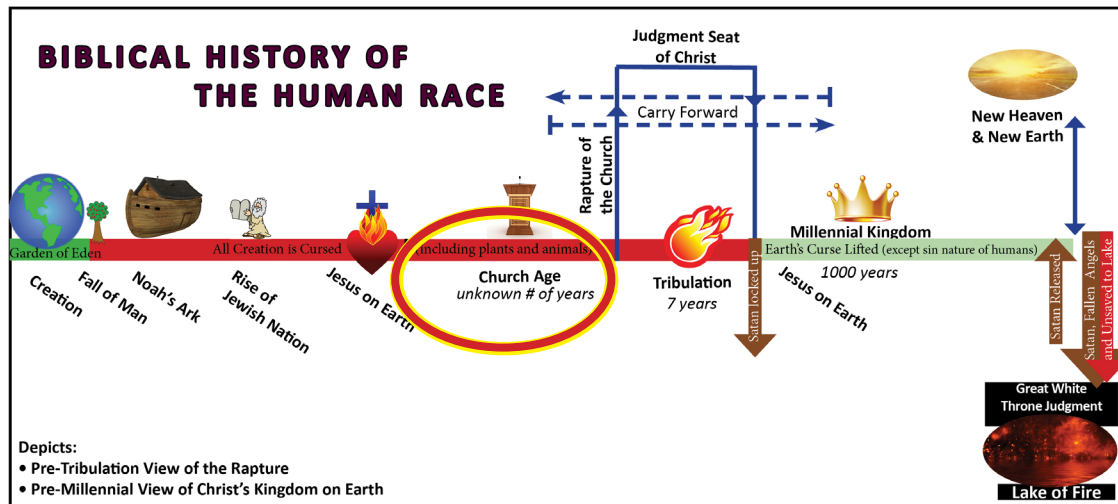


Preparing for the Rapture and Beyond



GLORY BOUND: The Upward Calling - Part 1

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We are now ready to return to our own time and place, when and where we live today, to begin to apply what we have learned.

See page 183 toolbox for full-page image.

CLUELESS??

*⁸The Lord has shown you what is good.
He has told you what he requires of you.
You must act with justice.
You must love to show mercy.
And you must be humble as you live in the sight
of your God. Micah 6:8 NIRV*

I hope you are beginning to see what I am seeing on my great quest for the truth about rewards. We were not left here "clueless" as to what the Lord wants (expects/commands) of us during our lifetime on earth. During His life on earth and through His Apostles and Prophets, He told us over and over again what we, as Believers, need to know to maximize our lives for our good and His glory. **And He sent His Holy Spirit to teach, train and empower us in righteousness, which is His ultimate goal.**

HE WANTS US TO BECOME MORE LIKE HIM EVERY DAY. Why?

- **His Glory** - [for the present] Our obedience and worship are **used by the Holy Spirit** to bring others into the Kingdom and to disciple fellow believers. Both actions bring the glory and honor



Let's be clear - Jesus does not **NEED** us to build His Kingdom; He has more than enough power to do it.

Isaiah 55:11 tells us:

*"...so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."*

Rather, He is allowing us the privilege of earning a position in His Kingdom government that is near and dear to Him.

What an incredible honor this is!

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to Him which is rightfully His.

¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see _____ and glorify _____ in heaven. Matthew 5:16

- **Our Growth** - [for the present and the future]
This reshapes our character into His image (imperfect clones - at least for now). The process of our growth in becoming Christ-like **results in earning our place in His Kingdom government.**

THIS IS WHAT REWARDS ARE ALL ABOUT

He wants “**His people**” to hold positions in **His Kingdom** (government) that He can trust to govern just as He would if He were physically there at that moment - not on the “other side of the world” - right there.

He is judging our fidelity, our loyalty, our obedience and our service NOW to decide our positions THEN.

Note that He is judging from a holistic viewpoint, not transactionally.

²⁷Peter answered him, “We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?” ²⁸Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

²⁹And _____ who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.” Matthew 19:27-29

The promises contained in these verses are not limited to the Apostles as evidenced by the word **EVERYONE** in verse 29. Note: verses 27 & 28 are specific to the Apostles, verse 29 is to all believers.

Let’s consider a few more verses to complete the picture:

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²¹*"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who _____ of my Father who is in heaven. Matthew 7:21*

²⁸*"What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.' ²⁹'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰"Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go. ³¹"Which of the two did what his father wanted?" Matthew 21:28-31*



Answer: _____

Pause a few minutes to consider the three verse selections (Matthew 19:27-29, Matthew 7:21 and Matthew 21:28-31) listed on these two pages. Circle the "connection point" - do you see it? The words are not the same in each set of verses, but the overall concept is. Talk this over with your group - do you agree? Note your answer here:

All three involve **obeying the will of the Father**. And they tie the concept of obedience with reward.

¹²*Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always _____ - not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence - continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, Philippians 2:12*

In Philippians 2:12, the Apostle Paul urges us to continue in obedience. The phrase "work out your salvation" means to **actively pursue spiritual maturity through obedience, prayer and reliance on the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures**. This is the process of

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Sanctification (where we are today on the timeline - see *Sanctification* in the toolbox.) While our salvation is a free gift received by grace through faith, our daily lives should be a **response of gratitude, love and anticipation of the times to come in the perhaps very near future.** He gave us something: eternal life with Him. He has the right to expect something in return: obedience.



OBEDIENCE IS THE KEY - THE QUESTION IS HOW CAN ANYONE TRULY OBEY?

Never fear, God has a plan to teach us obedience.

Have you ever considered that Jesus “learned” something while He was here on earth?

⁷During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission ⁸Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered ⁹and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him... Hebrews 5:7-9

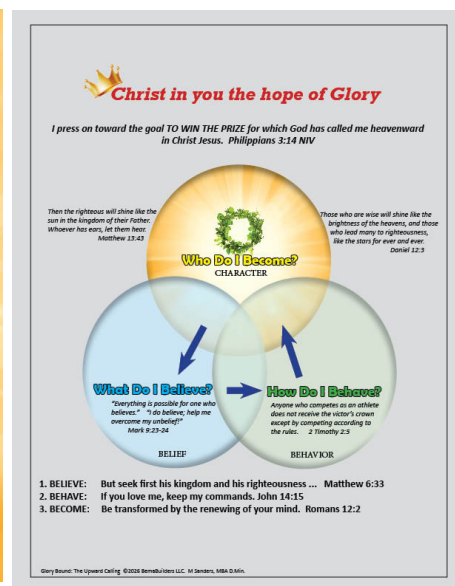
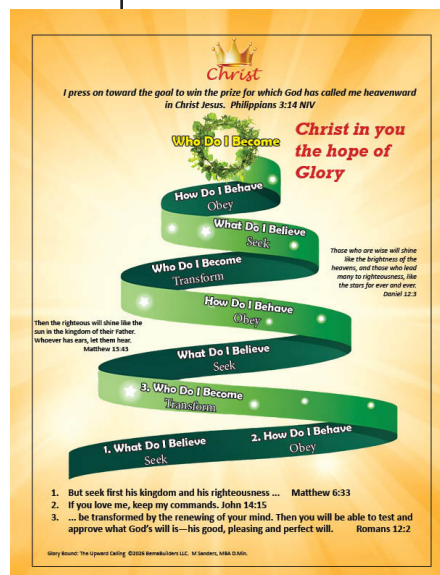
Take a few minutes to let the words of that Scripture soak in...

HERE’S THE PLAN!

Glory Bound: The Upward Calling

These are the same processes just depicted differently.

Turn to pages 195 & 197 in the toolbox, to see full size images.



It's a simple process.

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However, in the flesh, it is quite difficult if not impossible to achieve. Remember what Jesus said,

²⁷Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; _____ with God." Mark 10:27

²⁶Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Matthew 19:26

While here He is specifically talking about salvation, He uses the words "all things" for a reason, because He means "all things" which includes obedience. Obedience is possible with God. How?

*¹³I can do all things **through Christ** who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13 NKJV*

We are commanded over and over to obey His commands. He does not command the impossible. It's just impossible in our own strength.

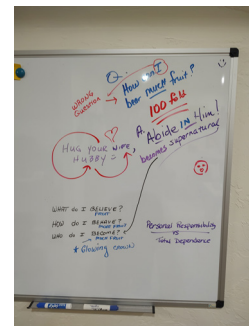
THE PROCESS OF GLORY

I call the graphics **"Glory Bound: The Upward Calling."** The process came to me one day years ago when I was praying and trying to figure out how to earn maximum rewards. I wrote it on my whiteboard. In a bit we will talk about doing **the two "Wills of God"** but for now we will lump them together under the heading of obedience. **That is what doing the will of the Father is, OBEDIENCE.**

I believe God created and saved each and every believer for a specific purpose, His purpose. **It is in the working toward that purpose that our rewards lie.**

¹²Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Philippians 3:12

Jesus said, "I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do." John 17:4



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Here is the thought process I went through that day:

What if earning maximum rewards requires transformation - that I can't do it as I am now. And

What if transformation is circular in nature and revealed by the answers to these questions?

1. What do I BELIEVE?

2. How do I BEHAVE?

3. Who do I BECOME?

1. What do I believe? Should change my behavior

2. How do I behave? Should change my character

3. Who do I become? Should change my belief



Take a few minutes to study and briefly discuss the Glory Bound graphics in the Toolbox.

As we learn and grow, we begin to act differently **(at first only intentionally, often with much effort and frequently failing - falling short)**. Never-the-less, these new actions (practicing obedience to the Word) change us just a bit. The reality is **the Holy Spirit is changing/transforming us into who God wanted us to be when He created us**. As we continue, who we are in Christ begins to grow, which in turn reshapes our thinking and beliefs.

As a result of this emerging transformation, we start to act just a little differently and the Holy Spirit changes (transforms) us once again. Each time we go around the circle "Christ in us" grows larger and larger. More and more we **become** someone He can trust. **This pleases Him.**

IMPORTANT: This is a process in which we must fully participate and intentionally practice every day.

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In his book *Heavenly Rewards, Living with Eternity in Sight*, Dr. Mark Hitchcock says, “The positions of authority we are given in the future are being determined now by how we live. Our stewardship of our time, opportunities and resources will determine the degree of our authority.”¹

If you want to increase your bema reward and earn a higher position in the Kingdom – go for it! **Greater bema rewards both honor and please Jesus.** Make “the circle” over and over again throughout the rest of your life – this is the *Process of Sanctification* (graphic found in the toolbox).

PHASE 1: WHAT DO I BELIEVE?

Earning rewards begins with faith in Jesus as Savior. One has to be saved. **Non-believers do not receive rewards** regardless of what they do (1 Corinthians 13:3). That is why reward earning begins on the day of salvation, nothing prior counts at all. So, I forget about everything good I did prior to that day. That was the old me - that person is dead. That person does not earn rewards.

Rewards are for the “new me” ⁷*You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ John 3:7* This is all about the “new me, the new you.”

Once we are saved, it is intended that we begin the process of sanctification/obedience in our “walk” with the Lord. We begin to think differently as our beliefs change and our faith in Christ grows and is strengthened.

How is this accomplished?

Continuously pray and search the Scriptures for truth that will change your faith in significant ways. **Ask the Holy Spirit to appropriate them into your life.**

³³*But seek _____ his kingdom and his righteousness... Matthew 6:33*

¹⁶*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the servant of God*

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I hope you have been doing a good job looking up the applicable Scriptures as you are making your way through this study. If you haven't already been doing so, consider reading several verses around the ones needed to fill in the blanks. The more you read, the more you will be blessed, I promise.

walk = daily life

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Lord Vs. LORD in the Bible:

LORD is His name, Yahweh, "I am that I am"



whereas

Lord is His title, Adonai, which means Sovereign

Snacking can turn into a "full meal deal" if you are willing to be fed.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
Matthew 5:6

Consider asking the Lord to:

1. Cause you to hunger and thirst.

Then, as you respond:

2. Fill you - which will cause your experiential righteousness to grow.

If you are sincere in your requests, He honors both.

may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Regular Scripture Reading

"The Bible is the greatest of all books; to study it is the noblest of all pursuits; to understand it, the highest of all goals. This is God's Word to you."² Handle it wisely. Handle it with care, respect and passion. But "handle it" regularly.

I have found it most helpful to approach the Scriptures in two ways and do **BOTH** frequently.



1. **A Daily Feeding** by simply reading a few chapters. I am not really "studying" the Scriptures so much as simply "enjoying" them. I am respectful and reverent - always praying and asking the Holy Spirit to reveal anything there He wishes me to know. He often points out the strangest things - I love it.

The teacher/pastor of the church I attend explained it this way (paraphrased from his sermon): Try to recall what you ate for lunch on the 15th of last month. Can you do it? Probably not. But did it do its job? Did it feed your body, nourish it and supply it with what it needed? Hope so. It is good to regularly "feed" on the Word of God in the same way. Just allow it to nourish you, to keep you spiritually alive and well fed. It will do its job if you **regularly partake**. (We will talk about this from a scientific perspective shortly. It might surprise you; it surprised me when I learned about this!)

I use the "Blue Letter Bible Daily Reading 1-year Chronological Plan" - see pages 201 and 203 in the toolbox. I like this plan because I can "see history" unfolding before my eyes and understand things more easily that way. You can access other free plans on their website, which I highly recommend for many reasons @ www.blueletterbible.org. They are a free resource only asking for donations. I have

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done this a few times and am doing it again this year. You don't have to get through the whole Bible in one year - but every believer should make it a goal to read the whole thing cover to cover a few times in their life. Failing to do so could result in loss. At some point, you will wish you had taken the time to do it. That is my opinion, of course.

Maybe you want to start by reading the New Testament, or the four Gospels or the Psalms - anyway you want to approach it is valid. Just make sure you do it!

I call this daily feeding **"Bible snacking"** since, while I am intentional about doing it, I'm not doing a deep dive into any specific topic. I'm not really trying to learn anything. It's not like studying when I need to take notes. I often enjoy a hot cup of coffee or tea while I am reading if I want to. And I also have a pleasant conversation with the Holy Spirit as well, asking Him to illuminate anything He wishes (which He often does).

Doing this allows me to read the "more challenging" books (Leviticus, for example) without getting bogged down. I just read it casually and feel fine about it. I read it aloud to myself thus engaging multiple senses at the same time. It also lets "the evil one" know I regularly read the Scriptures. From time to time I find some quite interesting stories tucked into the most unusual places in the Scriptures. I would not have found these interesting and useful stories if I had not used this approach and read the entire Bible. **I have "WOW" written in my Bible in lots of places.** Yeah, I confess, I write in my Bible.

**MAKE BIBLE SNACKING A HABIT -
A REGULAR PART OF YOUR LIFE.**

It's the one time snacking is recommended -- LOL.

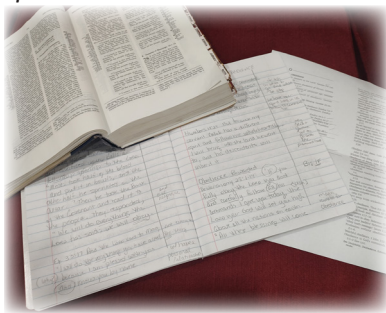
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A friend gave me a **"red letter challenge"** - it was awesome! A **"red letter challenge"** is to read the Gospels BUT ONLY read the words of Jesus (need a "red letter Bible" to do this). Don't read anything but His words, "listening" to what He says. This is one of the few times that you don't focus on context, just let Him speak. I was so moved by hearing His voice that I went back through it a second time but this time I copied every word He said. This slowed me down significantly. I cannot begin to tell you what it did for me! I cried with joy a lot...

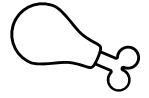
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Several years ago, a friend and I did a **deep dive** into the topic of “prayer” in the Scriptures - we used this book to give us the verses to research, and we actually wrote every verse in a journal - a step above and beyond reading that is quite fruitful. Anyway, prayer is mentioned in the Scriptures so often that it took almost three pages of that book just to list them. It was an amazing study that took us over a year to complete. We have never been the same since.

It's a deep-dive study worth considering. You could also consider doing one about the Holy Spirit or about Obedience.



2. Planned/Intentional Study: This is a **needed habit** as well. This type of study is generally done **topically, but it can be a specific book or books of the Bible**. Perhaps you all the sudden find yourself “curious” about what the Scriptures say about a given topic - maybe something you, or someone you know, is struggling with. As you continue along this path you will find more and more reasons to do topically driven deep dives into the Word of God **as He presents them to you in your life**. We will talk about those struggles more in Phase 2.



I found a book entitled **Where to Find It in the Bible** by Ken Anderson (available on Amazon) most helpful as a quick reference guide for “over 3,700 contemporary topics.” In fact, a few friends of mine and I used it to do deep dives together into topics such as love, forgiveness, relationships, idolatry, and many more using this book to help easily locate Scriptures that have something to say about specific topics. A concordance is good but is **limited to verses that contain a specific word**, whereas this book provides a broader base.

Select something that interests you. I looked up the word “reward” - it lists 44 references and then refers to the word “Recompense” to go to next. Again, just decide to do a bit of “deep dive” work regularly each year, breaking it up to a few verses on the topic each day. You’ll be glad you did. You will be “rewarded” for it.

For your convenience, the verses listed in **Where to Find It in the Bible** relating to the word “Obedience” may be found in the toolbox. I just finished this - and it blew me away. Grab a couple of Christian friends, decide how many verses you want to research each week and discuss what you find. That’s one of the best Bible Studies you can do.

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Joining Head Knowledge (intelligence) with Hand Knowledge (wisdom)

⁹We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the _____ and _____ that the Spirit gives, ¹⁰so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, Colossians 1:9-10

¹⁷I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. Ephesians 1:17

“Head knowledge” is good but insufficient. Wisdom is required. **Wisdom is knowledge in action.** I can “know” that smoking is bad for me, but to know it isn’t enough to protect me; I must stop (or never start) smoking in order for the knowledge to help me, to provide a benefit to me. The same is true of Biblical knowledge. There are scores of people (including some pastors and teachers) who can quote the Scriptures ad nauseam **but don’t live them.** In fact, Jesus regularly condemned this action (the “righteousness” of the Pharisees). In general, this is the essence of what James is communicating in the book by his name: **Works won’t save anyone, but faith without works is “dead/useless.”**

BOTTOM LINE: Spending regular time in the Word of God (not in books written by commentators, although they can be supplemental, they do NOT **replace** the Word itself) is essential to anyone who wishes to maximize their bema rewards. In my opinion, it is better to read/study/consume the actual Word, even if we don’t understand it, than to ignore it by replacing it with other people’s opinion of what it says and means. The Holy Spirit is more than able to **progressively teach us** directly from His Word.

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Remember:

¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the servant of God may be _____

_____.
2 Timothy 3:16-17

And, when possible, help others get access to the Word of God and encourage them to use it as well. Be careful (discerning) who you “invest with” for translation endeavors, but seek opportunities to do so (again, reward worthy).

BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND

Look back at the Process of Glory graphics in the toolbox. The top goal is transformation (Who Do I Become?).

²Do not conform to the pattern of this world, _____ 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

This is an interesting command. Let’s take a minute to dissect it in the original Greek to see if we can shed some useful light on it.

Phrase:	“Mood”	“Voice”
Do not conform	Imperative	Middle
Be transformed	Imperative	Passive

- Both parts of this Scripture are written as a **command**. Both parts are in the imperative “mood” meaning they express a command to the hearer to perform a certain action by the order and authority of the one commanding.
- The first half of the verse, **Do not conform**, is in the “middle voice” meaning **that part is our**

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responsibility to make it happen, i.e., resist conforming to the pattern of this world.

3. The second half of the verse, *but be transformed*, is in the “passive voice” meaning that it happens to us. We are unable to transform ourselves, that is the work of the Holy Spirit.

4. The passive aspect is explained in the rest of that phrase *by the renewing of your mind*.

5. Achieving both parts results in the “reward” - *Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will*.

So, if transformation is an action of the Holy Spirit what is my part - or is there a “my part” in this portion of the command? Am I helpless here?

The prior verse certainly sheds some light:

¹Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Romans 12:1

We could leave it at that, and it would be sufficient. But if I may, allow me to share with you a few things I just recently “discovered” about the transformation of a human mind.

As I understand it, none of this is actually “new science” - it was just new to me when I heard about it a few months ago. I have a friend that works at **Dallas Theological Seminary** who frequently forwards YouTube videos filmed at the seminary during regular chapel services to me. He forwarded one called ***Discipleship: From Neurons to Nations*** by Dr. William Yount. I found it fascinating and most exciting for my Christian growth. The essence of his presentation was a scientific discovery that essentially shows whatever we focus on (regularly “bathe ourselves in”) **physically changes our brain** - HOW our brains process information and, as a result, changes our minds - **how** we think. Research has

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shown that **repetitive focus can alter the way the brain processes information.**

Stimulus → Physical Change → Mental Change

This is true from either a positive or negative perspective. I did some research on this after I listened to Dr. Yount's talk and found articles on this topic interesting and reinforcing of his presentation. One such article was written by Dr. Tatiana Denning entitled *The Science of Complaining: How it Harms Your Brain*.

What does this have to do with transformation as presented in Romans 12:2? Everything! **God created us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.** Our part is to decide what we are willing to regularly "bathe in" - ruminate on, so to speak. My (and Dr. Yount's) conclusion is this:

If we choose to regularly read and study the Word of God, doing so will physically change our brains (renewal) thus allowing the Holy Spirit the opportunity to transform us into the image of Christ.

<u>Choice:</u>		<u>Causes:</u>		<u>Resulting in:</u>
<u>Stimulus</u>	→	<u>Physical Change</u>	→	<u>Mental Change</u>
Scriptures	→	Brain Renewal	→	Transformation

So that's my plan, and I'm sticking to it.

Result: ^{12b}*Then you **will be able** to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*
Romans 12:2b **Guessing no longer needed!**

PS Jesus grades "on a curve." He grades us based on what we **could know** - what we have access to because He is the provider. For those of us in the western world this may be problematic because access to the Bible is almost limitless here - yet it seems that we do not "consume" it nearly as much as we can. We may as well forget about using the excuse "I didn't know" ...

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We would be unwise to fool ourselves into thinking that:

1. Going to church and listening for 30 minutes (even listening to an outstanding Bible teacher),
2. Attending and participating in a Sunday School or ABF (or whatever your church calls it),
3. Even participating in outstanding Bible study groups during the week,

serve as a substitute for **regular one-on-one time in the Word of God and with the Holy Spirit.**

While they are all excellent and beneficial (highly recommended) - they are **not adequate substitutions** for snacking and feeding directly on the Word of God. **They aren't sufficient to get us where we need to go - into a personal relationship with the God of the Universe.**



UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION

1. Did you apply anything new last week from Chapter 7? What was it, how did you apply it?

2. How often do you read the Bible? _____ Have you ever read it entirely? _____
If not, why not?

3. Are you in any way encouraged to begin a more frequent practice of reading the Scriptures based on this chapter? _____ Why or why not?

4. Name one thing you learned in this chapter that will be beneficial in the days ahead.
How will you apply it (be specific)?