



RENEW

heart • soul • mind • strength

A 4-Week Student Discipleship Journal

This book belongs to:

RENEW: A 4-Week Student Discipleship Journal
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Contents

Starting Now	1
How It Works	2
 Week One: Heart.....	 3
Day One: Inside Out.....	5
Day Two: Fruit Comes from the Heart.....	7
Day Three: Renewal Starts Here.....	9
Day Four: Matters of the Heart.....	11
Day Five: Where Your Treasure is.....	13
Day Six: Treasure Hunting.....	15
Day Seven: Sabbath.....	17
 Week Two: Mind	 19
Day One: Got Perspective?.....	21
Day Two: The Highway of Life.....	23
Day Three: From the Outside In.....	25
Day Four: Eyes on the Prize.....	27
Day Five: Out of the Dark.....	29
Day Six: Stay On Target.....	31
Day Seven: Relationship.....	33
 Week Three: Strength.....	 35
Day One: Dealing with Distractions.....	37
Day Two: Plug In.....	39
Day Three: We Are Tangible.....	41
Day Four: Your Time.....	43
Day Five: Beyond Singing.....	45
Day Six: Reflecting God.....	47
Day Seven: Rest.....	49
 Week Four: Soul.....	 51
Day One: New Eyes.....	53
Day Two: First Impressions.....	55
Day Three: Survey Says.....	57
Day Four: Know Your Worth.....	59
Day Five: A Change In Perspective.....	61
Day Six: Write a Psalm.....	63
Day Seven: The End . . . Kind of	65

Starting Now

**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!
[2 Corinthians 5:17]**

Following Christ turns our lives completely upside-down. Our identity changes as we're adopted into a family where the God of the universe is our dad. We get to be attached to Someone who actually knows our future and who knows us better than we know ourselves, and we can even have conversations with Someone who has more power than all the Marvel superheroes put together!

But sometimes it feels like our daily lives don't change that much. We face the same problems and struggle with the same temptations. People still disappoint us, and we still make mistakes. The thing is, it takes time and effort for our lives to sync up with our new status as followers of Christ. Yes, when we follow Christ we are God's children and we have a completely new identity. But our bad habits and attitudes take some time to change. Our identity is new, but our heart, soul, mind, and strength are still being renewed. That's what this journal is about: the ways God slowly changes our lives to reflect the fact that we are disciples of Christ. You may have heard this verse before:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" [Mark 12:30].

In many ways, this verse sums up what it means to follow Christ. But we can't start loving God in these ways all at once or on our own. We need to redirect these parts of our lives and let God renew them, starting with our hearts.

How it Works

This book has four weeks of journal pages to help you journey down the road of what it means to be renewed by God, and how you can love him with everything you've got—whether you are just getting started, or have been walking for some time. Each week takes you through seven days of questions to get you thinking, Bible studies to grow your perspective, and challenges to stretch you out of your comfort zone. Then, on the seventh day of the week, you'll get a break to recharge for the next week. It'll help you get into a rhythm of learning, growing, and putting that knowledge into action.



Throughout this journal, you'll also find the MARKS OF A DISCIPLE. These are things that Christ-followers are committed to and have in common, like connecting with God through prayer, applying his Word to our lives, serving without personal agendas, managing God's gifts, and many other things.

Remember, you'll get out of this book what you put into it. The challenges you'll encounter won't always be easy—they're designed to stretch you! Take a risk and use this journal to run hard toward God. When we make ourselves available to him, he'll transform us and use us in ways that will blow our minds!



01. HEART

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

Mark 12:30

DAY 01. Intro

Have you ever tried to open a can of Coke that has been dropped or shaken up? Disaster. All the movement causes the carbonation to put pressure on the can, and when the pressure gets to be too much, the can explodes. Coke everywhere. In the same way, when we get put under enough pressure, what's inside comes out. In other words, our heart is revealed. Sometimes, it's compassionate, patient, and selfless, but more often than not, it's as explosive as the shaken can of Coke.

Our understanding of the heart today has morphed since biblical times. Today we think about our emotions or effort, but God is asking for something deeper when he says to love him with all of our hearts. Sure, our emotions and effort are part of it, but our heart is our "inner self." Essentially, it's what makes you, you. It's your true self, and everything else about you flows out of that.

Over the next few days, you're going to take inventory of your heart. You'll take a look at what it means to love God with your whole heart (everything inside of you), where you are in the process of loving God that way, and how you can start—with God's help—to renew your heart.

DAY 01. Inside Out

There are many things that athletes do to become better at their sport, but the most important are working out and practicing. An athlete that cares about their sport would never think of stepping onto the court or field without preparing—it would be like running a marathon without even going for a jog in the weeks beforehand. Great athletes train their bodies and muscles for weeks, even months before the season starts. They build up their cardio and strength so that their skill training has a good foundation. To ignore these things is to set yourself up for failure from the start, kind of like a basketball player that has a great shot but gets winded crossing the court. Training and preparation are what help set up someone for success. It all starts from within.

It's the same in our spiritual lives. If you want to experience the best that God has for you, it doesn't start with what is seen on the outside, it starts with something deep within that builds from the inside out. You need to "train" your inner self so that you experience true spiritual transformation and others might see Christ's work in you.

That is how renewal happens. God wants to do something great in your life, but not for the sake of making you look good. He wants to do something to make you who he wants you to be. But it is all going to begin with the innermost part of you—your heart.

This week we are going to look at how God wants to renew you from the inside out.

Why do we need to start looking inward at our hearts and desires before looking outward at our behavior?

How do you feel like God wants to work in your heart to renew you?

What sort of exercises can you do to train your heart (inner self)?

Are there any that you struggle to do regularly? How does that affect your spiritual life? What parts of your heart do you need God to renew?



Disciples of Christ receive God's love so they can show God's love. [1 John 4:19]

DAY 02.

Fruit Comes From the Heart

Think about the last time you walked into your youth group or church. What did you see around you? What were people doing? How did they talk? Was everyone gathered together or were there separate groups?

Even though it happened in an instant, when you walked into the room you assessed the environment around you. You made assumptions and even lumped people into stereotypes. How did those assumptions affect the way you perceived people? To take it a step further, how do you think people in the room perceived you?

It's so easy for us to see the outside of someone and make assumptions or even accusations about what their spiritual life is like. We think, "that's how a Christian should (or shouldn't) act" when we see them act, dress or talk a certain way. It's easy to do because it's what we see. But what about what we don't see?

When we see a tree, we don't usually think about the huge roots that are underground providing nutrients and stability to everything we see. And while we are busy looking at what's above the surface, God is busy at work beneath the surface nurturing the roots so the tree can grow strong, be renewed, and bear good fruit. It's the same with people, we see one thing, but there's a lot more going on inside. It always starts in the heart.

Read Luke 6:41-45 and use the OPA Bible study method to study this passage.

Observation:

Compile all the facts found in these verses.

Make 20–30 observations about what you read.

Principles:

Draw a few principles from the observations you made.

What is God trying to teach you in this passage?

Application:

How will you apply these principles to your life?

Be specific—a good application will tell who, what, and when.

DAY 03. Renewal Starts Here

Think about the last time you had to prepare for something. Did you come into it with excitement, or did you drag your feet? However you felt, you brought that into your preparation, and it affected the end result. Whatever was going on inside while you prepared came out when you performed. The same applies to the heart: your actions will only demonstrate what is going on in the heart.

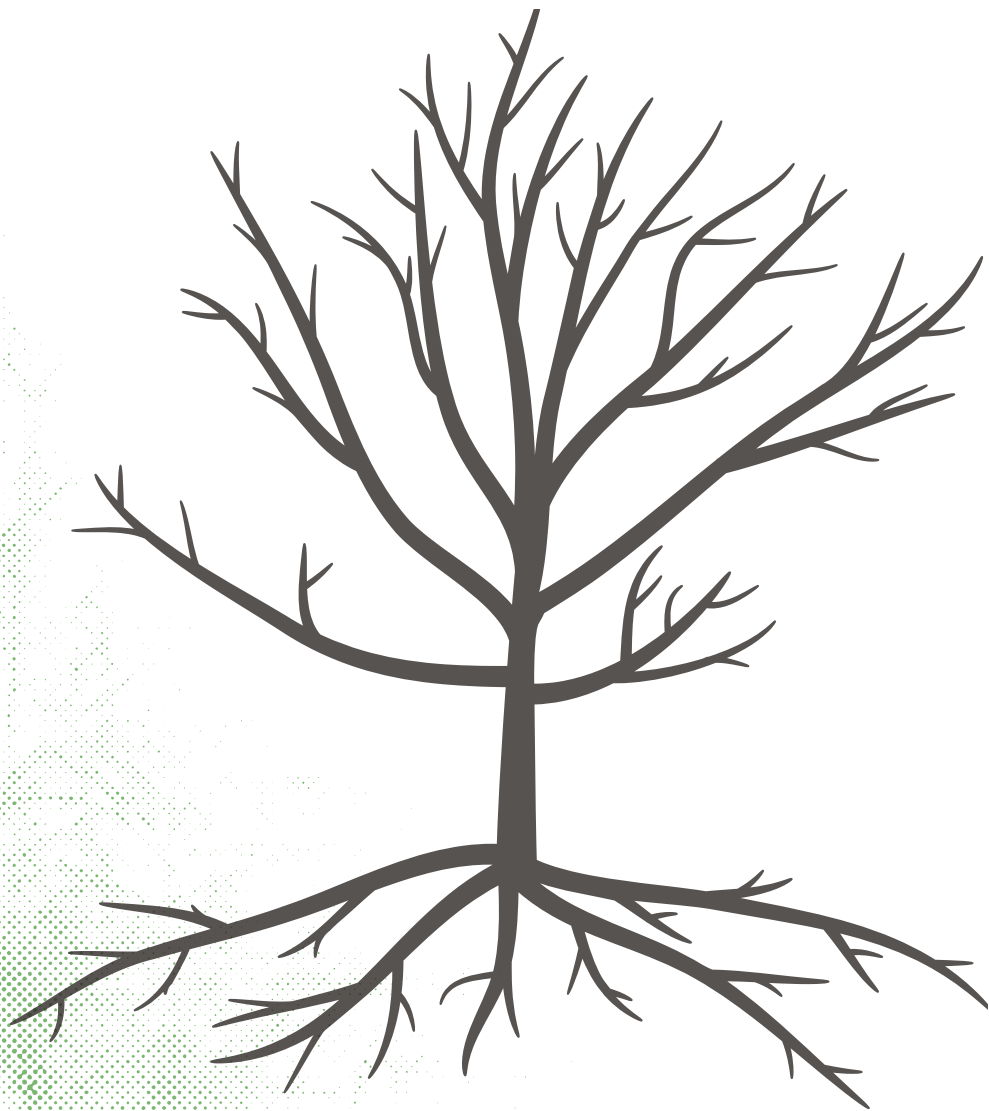
When God was choosing a new king for his people (kind of a big deal), he wanted to make sure people knew what his criteria was. God said, "people look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." Our heart is the root of our actions. Today we're going to take an inventory of our own hearts and find the areas that need work.

At times, you might think that you need to completely start over. But keep in mind that if you are a follower of Jesus, the Holy Spirit (God) already lives in your heart. He's already at work renewing you, but there is always a call for us to respond.

Take this challenge: Do some self-examination on your heart, and ask God what he would have you do to experience renewal in your life.

On the branches of the tree, write some words that describe the fruit of your life, good and bad. Ask people who are close to you what fruit they see in your life as well.

On the roots, write some words to describe what's going on in your heart to cause these actions. Praise God for good fruit. Repent of bad fruit, and ask God to transform the areas of your heart that cause bad fruit.



DAY 04. Matters of the Heart

Thump, thump. Thump, thump.

Today's the day. Now is the moment.

Thump, thump. Thump, thump. Thump, thump.

You knew this day was coming. You've been preparing, and now is the time, that next big step.

Thump, thump. Thump, thump. Thump, thump. Thump, thump.

As you take this step, you feel your heart start to beat faster and faster. Now it's time to move forward.

Has this ever happened to you? Was it the morning of a final test? Or when you finally decided to walk up to that guy/girl you have a crush on to ask them out? No matter the situation, you will begin to feel your heart do something in your chest that it doesn't do normally—it will beat harder and faster. So hard and so fast that you are sure others can hear how nervous or excited you are.

We've already learned that the heart is more than an organ that pumps blood all over the body. But just like that organ, if something matters to you, it will affect your heart.

You know how this is. When something matters to you, you do things to protect it or serve it. We see this all over the place with different types of social justice groups, causes, and missions. It's the reason we sacrifice, spend money, and take risks. It's also the reason you train so hard at a sport, go the extra mile when a friend is hurting, and study harder for the test that makes or breaks a college application.

Spend a few minutes today answering the questions below and really connecting the dots between your actions and your heart.



Make a list of the things you did today. Next to each item, write down why you did it.

Circle any items you listed that were the result of a strong passion of yours.



Describe a time that you did something or made a decision that revealed a negative part of your heart.



What effects did that action or decision have (on you, others, relationship with God, etc.)?



Think about the last mission trip you went on, or last service activity you did. Why did you do it?



In what ways could you be asking God to change your heart's desires today?

DAY 05. Where Your Treasure is

Yesterday we looked at how the things that matter to you affect your heart. You should have already taken some time to think about how this has played out in your own life. Chances are you have seen some negative things, as well as some positive things, that revealed your heart's true desires and passions.

Francis Chan, a famous author and pastor had this happen when one of his books sold really well. This is what he said about his thought process. "I think in times of prosperity, for me, I look at Scripture and go 'Wow, this is awesome. Look at this great selling book, all this money; what do I want to do? I want to give it to the people who need it.' I get excited about that."¹

This is a great example of someone who loved Jesus with his heart. Pastor Chan put God's priorities in front of his own and put his treasure toward the work of the Lord. He had a strong passion for God's Kingdom and was moved by what God cares about, so much so that he gave away his money to people who needed it. How can this teach you to love God with your heart?

Take a moment to think this through. Francis Chan was faced with a hard decision (what to do with all this money that just showed up,) and decisions often show us the truth about what we really value (treasure) in our heart. When was the last time you had to make a really difficult decision in your life? Anything from what to do after high school, a job over the summer, or even what you do when you're with your boyfriend or girlfriend. These decisions can shape your heart both now and for the future. When you're faced with a decision, what does it reveal about your heart?

Read Matthew 6:19-34: Jesus challenges us to really think about what we treasure. Use the OPA method to do a heart check and see where your treasure really is.

Observation:

Compile all the facts found in these verses. Make 20-30 observations about what you read.

Principles:

Draw a few principles from the observations you made. What is God trying to teach you in this passage?

Application:

How will you apply these principles to your life? Be specific—a good application will tell who, what, and when.

DAY 06. Treasure Hunting

After yesterday's Bible study, it's pretty clear that your treasure (what you value) is closely linked to your heart. As we come to the end of this week, let's do a little treasure hunting. Everyone seeks some kind of treasure, either earthly or heavenly. An earthly treasure is something sought for personal gain—putting your self in front of God. A heavenly treasure is one where God's will and plan come first—putting God in front of your self.

Keep in mind: the very fact that you're doing this book shows that you have a desire to deepen your relationship with Jesus. Don't feel discouraged if you find some things in your heart you need to deal with—everybody does. Dealing with these issues is one of the ways we love God with our heart.

This chart is going to help you look at five behaviors. These five behaviors could be a decision you make, an interaction you have, or a specific action you take over the course of a day. In the column on the left, write down 5 that are specific to the last 24 hours of your life. As you reflect on each behavior you wrote down in the left column, use the middle column to write down if it was tied to an earthly treasure with an 'E', or a heavenly treasure with an 'H'. Lastly, in the third column, write down what treasure it was tied to.

Behavior	Earthly (E) or Heavenly (H)?	Treasure (value)

As you do this, take note of what behaviors are more earthly than heavenly. Then pray and ask God to show you how you can change that. Also, ask someone in your group to hold you accountable to those things. It's always easier to fight a battle with someone than it is to battle alone.

Go Deeper: Do this for several days in a row, only reflecting on five behaviors each day. As you continue to do this, pray that your treasures lead your heart closer to God, and that you experience more renewal through a deeper relationship with Him.

DAY 07. Sabbath

Have you ever heard someone refer to Sunday as the Sabbath? That means it's our day of rest. Sabbath originated in Genesis when God rested on the seventh day of creation.

Spend some time praying and talking with God today. Recharge your batteries and refresh your mind.

“By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.”

—Genesis 2:2

This is a great day to write down any questions you've had over the week. Anything that didn't make sense or that you're unsure about. Write them down here, and make some time to ask someone who's a little farther down the road in their faith—maybe even the person who gave you this book.

**People look at
the outward
appearance, but
the Lord looks
at the heart.**

—

1 Samuel 16:7b