

Renew Series Week 8 Devotions

Our devotions for the coming week were written by Micah Washe, an adult leader at Encounter Youth. Each day of the coming week you will explore an aspect of mental rehearsal that we learnt about on Sunday in our Renew Series as you read God's word, think about it, get challenged and spend time in prayer.

DAY 1: FOCUS

READ: "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things." (Philippians 4:8, NIV)

THINK: Our minds are so powerful that our thoughts can be just as effective as our actions. So when we think about doing something like playing a game of football or chess, whatever you're into, our mind thinks it's the same thing as actually doing it. What this means for us is that we're always mentally rehearsing. You're always imagining doing things, right? You might not have an imaginary friend that you talk to (hopefully not) but you probably are always thinking about doing things. Well that's a mental rehearsal, and it can be a good or bad thing depending on what you are thinking about. So if you want to instinctively become better at anything, the best place to start is the mind according to today's passage.

CHALLENGE: If you want to improve on anything, whether that is in the classroom, on the sports field or even in your relationship with God, the challenge is to imagine success in those areas. Think positively about those things, and God will grow that seed.

PRAYER: Lord, we thank you for gifting us with powerful minds that can do amazing wonders for you. We just ask that you help us focus our thoughts on the positive side of things, and that we may be able to see success in all the areas of our lives, the most important being our relationship with you. Forgive us for where we've fallen short and have just given into negative thoughts about who we are and what we are capable of. Help us to yield those things to you. In Jesus' name, AMEN!

DAY 2: VIVIDNESS

READ: "As it is written: 'I have made you a father of many nations.' He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed- the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not. Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.'" (Romans 4:17-18, NIV)

THINK: Mental rehearsals aren't something new or a trending meme that's being shared with you. People as far back as Abraham were practicing this. However, in order for it to work in our lives, our brain needs for that thing to be as real as possible. It likes real things and, as we learnt in the message on Sunday, it cannot really tell the difference between what is real and what is not. So why not take advantage of that? The more vivid and "real" your mental rehearsals are, the more your brain starts to believe that the thing you are mentally rehearsing to be true. Just like God, you can start calling into being things that aren't in the way you perform, the way you behave and even the way you feel.

CHALLENGE: If you are trying to mentally rehearse something, do not hold back on how vivid and real you want to make that thing. Chances are that before you even knew that you mentally rehearse everyday anyways, you never really pay attention to how detailed your imaginings and thoughts were. Be encouraged to not only pay attention to those things, but to also practise enhancing the vividness of those positive mental rehearsal so that they can be real to you.

PRAYER: Lord, thank you that the skies are the limit with what we can envision. Thank you for blessing us with imaginative and open minds that we can use to not only our favour but ultimately

to your favour, Lord God. We ask that you help us take full advantage of the gift that you have given us, even though at times we have either utilised it or we have used it in a self-detrimental way. We pray that you will guide towards vividly seeing the fullness of your goodness in our lives, as well as towards seeing that goodness help us prosper in everything we do. We love you, Lord. AMEN!

DAY 3: CONTROL

READ: For as he thinks in his heart, so is he [in behavior—one who manipulates]. He says to you, “Eat and drink,” Yet his heart is not with you [but it is begrudging the cost]. (Proverbs 23:7, AMP)

THINK: Have you ever been asked for some lunch, money or stationery from somebody but you did not want to give it to them? You have probably done something that was the right thing to do even though you did not want to do it. This Bible verse is talking about that, and we can take encouragement from it because it shows us how to actually change that particular thing; our thoughts. If the way we think determines how we feel or who we are in situations, then if we begin to think in ways that make us feel good about the things that we do then we will want to do it. Mental rehearsals can help us with how we perform even for things that we don’t like doing. This is crucial because it means it gives us control over our hearts.

CHALLENGE: Whatever it is that you do not exactly love in your life, whether it is a subject at school or a chore at home, every thought you have about that thing is a chance to either cement that dislike or to change how you feel about it. Do not just mentally rehearse being good at doing the things that you want to do, but also mentally rehearse being good at doing the things that you really just need to do. This will help you to be motivated to do things that you often put off doing.

PRAYER: Father God, you are so amazing not just because you do things that you love to do but also because you bear the weight of doing difficult things too, like sending your son to die for us. We pray that the Spirit of power, of love and of self-control that is mentioned in your Word would be real in us, in our everyday lives. Help us to change the way we think about those things that are a thorn to our side, so that we will not just tolerate them but actually love them. We pray this in your mighty name, AMEN!

DAY 4: PERSPECTIVE

READ: “David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.” (1 Samuel 17:45, NIV)

THINK: For most, if not all, of his life, David had been mentally rehearsing the bigness of God. The verse above is not the only example of that. However, one must wonder how David got to having such a godly perspective to begin with. Was he just born with it? Surely not. Nobody comes out of their mother’s wombs slaying lions, bears and giants on the odd weekend. For David, he had built that perspective through years of faith in God. He saw God doing the amazing things that God had done in his life, but David saw those things even before God had done them. That’s great for us because it means that we just need to trust God, and mentally rehearse Him slaying the giants we face in our lives.

CHALLENGE: As we learnt, most people do not just start having a winning perspective on life. It is something that begins through a mental rehearsal in our minds. So get motivated to try that out this week. The greatest perspective that you can have is not you overcoming the obstacles in your life through your own sheer willpower, but it is God smashing those obstacles to pieces and using you to do it. You need to be okay with the Spirit empowering you to do giant-slaying feats and you need to be thinking about that as often as you can. If you do, you’ll grow that perspective to an incredible size and people will love and respect that about you.

PRAYER: God, thank you that you are bigger than anything and everything that this world can throw at us. We also thank you that we get to partner with you in overcoming the obstacles in not just our lives but also in the lives of those around us. We ask that you help us grow this godly perspective in substitution of thoughts or attitudes that do not acknowledge how much bigger you are than everything else. We give you all the glory and the praise of our successes because all these things come from you. Thank you so much, Lord. AMEN!

DAY 5: REPETITION

READ: “Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives’ tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things.” (1 Timothy 4:7-8)

THINK: Even the bible thinks gymming is a good idea. However, more than that, exercising our minds to think in a godly way is of the utmost importance. Yesterday’s devotion was all about having a godly perspective that we need to have been building, but the thing is that you never really stop building that thing. The greatest ballerinas in the world do not stop practicing just because of their status, nor do the greatest musicians or sportsmen. Everyone who is good at anything is always practicing that very thing. The same applies to us if we want to be any good at anything, but most importantly at being godly on a mental level. The word “rehearsal” is just another word for “practice: after all. When we mentally rehearse something, we are virtually practicing that thing.

CHALLENGE: Doing something over and over again can be difficult or even a bit boring. However, understand that because we are always mentally rehearsing, you might be practicing certain thoughts that are self-detrimental. You can help but think about things, so you might as well as practice thinking about them in a helpful, godly. Challenge yourself to train those muscles every day. The best to think positively is through your devotions, as well as through prayer with God.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, we thank you that you have given us the power to change our lives and our destinies through the simple repetition of good thoughts. We also thank you that you are always with us when we are practicing these things. Help us to continue to do those things in an effective way that is consistent and that glorifies you. We ask for forgiveness for when we have not only failed to practice godly thinking but have embraced ungodly thoughts as well. Renew our minds, as your word says that you do, and make us more like you even in the way we think. We ask this in your Holy name, AMEN!

DAY 6: PRAYER

READ: I can do all this through him who gives me strength. (Philippians 4:13, NIV)

THINK: Sometimes, if not most times, there are things that we simply cannot see ourselves doing alone. At times, the things that we desire to do require a certain level of strength that we just do not have within ourselves and maybe knowing that makes it hard to mentally rehearse victory with any conviction. However, that is probably the entire point of the faith we have in Jesus. We are not, nor should we be, trying to do these things out of our own might. Otherwise, what would be the point of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection? It’s actually Jesus who empowers us.

CHALLENGE: When you are mentally rehearsing anything, do it with God in mind. Practice making him the center of everything in your life, especially the things that you think about. Do not encourage godless thought because that leads to godless behaviour and probably godless actions. Trust God with everything, even the small things, in your life because that is prayer. Mental rehearsals can become like prayers too, and when we put God in the middle of them then it is all the more likely that those things will become real in our lives.

PRAYER: Lord, we praise you for your love for us. Thanks you that you are always empowering us through your spirit to do the things that would otherwise be impossible for us. We pray that you’ll

help us live a life of daily provision and empowerment. Forgive us for the times we've tried to do it on our own and have made a mess of things in the process. We give of ourselves to you now, because that is our true worship according to your Word. Thank you, Lord. AMEN!

DAY 7: DEVOTIONS

READ: "I have set the LORD always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved." (Psalm 16:8)

THINK: Thank God we do not have to play-pretend that he is with us. However, since we have been learning to think a certain way that makes things real to our brains, spending time with God can also be one of those things. Knowing and believing that God is with us is very important, but experience God's presence happens when we spend time with God. Devotions are an important mental rehearsal, because we meditate on the Word as well as get to learn about God. We're practicing knowing him and knowing his Word so that when life tests us, like Jesus was tested in the wilderness, then our minds are trained to know that he is there and they are also trained to know his will.

CHALLENGE: You've already taken up the challenge of getting to know Jesus by spending time with him through devotions like this. So be encouraged by the fact that you are either doing this right now or by the fact that you have been doing these devotions. Also, let that encouragement fuel you to spend so much more time with him.

PRAYER: Father, thanks that we have the honour of being able to get to know you as well as be with you always. We appreciate you and your love for us. We ask that you would empower us to do more and more devotions like this, that you would encourage us to read your Word and that you would cause us to speak with you. We are sorry for the times we have failed to do those things, but thank you for your grace that gives us the space to learn how to do spend time with you. We love you, God. AMEN!