

Renew Series Week 2 Devotions

In Week 2 of the Renew Series we explored the first of eight building blocks to thinking and acting like a champion - Awareness. Each day this week you will read a devotion written by Pastor Debbie and Ashley Tittley and do exercises to help you develop skills of awareness.

Day 1: Be Aware of Your Life

Read: *Wake up, sleeper rise from the dead and Christ will shine on you. Be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise.* (Ephesians 5:14-15)

Reflect: Do you ever find that you are physically present but not emotionally or mentally present? Maybe sometimes when someone is speaking to you, you don't actually hear them because you are distracted or you are thinking of something else. Maybe you are even in danger of getting blindsided by something in your environment because of a lack of awareness. Paul in the verse you just read challenges us to be awake and to be careful of how we live. Clearly awareness is a skill that we need to develop in our lives.

Do: We learnt the 3*3+1 Exercise on Sunday morning in our session on awareness. Take a few minutes to complete the exercise now: Write down 3 things you see around you, 3 things you hear, 3 things you feel and 1 thing of excellence. Do this occasionally through your day – you don't always have to write things down. The exercise will help you become more aware of your environment.

Pray: Ask God to help you to be more aware of what is going on in and around your life and to do everything with excellence and not in half measures.

Day 2: Be Aware of Your Body (Physical Awareness)

Read: *Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own.* (1 Corinthians 6:19)

Reflect: When you have a chance read Daniels story (Daniel 1:1-21). Daniel and his friends while working for the king decide to eat only healthy food, not the king's fine food. For 3 years they ate only healthy food and they were stronger than anyone else at the end of the time. Also, God gave the young men knowledge, and they were able to be skillful with what they learned and had wisdom to use the learning wisely. Daniel was also given the ability to understand dreams and visions. At the end of the three years, Melzar brought the whole group of young men in before the king and Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood out in the group. The Bible says there was none like them and whatever the king asked them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in his kingdom. It seems as if when you eat healthy it affects every part of you from physical to mentally.

Learn: You need to take care of your body because it is God's temple and a healthy body glorifies God. You will be a better witness for God and you will have more energy and be better equipped for what God has planned for you. Plus, you will stand out from the crowd!

Do: The challenge here is to write down a schedule of your week. Include school times, free time, sports and sleep. It's good to see just how your day is structured and it helps you to know if you are living a balanced life. And as you do that ask yourself if you are eating healthy? Make sure that you get enough of everything to live a balanced life. You could draw a wheel with the amount of time you spend doing each thing on it. Hey, don't forget to do the 3*3+1 Exercise in different situations you find yourself in during this week!

Pray: *Lord I know I am running a race, and I want to get the prize. Lord help me to train so that it will bring glory to you. I know that the crown I will win will last forever. Lord help me not run aimlessly, or be like a boxer who beats the air, instead help me to train my body and beat it into shape, so I will not be disqualified from this race. Help me see that I am your masterpiece, created to do good things that you have planned for me to do. Lord I know the more healthy and fit that I am the more energy I will have to put into whatever task you have for me. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)*

Day 3: Be Aware of Your Thoughts (Mental Awareness)

Read: *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (Philippians 4:8)*

Reflect: When I was young I was excellent at climbing trees, but one time I was so confident as I climbed that I climbed really high and before I knew it I lost my footing and I slid all the way down, right to the ground. I wasn't wearing sleeves and all the skin on the inside of my arms was sandpapered off my arm. Yea, ouch!!! Guess what my mom asked me: "What were you thinking?" I'm sure you've been asked that question. Has something like that happened to you in the past? If so, what did you do and what was your reply to that question?

Learn: What kinds of thoughts are putting down roots? What kinds of things are our minds really focused on? Why is it so important that we evaluate our thoughts? The answer is: because we are what we think. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Beware of what you set your mind on for that you will surely become." The spiritual battle begins and is ultimately won or lost in our minds. The aim today is to encourage and challenge us to keep our minds focused on what is pure and true.

Do: I don't know about you but I really think the snapping of the elastic band that we used, every time we had a negative thought really worked. And so if you have stopped using it I suggest you find it and start using it again. At least look at it when you wear it as a reminder to think positively. Your thoughts matter!

Prayer: Jesus please show me how to have the attitude of simple trust that young children have, so that I can place my cares into your hands. And so I ask for the power of your Holy Spirit that I may remain positive throughout all that is ordinary or difficult in my daily life. Thank you. Amen

Day 4: Be Aware of Your Feelings (Emotional Awareness)

Read: *Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life. (Proverbs 4:23)*

Learn: Christianity is all about a God who wants your heart, not your money, popularity, good looks. As you read through the Bible you see this is true. God is not interested in appearances and He hates religious acts that are all about show and tell. God searches our hearts and He wants us to love Him and others with our whole heart. Did you know our hearts are where our dreams, passions, desires, motives, thoughts, actions, desires and decisions are birthed? Now you know why scripture tells us to guard our hearts. Our hearts determine the course of our lives.

Reflect: What are your dreams? What does your future look like?

Learn: You need to guard your heart from idols, things that take the place of God. Whether it is money, fame, power or sex – these will lead you to destruction and away from God.

Do: Think for a moment what you have allowed to capture your heart. Ask God to reveal to you what idols have you put before him. You can confess right now, just by saying you are sorry. Also, don't forget to do the 3*3+1 Exercise in different situations you find yourself in during this week!

Read: *Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.* (Psalm 51:10)

Pray: Spend some time thanking God for his love and asking him to help you guard your heart.

Day 5: Be Aware of Your God (Spiritual Awareness)

Read: *Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path.* (Psalm 119:105)

Reflect: As a teen I grew up singing a song, Shine Jesus Shine and I loved the first verse which went like this: *Lord the light of your love is shining, in the midst of the darkness shining. Jesus Light of the world, shine upon us, set us free by the truth you now bring us. Shine on me, shine on me.* What song do you love singing that lifts your spirit and makes you feel safe?

Learn: Light is a marvelous thing isn't it? The first thing anyone wants to do when they get lost in the dark is to have light. A fire will do or the torch on your cell phone, anything to light your way, so the darkness doesn't consume your situation. Before you can eliminate the darkness you have to turn on the light. It works the same with the Word. God's Word will light your path. But for it to light your path, you need to read it, study it and absorb it into your life and you won't get lost in the dark.

Do: I just love reading the Psalms, David is so in love and passionate about God and I'm not as eloquent as David at expressing myself so what I love doing is pretending I am David and I read Psalms as if they are my words. So you try it. Start by reading Psalm 1: *I'm blessed because I don't walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but my delight is in the law of the LORD, and I meditate on his law day and night. I'm like a person, like a tree planted by streams of water, I yield my fruit in season and my leaf does not wither— whatever I do prospers.*" (Psalms 1:1-3). Also, don't forget to do the 3*3+1 Exercise in different situations you find yourself in during this week!

Pray: Thank God for giving you His Word so that you can have an intimate relationship with Him. Ask him to help you to be faithful to read His Word and use it to guide you through life.

Day 6: Be Aware of Your Environment (Situational Awareness)

Read: *Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong.* (1 Corinthians 6:13)

Do: Close your eyes and listen to all the sounds that surround you. Can you name them? E.g. TV noise, cars driving past. We can so easily be distracted, probably because there are so many distractions out there. But we have learned to be careful what we allow to distract us.

Learn: I remember a self-defense instructor once telling us at Youth that those who are aware of their surroundings will never get attacked. They are those people who while walking are being observant of their surroundings and who are not looking at the floor as they walk. Probably because they would be able to identify the perpetrators or they would know how to get out of the situation. Either way it's important to know your surroundings.

Do: Tonight I want you to shut those distractions out and I want you to try something new. Are you keen? Slowly read this passage: *"Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? "Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? "If you then, being evil, know how to*

give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him! (Matthew 7:9-11). Now I want you to ask God, "How do you feel about me God?" And because you have asked know He will answer. Become aware of the flow of thoughts that are coming into your mind. That is God speaking. (Only if they are good and positive!). Focus on those thoughts; they will probably sound like you but guess what, God speaks like you because then you will understand Him better. Now write those thoughts down. And treasure them because that's what God thinks of you.

Pray: First thank God for speaking to you, then praise Him for who He is and this incredible journey He is taking you on and ask Him to help you make good and healthy choices in life. Amen.

Day 7: Be Aware of Others

Read: *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.* (Philippians 2:3-4)

Reflect: Have you ever had a family members or a friend struggle with something that you missed or that you were not aware of and you were so shocked that you didn't see it? How could you have helped them had you been aware of their situation?

Learn: Rather than filling your life with objects, fill your life with the joy of a giving heart. Help anyone in need and God will bless you with a happy heart. Bill Gates has been known for all the billions of dollars he has made but more than that he is also known for his generosity. There are many reasons to give. By giving we obey God; we show others God's heart; we trust God to supply our needs; we advance God's kingdom; and we make God smile. I could give many more reasons why it's good to give!

Do: Pay it forward. Find someone in need and do one good deed for them, whether it's a person in need of food, a family member in need of a word or a friend who could use a hug. And as you give I want you to become aware of the feeling you get when you obey God's Word.

Pray: Right now, ask God to give you the name or an image of the person He would like you to pay it forward. Then thank Him that He is going to use you. Pray for the person you are going to reach out to.

Do: Now don't forget to do what you have decided to do.