

TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE



THE GOD- SHAPED BRAIN

How Changing Your View of God
Transforms Your Life

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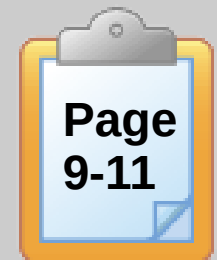
Section One:
God, The Brain and What Went Wrong
Chapter 1: God Is Love



Although we have the
power over what we believe,
what we believe holds real power over us.

POWER TO HEAL and
POWER TO DESTROY

The story of Vance Vanders





Our beliefs
change us
mentally,
physically
and
spiritually.

The Battlefield On Which The War Between Christ And Satan Is Fought Is The Mind.



Distorted views of God can bring pain, suffering and ultimately, death, whereas scriptural thinking about God results in healing of mind, body and relationships.

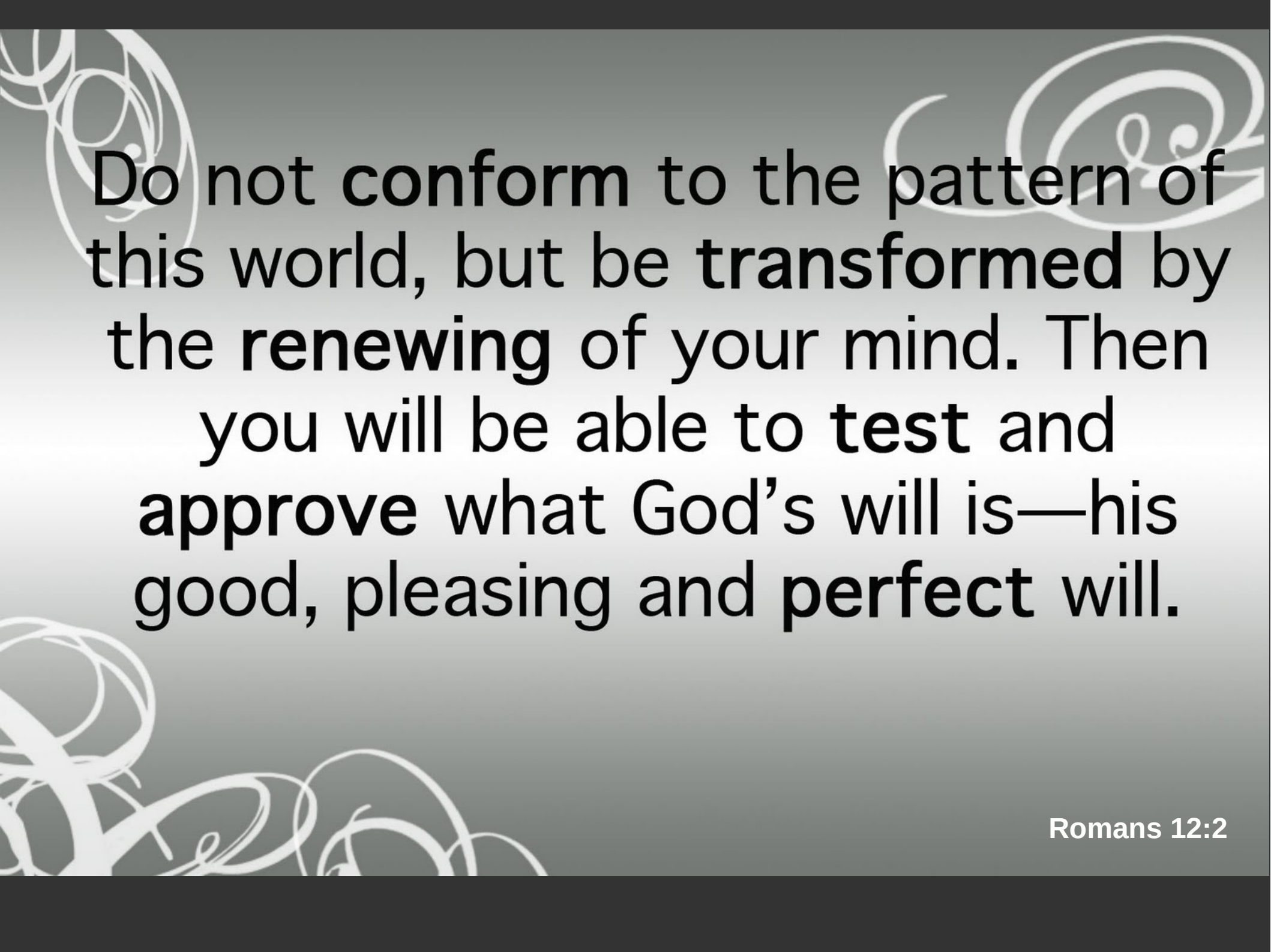
How does our view of God's character affect our behavior?

**THE WAY
YOU VIEW GOD
WILL EVENTUALLY
SHOW UP
IN THE WAY YOU
LIVE YOUR LIFE.**

CHARLES H. SPURGEON

*Scripture must be taken as a whole –
tying together all the various pieces to
obtain the fullest revelation of God's
character. As believers, we have the
Holy Spirit and are capable of
discerning scripture correctly,
without the need of a priest or a
theologian.*

*Do not surrender your thinking to
other human beings.*



Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:2

The Bible says that *God is love...*

It doesn't say that God is forgiveness, even though He is forgiving; or that God is knowledge, even though He is all-knowing; or that God is power, even though He is all-powerful.

All other attributes are, like facets on a diamond - radiant windows into the heart of God.



But with regard to love, God does not merely act it out – *He embodies it!*

“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other.” 1 John 3:14

**Because God is love,
His very essence,
nature and character
is outward moving,
other-centered,
giving, and beneficial
to others.**

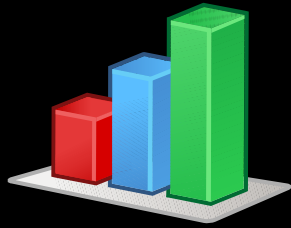


This is how we know what love is: Christ gave His life for us.

**God's nature of love is seen in creation, because all
of nature, all life, is built, designed, constructed to
operate on the template of God's love.**



Sometimes we are taught that
God's love is authoritarian and
commanding. It rules over us
and inflicts punishment for
disobedience.



In 2006, Baylor University took a national survey and found that only **23%** of people viewed God as benevolent or loving, while **32%** saw the Almighty as authoritarian, **16%** as critical and **24 %** as distant.

Five percent claimed to be atheist.

*Does it matter what God-concept
we hold to?*

*Research at the University of
Pennsylvania suggests it does. The
findings documented that all forms of
contemplative meditation were
associated with positive brain changes
– but the greatest improvements
occurred when participants meditated
specifically on a God of love.*

Such meditation was associated with growth in the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain where we reason, make judgments and experience Godlike love.

They also experienced increased capacity for empathy, sympathy, compassion and altruism.

Not only does other-centered love increase when we worship a God of love, but sharp thinking and memory improve as well.



*Worshiping a God
of love actually
stimulates the
brain to heal and
grow.*




When we worship a God who is punitive,
authoritarian, critical or distant
– fear circuits are activated
and, if not calmed, will result in
chronic inflammation and
damage to both brain and body.

Applications To Your Life Today

1. Examine Scripture for evidence of God's character of love. Look at the life of Christ to confirm God's love, as understood in the rest of Scripture. Look for the principle of love in nature.



 2. The world is filled with many religions, denominations, and views about God.



Any theory that violates the law of love would be viewed as incorrect.



Are your conclusions in harmony with the law of love, or is there conflict?

3. The Most Important Application Is Choosing To Live In Harmony With The Law Of Love.

**A GENEROUS PERSON
WILL PROSPER;
WHOEVER REFRESHES
OTHERS WILL BE
REFRESHED.**

PROVERBS 11:25

Choosing to operate
in harmony with
God's design for life
results in better
mental and physical
health.

BECOME A VOLUNTEER - MAKE A DIFFERENCE



Studies over the years have examined the relationship between volunteer work and health related outcomes. Not only is volunteer work associated with increased leadership and self-confidence, but one study showed that volunteers live statistically longer and had better physical functioning compared to those who did not volunteer.

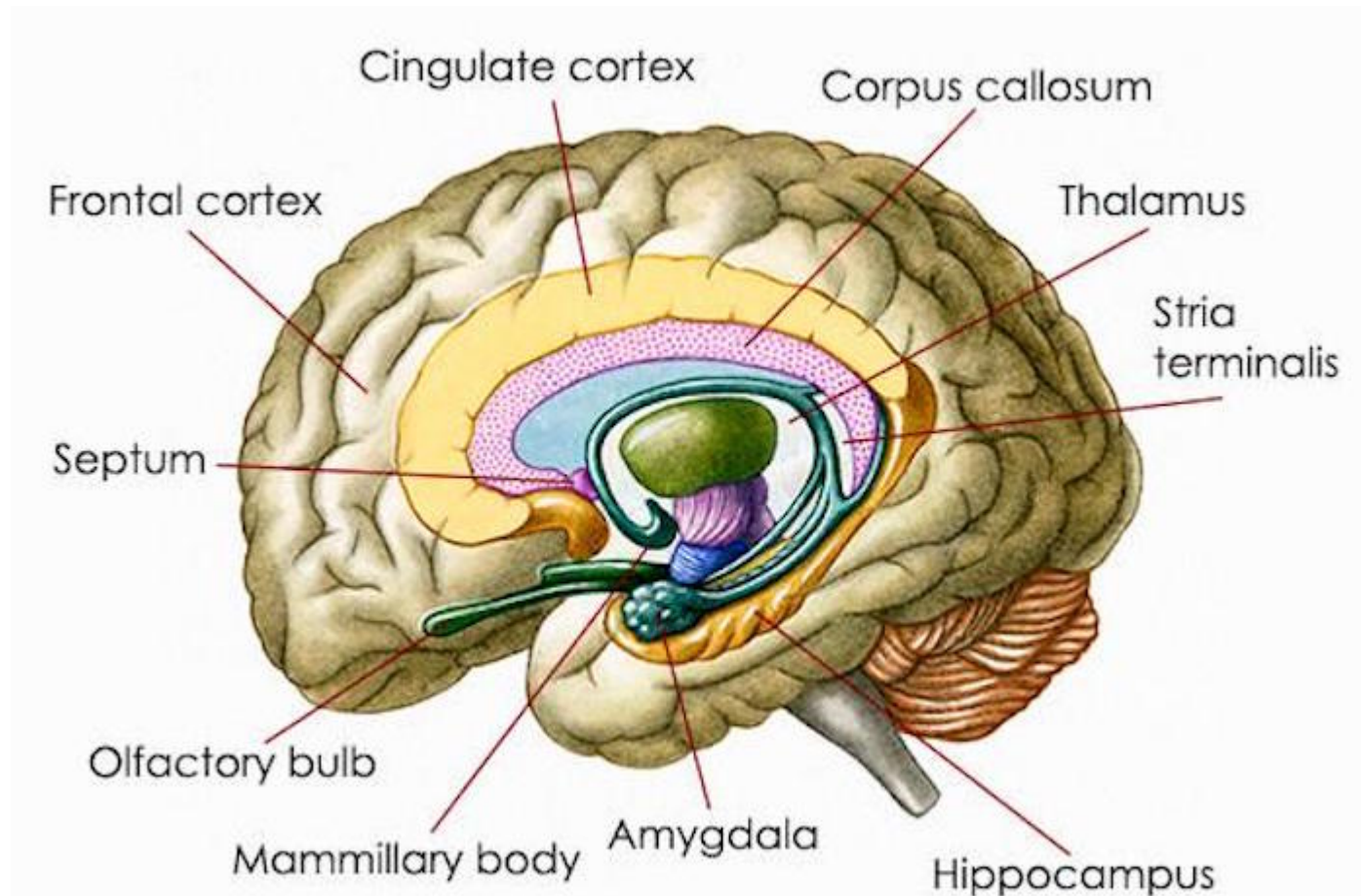
Section One:

God, The Brain and What Went Wrong

Chapter 2: The Human Brain and Broken Love

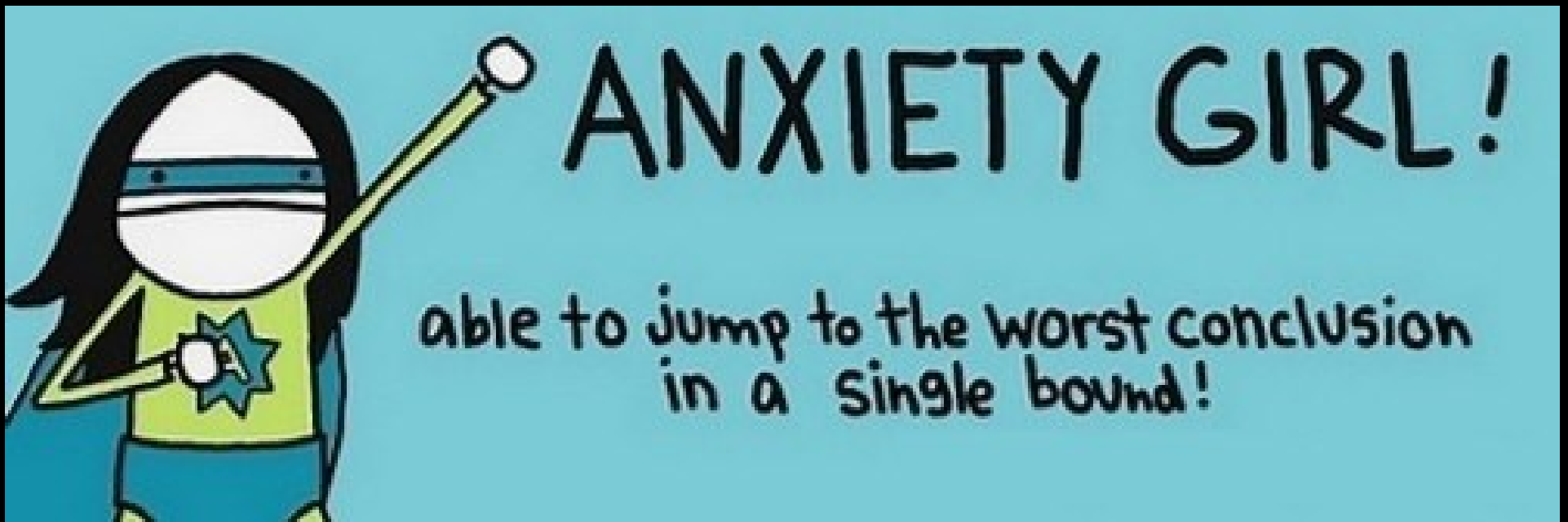


The human brain is the most sophisticated, elegant, biological piece of machinery ever known and you don't have to be a neuroscientist to understand some basic brain science.





Meet Amy G. Dala, also known as ...



The *amygdala* acts as brain's alarm switch.



The *amygdala* releases attention getting adrenaline, alerts the hypothalamus, and the body's emergency response is activated, producing the stress steroids known as glucocorticoids.

Once the alarm has sounded, the brain's administrator, the *prefrontal cortex* evaluates whether there is real danger or whether it's a false alarm.

If there is real danger, the alarm **gets louder**.
If it's determined to be a false alarm,
everything **calms down**.

The prefrontal cortex processes stimuli from
your brain's emotional center to either calm
the system or put you squarely in '**fight-or-
flight**' mode.

Many people have difficulty calming their
alarm circuitry, struggling with recurring or
chronic fear.

**If God designed
humanity to be in
harmony with His law
of love, what happened
that so many are
afraid and anxious?**

The Origin of Fear

"THE DEVIL...
WAS A MURDERER
FROM THE BEGINNING,
NOT HOLDING TO THE
TRUTH, FOR THERE IS NO
TRUTH IN HIM.
WHEN HE LIES, HE SPEAKS
HIS NATIVE LANGUAGE,
FOR HE IS A LIAR AND
THE FATHER OF LIES."

JOHN 8:44

1. Lies believed break the circle of love and trust.

Adam and Eve believed Satan's lies that God was trying to hold them down by hoarding power and control. *They lost trust in God.*

2. Broken love and trust result in fear and selfishness.

They feared God and hid from Him. Since they no longer trusted Him they had to watch out for themselves. In today's world we use the terms, "survival of the fittest" "the drive to survive" "kill or be killed" or "watch out for me first."

3. Fear and selfishness result in acts of sin.

Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate the fruit.

4. Acts of sin result in damage to mind, character and body – a terminal condition.

“The wages of sin is death.” (Romans 6:23)

In fallen humanity, love was suppressed and fear became the primary driving force.

Ever since Adam, humans have been born with their brains controlled by fear and selfishness. The selfish, fear controlled brain is hostile to God, and unable to please Him.

But when one trusts God, a change takes place: the prefrontal cortex is imbued with love and truth from the Holy Spirit, restoring God's balance, leading back to other-centered peaceful living.

The apostle Paul recognizes this in Romans 8: 5-8.

“Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.”

Our Terminal Condition Is Not Our Fault

Just as a child born to AIDS infected parents, we are born into a terminally selfish state, and we didn't do anything wrong to be born this way.

Though it's not our fault, we still will suffer from this condition unless it's cured. We are born with brains that naturally fire the alarm center and seek to protect self at the expense of others.

When the law of love is broken, the only possible outcome, without divine intervention, is ruin and death.

Only love, coming from God, is capable of freeing us from fear.

There is no
FEAR IN LOVE;
BUT *perfect* ♥
LOVE
casts out FEAR.

1 John 4:18



Brain imaging studies have demonstrated that the more time a person spends in communion with the *God of love*, the more they experience decreases in stress hormones, blood pressure, heart rate and risk of untimely death.

Even in our mortal and defective bodies, love is healing.

Conversely, the more time spent contemplating an angry, wrathful, fear-inducing deity, the more *damage* to the brain and the more rapidly one's health declines.

The Giver of Life

Jesus said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10)

The abundant life is the life of love which we can only have when we replace the *twisted version of God* with the *truth*, enabling God’s love to flow through us to others.

Section One:
God, The Brain and What Went Wrong
Chapter 3: The Infection of Fear

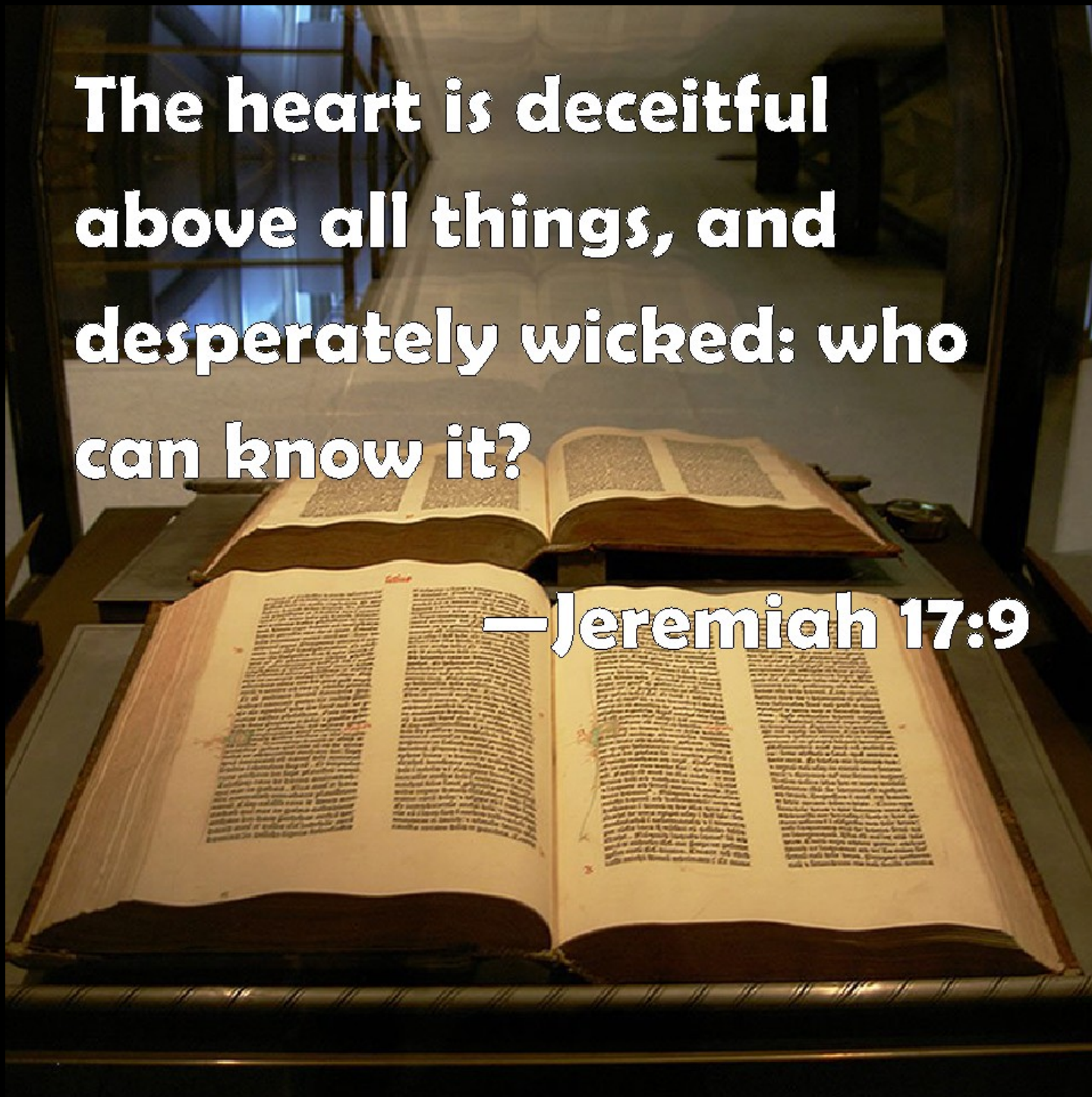


Fear is an intruder, an unnatural invader, like a flesh eating bacteria, ravaging and deforming all creation.

Fueled by fear and selfishness, the imagination of men ran wild and created every distorted, twisted and perverted idea about God, which only incited more fear.

**The heart is deceitful
above all things, and
desperately wicked: who
can know it?**

—Jeremiah 17:9



Today, fear is constantly with us, stalking us, hiding in the shadows of our minds.

It doesn't wait for an invitation; it barges into our lives like cattle tromping daisies.

Not the kind of fear as when a house is on fire or a bear is approaching, but the noxious uneasiness which is **fear born of sin**.

Fear is part of the **infection of sin** that leads us away from God, away from healing, away from peace into further **self-destruction**.



The Many Faces Of Fear

Fear comes in many sizes and shapes. At one end of the fear spectrum is the **megalomaniac** – the type of fear used by people such as Hitler, whose rise to power was **ruled by fear**, but rather than eradicate it, they embraced it and **fear became their weapon against society**.

On the other end is the human mouse – afraid of rejection, fearful of embarrassment, terrified of criticism, they become a doormat to be walked on by the entire world. They never say no, never stand up, never set boundaries because they are controlled by fear of what others might think.



In between are all the others; the playground bully, the proud, the arrogant, the racist, the shopaholic, the liar, the cheater, the fraud ... each *motivated by fear* and seeking some way to *protect self, promote self or advance self*.

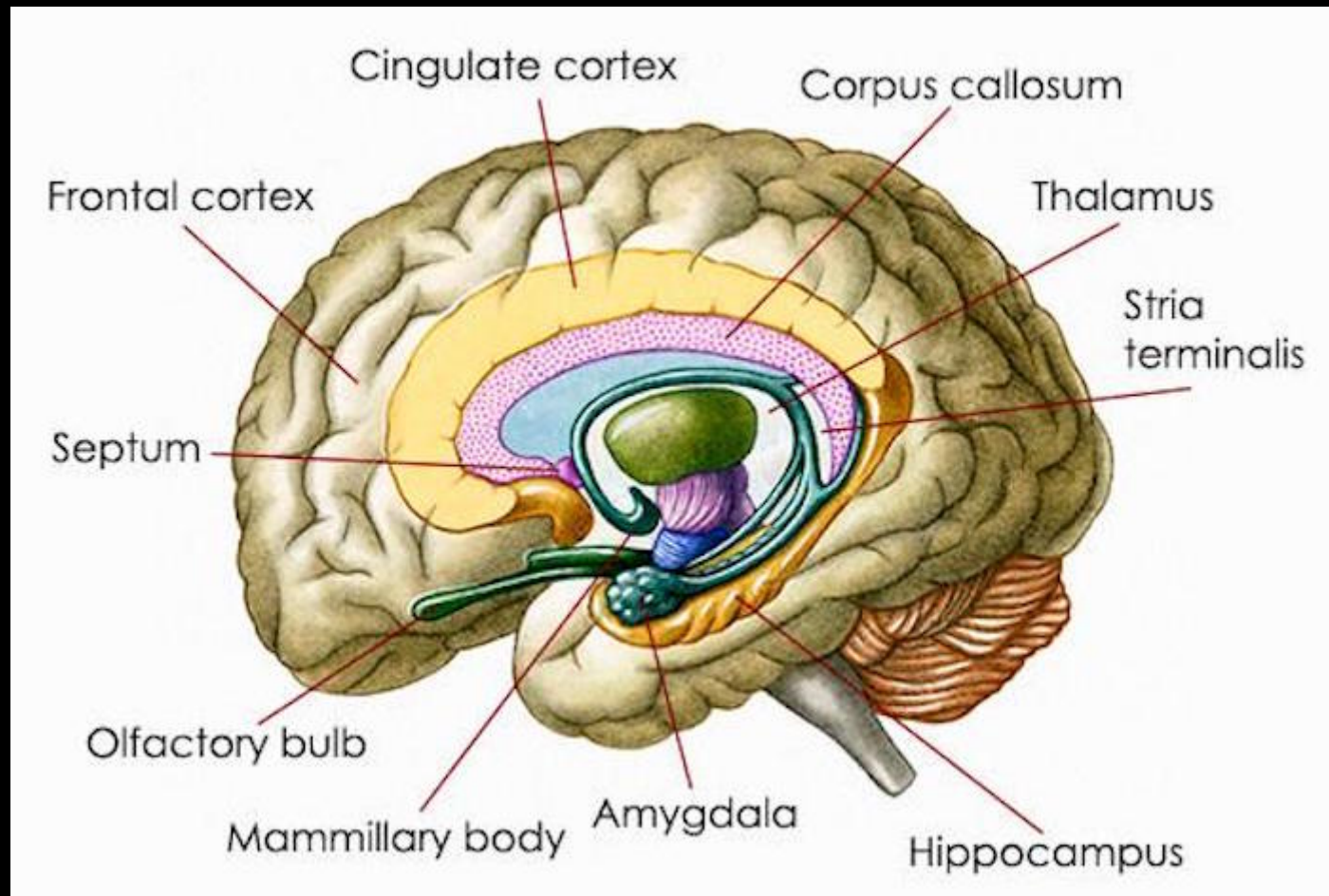
Out Of Balance

When the *amydgala* is constantly firing, the stress is shunting blood and energy away from our internal organs to the muscles. Our *immune system* is *impaired* and our *prefrontal cortex* becomes paralyzed.

This is why people under high stress are more vulnerable to infections, colds and other illnesses and why people perform so poorly on tests when they are anxious or fearful.



It is in the prefrontal cortex that we experience healthy love, compassion, empathy, reasoning capacity, judgment, the ability to worship, plan organize and problem solve.



Fear and Love are Inversely Proportional

When fear increases, love, growth and healthy thinking decreases.

When love increases, not only does fear decrease, but there is improvement in development and healthy thinking



PERFECT

~~FEAR~~

LOVE

CASTS OUT

~~LOVE~~

FEAR

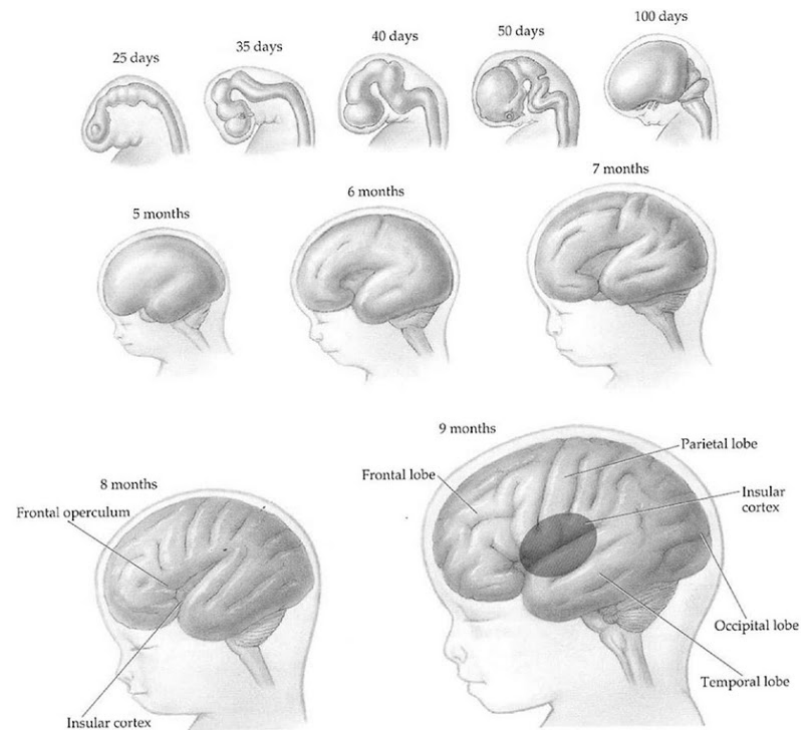
Fear, insecurity, selfishness, anger, rage, lust, jealousy, and aggression arise from our constantly stimulated limbic system.

This process damages the brain, and if not stopped, eventually the ability to think in healthy ways is completely lost.

How does this all get started?

Brain development begins in utero. Unusually high stress in the mother can produce stress hormones which cross the placenta barrier and alter the developing fetal brain.

A child born to a high stress mother will have a brain less capable of calming itself and turning off the alarm system (the amygdala.)



Such children start life from a baseline more fearful and anxious than they would otherwise have experienced.

After birth a baby's brain contains hundreds of millions more neurons at birth than it will have at eight years of age.

Like Michelangelo chipping off from a block of marble to create a masterpiece, the brain is retraining, strengthening and expanding hundreds of millions of neurons the first eight years of life, depending on education, environment and experience.

The neural circuits that are not used are pruned, deleted or reassigned.

Activities that repeatedly and regularly excite or fire the *amygdala* during childhood will impair the growth of the *prefrontal cortex*.

Entertainment and The Developing Brain

One of the factors in the rise of fear and psychiatric disorders is the high prevalence of theatrical entertainment, which refers to programming designed to cause emotional reactions while disengaging critical thinking.

Theatrical programming, which is not to be confused with educational programming, has as its primary effect to fire the limbic system while simultaneously diminishing prefrontal cortex activity.

Such programs are designed to get an emotional response from you (to laugh, cry, be afraid, aroused, angry, irritated, frustrated) while turning off your critical thinking.

With the developing brain of a child for the first eight years of life, the problem is not only with the content of a program, it is a neural-development issue.



In other words, watching G-rated theatrical entertainment will still damage the developing brain.

The Violent Link

A study was done in 1992 to determine if there was a link between television watching and increased violence in society. The United States and Canada introduced television in 1945, and South Africa in 1974.

Between 1945 and 1974 homicide rates in Canada increased 92%. In the United States there was a 93% increase. In South Africa, during the same time period, homicide *decreased* by 7%.

Note: In South Africa only white-on-white homicide was measured to avoid shewing the results with apartheid related racism.

Then, after the introduction of television, from 1974 until 1987, South Africa's white-on-white homicide rate soared by 130%!

The type of programming on television in the US between 1954 and 1974 were shows like *Howdy Doody*, *Leave It To Beaver*, *I Love Lucy*, *Car 54*, *Gilligan's Island*, *Lassie*, *Rin Tin Tin*, *The Lone Ranger*. All these shows would receive a G-rating. When the content worsened after 1974, homicide rates jumped by 130%.

If television watching is playing a role in societal violence, it seems that content is a *magnifier* of the problem but *not the core issue*.

The primary issue is neural development - overstimulation of the limbic system by theatrical entertainment, while decreasing the usage of the prefrontal cortex.

***This creates brains
which are out of balance.***



Then with adolescence comes the hormonal surge, where the limbic system becomes inflamed and emotions become unstable.

Without a properly developed prefrontal cortex to restrain the limbic system, such teens have higher risk of attention problems, are more likely to be moody, impulsive and aggressive.

They suffer increased anxiety, emotional volatility and violence. They also have an increased risk of alcohol and illegal drug use in attempts to chemically calm themselves.

Childhood Stress Changes The Brain

A study following 800 individuals over a period of 32 years concluded that childhood trauma also impacts brain development. Three measures of childhood stress was measured:

- Overt Physical or Sexual Abuse
- Neglect
- Socioeconomic Deprivation

The results demonstrated that the more childhood stress, the greater levels of stress hormones, which results in vulnerability to a variety of chronic disease states, including depression, inflammatory diseases and metabolic problems.

They have difficulty with empathy, compassion, trust, altruist love, sympathizing with others, patience and overall healthy relationships.

It's no wonder that according to the National Institute of Mental Health, anxiety disorders are the most common mental health problem in America, affecting 28.8 percent of adults at some point in their lives – *and this rate seems to be on the rise.*



DO NOT DESPAIR! The Good News is there is a Fertilizer for the Brain!

Brain Derived Neurotrophic Factor (BDNF)

BDNF, A secreted protein that acts as a fertilizer of the brain's neurons, making them grow more quickly and develop stronger connections.

It is the "Miracle Grow" of the brain, says neuroscience researcher and professor at Harvard University, Dr. John Ratey.

Miracle Grow for the Brain BDNF



Continued inflammation causes suppression of genes that produce proteins called neurotrophic factors. One such protein is a brain derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF)

Brain derived means that the brain makes it. Neurotrophic means something that makes the neurons grow strong. Think of it as a fertilizer for your neurons. This protein makes neurons stronger and sends out more connections to other neurons, increasing brain circuits. The brain even makes new neurons with this protein. It helps us learn faster and easier.

When this protein and other proteins like it are absent, the brain stops making new neurons and the neurons we have begin to wither and die.

The chronic stress signals causes a message to be transmitted to the DNA in the brain cells, turning off the gene that produces BDNF. Once this gene is turned off, brain volume begins to shrink in the hippocampus and parts of the prefrontal cortex. Such brain changes correlate with disorders like major depression.

The good news is that many brain regions remain changeable throughout life, thanks to a condition called *neuroplasticity*. This is particularly true of the prefrontal cortex. As we exercise healthy neural circuits, these circuits develop, strengthen and expand. The brain also prunes unhealthy circuits when we leave them idle.

God's Methods and Personal Application

If you suffered abuse during childhood, or struggled with an over active limbic system resulting in aggression, irritability, impatience, anger, lust, selfishness, fear of insecurity:

***Don't be discouraged.
God's methods bring healing!***

What are God's methods? **Truth.** **Love.** **Freedom.**

In order to be beneficial, treatment must be applied; truth is only beneficial when it is understood, believed and applied.

God's methods would include, but not be limited to:

1. Worshiping a God of love and rejecting God concepts that induce fear.
2. Regular meditation on some aspect of God's character of love, at least 15 minutes per day.
3. Being truthful and eliminating falsehood of any kind from the mind. This is particularly important for those who have suffered abuse and have mentally distorted the truth. The application of truth is healing.*

4. Live to give. Actively seeking to help others; get involved with some ministry or volunteer activity.



5. Establish relationships with people of loving and mature character, and *terminate destructive and exploitive relationships.*

6. Trust God with your life and your life's outcome. Choose to fulfill your known responsibilities in harmony with a clear conscience and God's will, and then trust God with how things turn out.

One of the greatest sources of worry and fear is trying to make life turn out the way we want, rather than simply choosing what is right in governance of self and trusting God with the outcome.

Remember Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?
Bow to the idol or not ... that was their choice.
How things turned out they could not control.
***Too often we don't focus on our own
responsibility, but what will happen as
the result of our choice.*** Then we modify our
choice to affect the outcome. If we were in their
position, when the music played, *might we have
bent down to tie our shoe?*



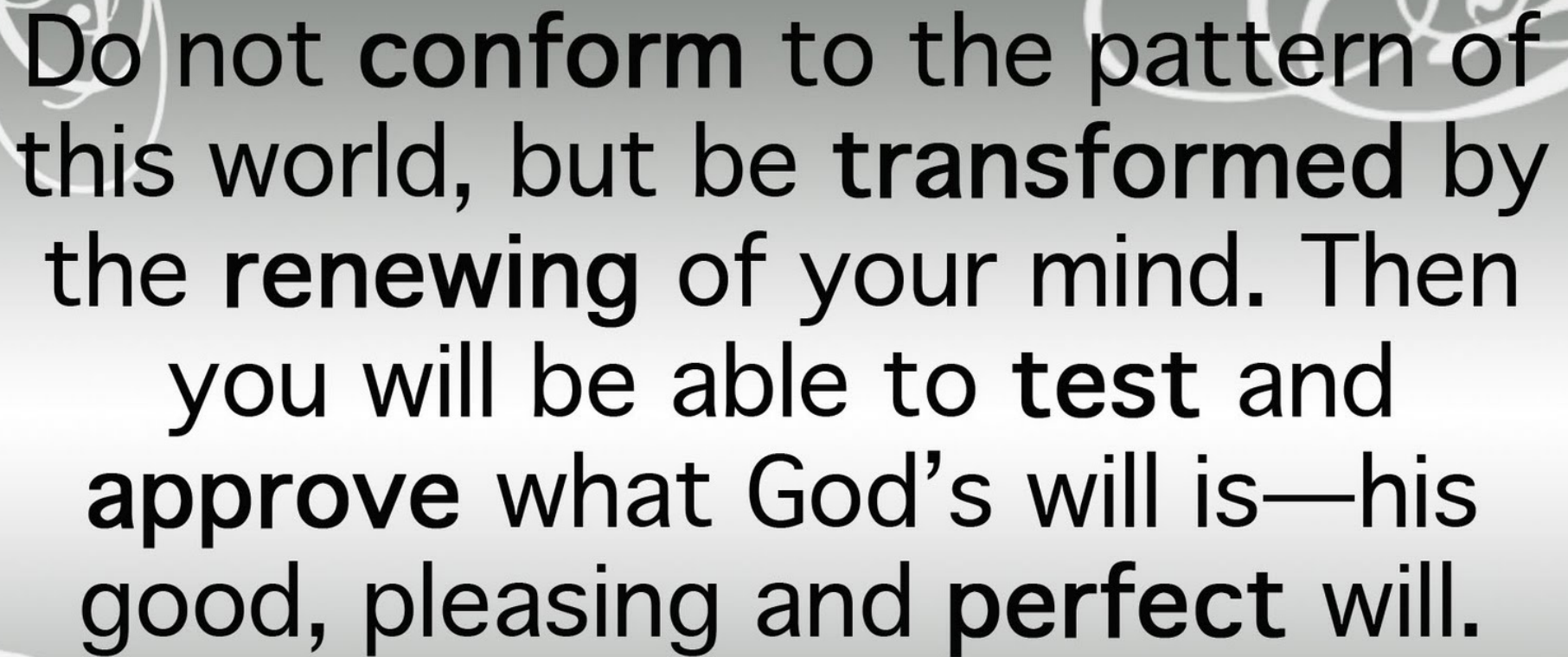
7. Live in harmony with the physical design protocols for life:

- regular sleep
- drink plenty of water
- exercise mind and body regularly
- avoid toxins
- eat a balanced diet

8. When mistakes are made, resolve guilt as soon as possible, forgive those who mistreat you, and don't hold to anger and grudges as such emotions activate the body's inflammatory cascade.

9. Resolve fear, as unremedied fear truly destroys.

It is love that heals and restores, but genuine love is only experienced when lies about God are removed.

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Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

ROMANS 12:2

Remember Philippians 4:8

“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.”

Study scripture to see that this is what God is:

True, Noble, Right, Pure, Lovely, Admirable and Praiseworthy.

Think About These Things



The End - Go In Peace