. So, Acts 4, 27 and 28.

The church is praying in wonder to the sovereign God that has just ordained the death of His Son, and they pray like this, Acts 4, 27. Truly in this city, Jerusalem, there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod, Pontius Pilate, all the Gentiles, the peoples of Israel, to do what your hand and plan had predestined to take place. So, Herod did what God predestined to take place.

Pilate did what God predestined to take place. The shouting crowds, crucify Him, crucify Him, did what God predestined to take place. And the soldier, the Gentile soldiers who drove the nails, did what God had predestined to take place.

And the sovereign will of God was accomplished at 9 o'clock on Friday morning. And it was all sin. Pilate's expediency.

Herod's mockery. The soldier's gambling for his clothes. You're the son of God.

The hatred of the mobs stirred up by the Pharisees. Crucify Him. That's all sin and planned by God.

So, that's why I said this text, verses 27 and 28, is a light on a theological jungle of problems. Whoa, you're saying that God's sovereign will that always comes to pass includes sin? Yes. If God could not plan the murder of His Son, then we could not be saved.

It's not like Jesus just jumped up on the cross and died and God said, Whoa, I didn't know that was going to happen. But I'll use it to save people. That's heresy.

God planned it for you. And it couldn't have happened without sin. You don't kill the Son of God without sin.

Okay. So, when I say one of the meanings of will of God is all that comes to pass that God ordains, I mean it includes everything. A couple of other examples.

1 Peter 3.17 says this, It is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. Now think that one through. That's 1 Peter 3.17. It is better for you to suffer for doing good.

So, you're at work and something is being discussed about a policy. The policy in your mind is an evil policy. It's a sinful policy.

It would involve you and other employees in sinning. You know if you say something, you're in big trouble. You could lose your job.

You're going to expose this manager as a bad guy. He's making a bad choice. And if you say something, he's going to be exposed.

He will put you down one way or the other. You choose to do good. You're going to do good.

You speak truth and you get fired. Now, put this text on that. It is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will.

Now what does that mean? That means when you spoke, the manager, who now is in trouble because you just exposed the evil of what was about to happen, he could be hindered by God from firing you, or he could look at this and say, I permit you to fire him. And he fires you. God could just stop it.

He could just stop it and you don't lose your job. And this says it is better to suffer for doing, if that should be God's will. Now, if he fires you, did he do good? No, he sinned.

And that was God's will, that he sinned. Now, you've got to have a category here, unless you think, I'm speaking here. You're like, God is a sinner.

You've got to have a category from the Bible that says God can ordain that sin come to pass without himself sinning. God's not a sinner. God's not evil.

God is holy, just, and true, and good. And in the way he governs and runs the world, this text says, if it's God's will that you suffer for doing good, which always involves somebody sinning against you. That's 1 Peter 3, 17.

Ephesians 1, 11 is the most sweeping statement of all in this regard, the sovereign will of God. It says, in him, Ephesians 1, 11, in him, Christ, we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things, I take that literally, who works all things according to the counsel of his will. So, will of God means all things God does.

All things. He works all things according to the counsel of his will. And you know your Bibles.

You know texts like this. This extends to the details of all existence. Matthew 10, 29, not one sparrow falls to the ground apart from our Father in heaven.

Proverbs 16, 33, the lot, the dice, are cast in the lap, and every decision is from the Lord. Reno, Las Vegas, Atlantic City, every dice rolled, God decides what turns up. I believe that with all my heart.

That's not a problem for God. He's that, I play Scrabble with my wife. We don't gamble.

But we reach our hand into the bag to pull out letters. Now, do you pray at that moment? I need a Z. She's way ahead. I totally believe God decides what letters come out in my hand.

I do pray. And I thought through how I should pray. It's a marriage issue.

I pray not, let me win. No, no, no, God knows who needs to win here. My wife has been playing Scrabble for 46 years.

If you tabbed up all the games, we'd probably be tied right now. It's amazing, amazing. So I pray for the kingdom and for the family.

Whoever needs to win, you know, for humility or encouragement. You know. So I don't try to pull a rank on her.

You know, come on, God. No way. That's how sovereign God is.

From the silliest little, no sparrow falls, no letter comes out of the bag, apart from God's will. So my answer to the question of what does will of God mean is that now I know one possibility. I don't know the answer yet of what the meaning is in verse 2. I just know throughout the Bible, will of God often means what he does, and it always happens.

God is sovereign. He decides what happens. Now there's another meaning for the term will of God, the one that we use maybe more often.

And it is God's, I call the first one the will of decree. I said the will of decree. What God decrees happens, including all the bad things in the world.

God's going to work it all for good. The other meaning is the will of command. For example, Jesus said in Matthew 7, 21, Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father.

What does that mean? Only those who do the will of my Father enter my presence, which means some don't and some do, which means the will of God is done by some and is not done by others, which means this will of God doesn't have the same meaning as the first one because the first one is always done without fail, and this one is disobeyed and not done. So clearly, will of God isn't the same. Here's another one, 1 Thessalonians 4, 3. This is the will of God, your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual immorality.

Have you? No. Some of you have not, which means you broke the will of God. You disobeyed, contradicted, did not fulfill the will of God for your life.

The will of God for your life is sanctification, abstain from all sexual immorality. Don't look at pornography as the will of God. The last week, dozens of you probably broke that will.

You contradicted it, canceled it. It did not happen. The will of God did not happen in your life because you looked, 1 John 2, 17.

The world is passing away in all its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. Some do, some don't. Therefore, we have two meanings of the will of God in the Bible.

One is his sovereign will, and one is his moral will, will of command, will of decree. This one is always done. He is sovereign.

This one is often not done and contradicted. Now, which one is meant in verse 2 of Romans 12? And before I show you the answer that I think is there, let me comment on how precious it is to have these two truths. You may think that's just interesting or not.

It's more than interesting. It's precious. Let me try to explain why.

Those two realities which are in the Bible, God has a will of command, thou shalt not kill. And a sovereign will, I ordain that my son be killed. I ordain what I forbid.

That those two things are in the Bible corresponds to profound longings and needs that you have in moments of crisis and loss. You may not have thought this through, but you experience it. You do.

Suppose you were abused as a child, and it has borne sad fruit for many years. Some uncle sexually abused you or a dad. And somebody is trying to help you, counsel with you, help you to work through the implications of that.

And somebody asks you, do you think that was the will of God? Now, up until now, I don't know what you would answer to that question. But I have just now taken 15 minutes or so to try to give you a structure of biblical thought to know how to answer that question in a way that not only corresponds with the reality of biblical truth, but with deep needs of your soul right now. The first need you have, and I don't know which one comes first for you.

You might be different, but there are two needs. One is, I need to believe God hates what happens. And when he was looking at the abuser, he was saying, don't do that.

That is contrary to my will. I command you not to do that. He hates what he sees and will approve of judgment.

You need to believe that God is right there, disapproving. And secondly, you need to believe that God is sovereign. So sovereign in that moment that he can turn everything for your glorious and everlasting good.

And if you try to solve the problem of God's sovereignty at the moment of crisis and push him so far out of that moment of causality, so far to the edges, you know what's going to happen? You will now be left with no God to help you deal with this and turn it for good. He'll be useless. You've just shoved him off and said, you can't have anything to do with that.

Your will can't be involved in this. Your governance of the universe cannot oversee this. I cannot have a God who in any way would ordain that this come to pass.

And you shoved him so far to the edge of the universe, now in your pain for the rest of your life. You're crying out to a God to do miracles, and you've pushed him away. If he can't govern that moment, he can't govern the rest of your life and do the miracles you need for him to do.

So you need two things. You need a God who disapproves of the ugliness, and you need a God who ordains that all things come to pass and is so sovereign he can take everything, including that, and work it for good. And so if you try to say there's no sense in which the sovereign God will that, you will lose God for the rest of your life.

So I think those two truths correspond to pretty profound needs that we all have. You pick, it may not be abuse. It just may be the loss of a loved one.

It may be disease entering into your life. It may be some painful relational conflict right now in marriage or with kids or with friends. You're all in something, and you need two things.

A God who can empathize with you as a high priest and hates sin, hates sin. The definition of sin is God hates it and says, Don't do it. I forbid it.

And you need a God in that moment who is totally sovereign and governing all things so that even the sin being done against you is folded into his purposes for you, and you can shine like the sun someday even in spite of that loss, that pain. Both of those are needs that I think God meets by being this kind of God. So now we're at verse 2, and we're asking, Which is it? Let's read verse 2 again.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that by testing you may discern what is the will of God. He wants you to know what is the will of God. Which is it? My answer is it is the will of command, not the sovereign will of God.

He is not saying get your mind renewed so that you can discern what is going to happen tomorrow. He's saying get your mind renewed so that you can discern what ought to happen tomorrow through your life. See the difference? He is telling us to look for his will of command.

I've got a couple of reasons for why I think that. Number one, in the Bible, God is not bent on bringing you into an increasing awareness of his secret will for tomorrow. He does not want you to know what's going to happen tomorrow.

What you need in order to discern what will happen tomorrow is not a renewed mind, but a crystal ball. There is no virtue in seeing tomorrow's events in a crystal ball. Witches do that.

Satan does that. He's not eager for you to become an effective Satan who can predict the future. That's not the point of verse 2, right? I just hope we're on the same page here.

The goal of verse 2 is not get a really effective gift of seances. Get a really effective gift of soothsaying so that you can predict that tomorrow there's going to be a car accident, or tomorrow you're going to lose your job, or tomorrow whatever. He doesn't give a rip whether you know that stuff.

It has nothing to do with how good you are, how beautiful you are, how new your mind is. All you need is a crystal ball and some tie-in with the devil to do that. He wants your mind to be renewed, not to know the sovereign will of God tomorrow, but the moral will of God.

What does God want me to do? What does he command me to do? That's what he's after. There are three stages now to the unfolding of the moral or the will of command, the moral will of God, the will of command, that when you discern it, it comes in three stages. Let me just lay these out real quickly for you so you can see how your obedience to verse 2 might look.

Stage number one, the will of command is revealed in the Bible decisively, authoritatively, infallibly. If you want to discern what is the will of God, you start here. It's a very thick book.

This version has 1,100 pages. And page after page after page is helping us discern the moral will of God. What does he approve of? What does he delight in? What is good, acceptable, and perfect in his view for you to do this afternoon? So start here.

In fact, it says in 2 Timothy 3.16, All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for correction, reproof, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be fully equipped for every good work. Wow. Every.

Yes, every. In other words, there's no good work that you have to have another book besides the Bible to cause you to know. The Bible is sufficient to help you discern every good work, which is why I say this is it.

This is the place. I don't know what that was. A little snow falling out of my mic.

So start there and ask the Lord for a renewed mind, that is, a mind that when it reads the Bible can see what it means. That's step one. Number two, many things you must choose which are not described in the Bible as what you should do.

Let me say that better. You must choose to do many things where the Bible does not give you explicit instruction. The Bible will not tell you what person to marry.

The Bible does not tell you which car to drive. The Bible does not tell you whether to own a home or rent a home. The Bible doesn't tell you where to take a vacation, doesn't tell you what phone plan to buy, doesn't tell you which brand of orange juice to drink, and a thousand other choices that you must make, the Bible is not explicit on.

So the second stage of discerning the will of command, the moral will of God, is that you take the Bible and you pray for a renewed mind that knows how to discern how all of the things that are revealed here when applied to orange juice will produce a godly decision. House ownership, car ownership, person to marry, job to have, school to attend, leisure activities to avoid or go to, most of those decisions are not spelled out here, which is why Romans 12 says, do not be conformed to the world in the way it goes about those decisions, but have your mind so renewed by this word that you discern which of those things would accord best with what is here. Oh, how that requires a renewed mind, right? Because it's not simple like, there's a verse that says, Ford, Ford, not Chevrolet, Ford.

It will not happen, or electric car. Some of you might find that here. Here's a verse about electric car.

So step number two in penetrating through to the will of God's command as it applies to the things where he didn't make it explicit is you got to have a new mind shaped by the rest of Scripture so that when you come to those decisions, there is a readiness to see and do the will. And here's the third one. And this one is the one we don't think about as much.

Even though, I'm going to argue, 95% of your behavior is here. Namely, you do not premeditate and decide to do 95% of what you do. You just do it.

Most of your thoughts, they're just there. Most of your feelings, they're just there. And most of your actions, they're just there.

And a tiny handful you think about before you do. Otherwise, you'd go crazy, right? I mean, at every moment, like I'm going to open the door. Should I open the door with my left hand or my right hand? I'm going to pray about this, discern the will of God, something about right and left in the Bible, sit at his right hand, that's probably the best one to use.

You'd go crazy. You couldn't live your life that way. And that is, I would argue, I'm just guessing, 95% of your life.

So this afternoon, you're probably going to make decisions about, what, half a dozen things that you're going to do? I watch a ball game, might take a nap. And you think them through. Think of pros and cons, and you do them.

The rest of your life, and you're going to make hundreds and hundreds of actions between now and the time you go to bed tonight, they're just going to flow out of you, flow out of you, like Jesus said. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks, and you will give an account for every idle word. And you didn't plan 95% of them.

Now, what's the implication of that? Most of my gestures, most of my facial expressions, most of my attitudes towards another person, most of the words coming out of my mouth, most of the things that I'm

doing in the day, I'm not even thinking about it all. I'm just doing what is the implication of that for proving what is the will of God in those. And if you think, oh, but God doesn't have any will for things that we do spontaneously.

He only has a will for things that we do decisively. And that's ridiculous. God says, don't be proud.

God says, don't be angry. God says, don't rejoice. I mean, do rejoice.

Sorry. Well, none of those. God, don't be anxious.

Well, are you going to go out this afternoon and say, now here's an occasion where I could be anxious or not. Here's a couple of reasons why I shouldn't be. Here's a couple of reasons why I should be.

I think I won't be anxious. Or I think I'd be anxious here. You just are anxious, and you shouldn't be.

You see the implication of that? The implication is we are told to do things all over the Bible that we would just do or don't do spontaneously. So what's the implication? The implication is verse 2. Don't be conformed. Be renewed in your mind.

You've got to be a new person. You can't just make new decisions. Because 95% of what you're doing, you're doing spontaneously.

And if you're not a new person, then out of the mouth, the heart speaks wrong stuff. And you are sad about that. And we need to be changed.

So let's end by asking the question with those three steps, like Bible, application of the Bible consciously, and then a transformed mind that does 95% of its life unconsciously, that is, spontaneously, how in the world do you become new? Now, that's the rest of your life. But here's a few pointers, and we'll be done. Number one, Ephesians 4.23 says, Be renewed in the spirit of your mind.

Not just in your mind, in the spirit of your mind. And that is a work of the Holy Spirit. And we are, He's acting upon us.

It's a passive verb, right? Be renewed in the spirit of your mind. The mind doesn't just have thoughts. There's a spirit of your mind.

A spirit that loves or hates what the will of God appears to be in the knowledge of the mind. So we must be renewed, not just that we have new thoughts, but we feel differently about our thoughts. Titus 3.5, He saved us by washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit.

So the second thing to say is, not just do we need a new spirit in our mind, the Holy Spirit is the one who works that. And therefore, number three, we should cry out to God for the Holy Spirit. David did.

Psalms 51.10, Created me a clean heart, O God. Renew a right spirit within me. God, you come, you come.

I need to be new, so make me new. So prayer is the pervasive activity of the Christian life. Which father of you has a son who asks him for bread would give him a snake? Or if he asks him for an egg, would give him a scorpion? If you then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly father give the Holy Spirit? That's the version in the gospel of Luke 11.13. He will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.

And he doesn't mean the first time, he just means over and over again. We all need the Holy Spirit. John Piper needs the Holy Spirit to do what? Love, joy, peace, patience, goodness.

Think of those nine fruits. All those nine fruits are the kind of thing that make me act spontaneously better. Right? Patience.

Right? If I'm a deeply patient person because the Holy Spirit is at work in me and you say something that irritates me, I will spontaneously respond more kindly than if I'm an impatient person. So what are you praying for? For newness. Newness.

I need the Holy Spirit. I need to be more loving, more joyful, more patient, more kind, more good, more self-controlled. Work on me, Holy Spirit.

Take over and make me new, new so that I don't just think right thoughts about the will of God. I love the will of God so deeply that I spontaneously respond to people in a godly way when I'm not even thinking about it. That's how deeply we need to be renewed.

And the last thing I would say in closing is how does the Holy Spirit do that? It's not magic. Second Corinthians 3.18, we all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord are being changed. You could translate that or paraphrase it being renewed.

Let's do that. We all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord. That happens here in the gospel especially.

We all with unveiled face beholding the glory, the beauty, the radiance of the Lord are being renewed from one degree of glory to another. That's how the Holy Spirit does it. The Holy Spirit was sent into the world to magnify Jesus Christ off the pages of this book so that looking at Christ and his glory and his beauty, we would be changed into his likeness so that when I turn now to live my afternoon, there is a more natural, free, inner, spontaneous doing of the will.

Father in heaven, oh how I long for my marriage, my parenting, my grandparenting, my relationships with people I meet along the way. How I long not only to know some scripture texts to apply but before I think at all, I want to speak Christlike. I want to feel Christlike.

I'm praying that now not only for me but for these friends. I'm sure they feel the same way. They would like for their default reactions before any premeditation to be holy.

We want to be changed that deeply and so we ask you to pour out your Holy Spirit upon us. Won't you stand for a closing benediction? And I'll dismiss you. The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. And everybody said amen.

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