

RENEWAL PATH

A Biblical & Clear Path Out of Any Sin

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PREFACE

“People change when they hurt enough that they have to, learn enough that they want to, see enough that they’re inspired to, or receive enough that they’re able to¹.”

—John Maxwell

Maybe you hurt so much that you have no choice. Your life is falling apart, relationships are strained, or you simply can’t bear to keep living the way you’re living.

Maybe it’s not pain that brings you here; maybe you feel “fine.” Not bad. Not broken. Just... fine. Yet you realize you’re missing out on something; that life can be so much more than “fine.”

Whether you start from a place of pain or dissatisfaction, my prayer is that you learn enough, see enough, and receive enough to get unstuck—and that you would share this freedom with others. That was my goal as I wrote this book.



INTRODUCTION: START HERE

The book you're reading began with a house—literally burning to the ground.

A group of young adults gathered for a weekend we called a "Renewal Retreat" to seek God, get honest, and pursue healthy change. Stories that had been hidden in shame were brought into the light. Tears were shed. Walls came down. What people witnessed went beyond an emotional release—we experienced freedom.

And then, the day we went home—to our new lives—the neighbors informed us that the house we stayed in was completely engulfed in flames. Gone.

This book was written because what happened at that retreat revealed something true for all of us. Renewal isn't just about a moment—it's about the patterns that shape our lives long after the emotion fades. Over years of personal struggle and pastoral ministry, I've watched people sincerely love God and still feel trapped in cycles they couldn't break.

If that's you, you're not alone. We all have patterns we wish we could change—mindsets, habits, reactions, or secret struggles that refuse to stay buried. No matter how much we pray, plan, or promise ourselves 'this time will be different,' something keeps pulling us back. It's easy to start believing real change isn't possible. But it is. It just doesn't start where most people think.

Your Position

Change doesn't begin with your patterns; it begins with your position—specifically, where you stand before God. According to the Bible, real transformation grows out of relationship, not sheer effort. And that relationship begins with faith—faith in what Jesus has done for you, not what you can do for Him.

Many people get discouraged here because we've been trained to believe our value, worth, and whether we're "good" or "bad" comes from what we do. Faith in Jesus means stepping out of that performance-based mindset—no longer relying on your effort, religious practices, or how long you've gone without doing the thing you want freedom from.

When you place your faith in Jesus, your position before God changes instantly. You're forgiven. You're welcomed into His family. You're given a new identity, not defined by your past, but anchored in His love. As that starting point shifts, the pressure to perform begins to lift. The voice that says, "You'll never be enough," starts to quiet. You no longer live under shame or fear because God isn't asking you to earn His love; He's inviting you to live from it.

This kind of faith isn't a "get-out-of-hell-free" card that lets you continue in destructive patterns. It's a trust that reshapes your life from the inside out—a transformation fueled by love and grace, not fear or pressure.

If, at this point, you're not sure where you stand with Jesus, you're not alone. Many people wrestle with questions, doubts, or past experiences that make faith complicated. You don't need to rush that process. Ask your questions. Explore honestly. Jesus never pushed away sincere seekers, and He won't start with you. You can and should examine the evidence, talk to Christians you trust, or use tools like *ChatGPT*¹ to research the reliability of Scripture and the historical claims about Jesus.

But here's the heart of it: Jesus really did come, He really did die for your sins, and He really does invite you to trust Him. Starting from that place doesn't make life perfect, but it does make real, lasting change possible—and it gives you a foundation this book will keep building on.

The Tension Between Position and Practice

While your *position* changes instantly when you place your faith in Jesus, your *patterns* often don't. The habits, reflexes, and ways of thinking you've practiced for years don't disappear overnight. You may still react the same way, crave the same things, or feel pulled toward the same old paths. That's where *sanctification* comes in.

Sanctification is the process of becoming in practice who you already are in position. It's the ongoing work of putting off the old self and putting on the new (Ephesians 4:22–24). It's the daily invitation to live from the reality of who you are in Christ, not who you used to be without Him.

This book is about that process. It's a discipleship tool to help you learn how to walk in the newness of life while still living in a body and mind that have been shaped by the world. It's about taking responsibility for the part of transformation that God has entrusted to you; not to *earn* His grace, but to *respond* to it.

You'll soon see that change doesn't happen by accident. Renewal doesn't come by wishful thinking or emotional moments. It comes through training our minds and habits to align with the truth of God's Word.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Romans 12:2). Transformation happens as your mind is renewed, when your thoughts, desires, and responses begin to reflect the mind of Christ.

Sanctification is the journey of becoming more like Jesus; not just in belief, but in behavior. Learning how to shape your patterns to reflect your position before God.

How Not to Change

As you get started, it helps to recognize a few common ways not to change. These are myths that sound right but don't work. They might adjust your behavior for a while, but they don't transform your heart or renew your mind. I've tried every

one of them and maybe you've tried some yourself.

1. Change in Isolation

Many of us believe we can change on our own—that if we just pray harder or try harder, we can fix what's broken inside while keeping it a secret between us and God. The problem is, God didn't design change to happen in isolation; He designed it to happen in community.

James 5:16 says, "Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed." Healing happens when our struggles are brought into the light, not hidden in the dark.

2. Change Through Pain

Some of us believe we'll finally change when we "hit rock bottom;" when we feel bad enough that we're finally ready to change. The problem is, pain-based change often only lasts as long as the pain does. When the pain fades, the pattern returns. 2 Corinthians 7:10 says that Godly sorrow leads to repentance, but it's not the sorrow itself that transforms you. It's what you do with it. Long-term change comes when you learn to think differently, not just feel worse.

3. Change Through Distraction

This one is subtle. It's easy to tell ourselves, "If I can just stay busy or fill my time with good things, maybe I'll stop thinking about it."

Distractions can help in the moment, but it's not the same as renewal. Eventually, when life slows down or old triggers return, you fall back into familiar patterns. That's because the issue isn't just the behavior, it's the mindset behind it.

True change doesn't happen by *avoiding* your thoughts; you'll need to learn how to *take them captive* (2 Cor. 10:5).

4. Change Through Prayer and Deliverance Only

This one sounds right because prayer and deliverance are good. The problem comes when we pray or seek deliverance without any willingness to change how we actually live. Most of our behaviors are driven by subconscious routines formed over time.

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So even though praying for deliverance feels spiritual, without addressing and rewiring the underlying patterns, we leave ourselves open to fall right back into the same behaviors.

That's why Paul said, "Be transformed by the renewal of your mind..." (Romans 12:2). Change isn't just about surrender in a moment—it's about partnership with God in the daily renewal of our thoughts, habits, and responses.

5. Change by Waiting Long Enough

Many of us assume we'll eventually outgrow our sin. It's easy to believe that if we keep following God long enough—reading the Bible, going to church, and doing the right things—our struggles will somehow take care of themselves.

Unfortunately, sin doesn't disappear with time; it actually deepens with neglect. Left unchecked, it forms ruts in the mind and habits in life that only grow stronger with repetition.

It often takes repeated failure for us to finally realize that sin will not take care of itself, and that waiting isn't obedience. God doesn't call His people to wait out their old nature; He calls us to *put it off*.

Ephesians 4:22–24 says, "Put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." Change isn't a passive process, it's an active one.

How to Change

If "How Not to Change" shows what doesn't work, what does? This book will uncover five Biblical and neuroscience-backed practices for renewing your mind—principles that can be applied to *any* sin area in your life.

When you're ready to surrender fully, these practices represent how the process of sanctification actually plays out day by day, in cooperation with the Spirit's work in you.

Practice 1: Get Honest

Change begins with honesty—with yourself, with God,

and with others. God works in the light, not the dark, which is why you can't heal from what you continue to hide. Honesty breaks the power of shame and invites others into your healing journey. We'll unpack how to build a lifestyle of honesty, and why God designed community as the context for transformation in the chapters to come.

Practice 2: Get Off the Path

Sin follows a predictable path. The same people, places, emotions, and environments often lead you to the same outcomes. These are what we'll call your *cues*, the signals that trigger your mind to follow old habits subconsciously.

Learning to "get off the path" means recognizing those cues early and avoiding them before temptation hits. It's about retraining your brain to take new routes before you fall into the old ones.

Practice 3: Cut It Off

Jesus said, "If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off..." (Matthew 5:30). "Cutting it off" means removing access to the things that lead you back into sin. This might mean subtle or drastic changes to your lifestyle, but the key is to make it difficult to access the things that cause you to stumble.

Practice 4: Take Thoughts Captive

The enemy loves to plant lies that shape how you see God, yourself, and others. Scripture calls us to "Take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:5). This means learning how to destroy lies and actively take control of your thoughts through the authority of Christ.

This step focuses on what you choose to dwell on, and how to redirect your thoughts toward truth.

Practice 5: Replace the Sin

The last practice is to replace sin with something better. The reason we keep going back to sinful patterns is because they offer *short-term rewards*. Our brains are wired to repeat what feels good, even if it hurts us later. The only way to break that loop is to create new, life-giving patterns. To replace sin with truth, worship, service, and purpose.

When you build new habits that align with God's design, your brain starts to form new pathways, and those pathways begin to support a new way of living.

The Renewal Path

These five practices form a path—not a formula, but a framework for partnership with God.

- 1. Get Honest**—bring it into the light.
- 2. Get Off the Path**—recognize and reroute your cues.
- 3. Cut It Off**—remove access to what leads you astray.
- 4. Take Thoughts Captive**—win the battle in your mind.
- 5. Replace the Sin**—build new habits that reflect your new nature.

We'll also talk about the spiritual battle behind the breakthrough and ways to use your story to help others. This is how transformation happens, when you stop conforming to the world's way of change and begin renewing your mind according to God's design.

Why This is Effective

This framework is so helpful because it deals with the pattern of sin, not just the type of sin. The process connects Biblical transformation with neuroscientific habit renewal, making it naturally adaptable for any sin, including, but not limited to:

- Lust / sexual behaviors
- Anger and resentment
- Comparison / envy
- Gluttony / overeating
- Substance use
- Control
- Pride

Start with One

You might want freedom in ten different areas—and that's great. But, what's most helpful is to start with one. One specific area of struggle. One pattern you're tired of. One part of your life you want God to change. The principles in this book will apply across the board, but freedom begins when you can be specific and name the first battle.

So, what's your "one thing"?

Name it now. Write it down. Keep it in mind. This journey will be clearer and more powerful if you do.

Don't Fly Solo

This journey is personal, but it's not meant to be private. I wrote this so you can go through it with others. At the end of every chapter, you'll find questions designed for honest discussion because freedom multiplies in community. You'll see things others won't. They'll challenge you in ways you can't challenge yourself.

Bring a trusted friend, mentor, or group into what you're working on. Invite them in as you begin, and use wisdom by respecting confidentiality so everyone feels safe to be honest. If helpful, see Appendix B for recommendations on using Renewal Path in a group, and Appendix C for a sample confidentiality agreement.

Not Meant To Be Therapy

If you've experienced trauma, deep emotional wounds, or

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mental health challenges, talking with a licensed professional isn't just helpful, it's wise. There are things in your past that may need unpacking with care, patience, and professional guidance.

This book isn't focused on wounds from your past. Instead, this is a guide for how to overcome patterns that keep you stuck. It's a Biblical and practical roadmap to help you respond differently, so you're no longer caught in the same cycles of sin, shame, or self-protection.

In a way, this can work alongside therapy or professional care. Together, they can help you experience deeper healing and real freedom, both understanding your past and knowing how to walk forward in the present.

Final Request

Maybe you're seeking freedom from something small. Maybe this will be freedom from something that's been holding you back for years or even decades. My one request is that as you experience freedom—real freedom from the things holding you back—please don't keep it to yourself.

Would you commit, right now, at the very beginning, that whatever healing or breakthrough you find won't stop with you? That you'll pass it on somehow, some way?

Many of us have walked through pain, shame, addiction, or regret. And for some of us, the fact that we're still standing is a miracle in itself. But this journey isn't just about surviving and moving on, it's about stepping into a bigger purpose. Your story matters. And someone else needs to hear it.

So, if God uses this journey to bring about freedom in your life, would you use your freedom to help someone else find theirs?

It will look different for each of us, but all I ask is for a willingness—right here at the start—to say, "As I get free, it won't stop with me." Somehow, some way, you'll help someone else walk in freedom too. *Will you do that?*

Let's Begin

Whether you feel burned out, caught in shame, or just quietly managing a life of apathy, you were made for more. You were made for renewal.

It won't be easy. Renewal will need to be your number one priority and will often stretch you out of your comfort zone, but it's worth it.

If you're ready, take a deep breath. Come with an open mind. Be brutally honest. And take the first step.

Welcome to the Renewal Path.

RENEWAL TOOL: MY RENEWAL COMMITMENT

Take time to write out your personal commitment before continuing this journey. Don't overthink it—just be honest. Use the prompts below to help:

1. What I hope to get out of this book:

2. One area I feel stuck in or tired of:

3. What I'm willing to do to pursue renewal:

(Am I willing to get honest, make changes, seek help, whatever it takes, etc.?)

My commitment:

"If I find meaningful change through this process, I won't keep it to myself. I will pass it on." (Sign it and date it.)

FOR GROUPS: REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. What are you hoping for as you begin this journey?
2. Which of the “How Not To Change” ideas have you tried in the past?
3. What would it take for this group to feel like a safe space for you to be honest?
4. What one sin do you want to focus on as you go through this book?



PART 1: THE PATH

Biblical and Proven Practices of Freedom

You have reached the end of the preview, the entire book can be purchased at: <https://a.co/d/c422yLR>