

Five-Day Devotional: Before life changes, our thinking must change

This 5-day devotional is from the sermon “Upside Down” based on 1 Corinthians, 1 reveals how the gospel transforms us from the inside out. Discover how God reshapes our thinking, uses the unlikely, removes pride, and calls us into a bigger purpose beyond ourselves.

Day 1: The Inside-Out Revolution

Devotional

Have you ever tried to change a habit only to find yourself back where you started? Maybe you've attempted to be more patient, more generous, or less anxious, but despite your best efforts, lasting change feels elusive. Here's the truth: real transformation doesn't begin with behavior modification—it starts with a complete shift in how we think. Our actions flow from our beliefs about God, ourselves, and the world around us. When we try to change our fruit without addressing the root, we're fighting a losing battle. The gospel doesn't just offer us better behavior; it offers us a completely new way of seeing reality. This isn't about trying harder or doing better. It's about allowing God's truth to confront and reshape our thinking from the inside out. When our minds are renewed by His Word, our lives naturally follow. The change we've been striving for becomes possible—not through our effort, but through His transforming power working within us.

Bible Verse

'For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.' - 1 Corinthians 1:18

Reflection Question

What area of your life have you been trying to change through willpower alone, rather than allowing God to transform your thinking first?

Quote

Before life changes, our thinking must change.

Prayer

Lord, help me stop trying to change from the outside in. Renew my mind with Your truth so that real transformation can begin from within.

Day 2: Upside-Down Kingdom

Devotional

Everything about the gospel seems backwards to our natural way of thinking. We expect power to look impressive, victory to come through strength, and success to be measured by worldly standards. But God's kingdom operates on completely different principles. The cross flips our understanding upside down. It shows us that true power is found in surrender, victory comes through sacrifice, and life emerges from death. What the world sees as weakness—a man dying on a cross—is actually the greatest display of God's power in human history. This upside-down reality doesn't just apply to Jesus; it applies to us too. When we surrender our need to be strong, impressive, or in control, we discover God's strength working through our weakness. When we stop trying to save ourselves, we find true salvation. The gospel doesn't conform to our expectations—it transforms them entirely. Embracing this upside-down kingdom means letting go of our natural instincts about how life should work and trusting in God's better way.

Bible Verse

'For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.' - 1 Corinthians 1:18

Reflection Question

Where in your life are you still operating by the world's definition of strength and success rather than God's upside-down kingdom principles?

Quote

The cross flips everything upside down. And it tells us that power is not that. It tells us that power is found in surrender.

Prayer

Father, help me embrace Your upside-down kingdom where weakness becomes strength and surrender leads to victory. Transform my understanding of what true power looks like.

Day 3: The Unlikely Chosen

Devotional

Look around at the people God uses throughout Scripture, and you'll notice a pattern: He consistently chooses the unlikely candidates. David was the youngest son, Moses had a speech impediment, Gideon was hiding in fear, and the disciples were ordinary fishermen and tax collectors. God operates this way intentionally. He chooses those who are overlooked, weak, and seemingly unqualified because it makes His power unmistakable. When transformation happens through unlikely people, no one can claim credit except God Himself. This should be incredibly encouraging if you've ever felt inadequate or unqualified. Your weaknesses don't disqualify you from God's purposes—they actually position you perfectly for His power to be displayed. He doesn't need your impressive resume or natural abilities. He needs your availability and willingness to let Him work through you. The same God who chose fishermen to change the world wants to use you exactly as you are. Your perceived limitations might just be the very thing that makes you perfect for His plans.

Bible Verse

'God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong.' - 1 Corinthians 1:27

Reflection Question

What perceived weakness or inadequacy in your life might God actually want to use for His glory?

Quote

God chooses those who are overlooked. God chooses those who are weak. And God chooses the most unlikely people to carry out his purposes.

Prayer

Lord, thank You for choosing the unlikely and using the weak. Help me see my limitations as opportunities for Your strength to shine through.

Day 4: No Room for Boasting

Devotional

Deep down, we all want some level of credit. We want recognition for our efforts, appreciation for our sacrifices, and acknowledgment of our progress. It's human nature to desire a pat on the back for the positive changes in our lives. But here's the beautiful and humbling truth of the gospel: God takes all the credit for our transformation. Everything we receive—wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption—comes entirely by grace. No one stands before God and says, "I earned this." This isn't meant to diminish us; it's meant to free us. When we stop trying to prove ourselves, measure up to others, or impress people with our spiritual progress, we can finally rest. We can stop the exhausting cycle of performance and comparison. Salvation isn't something we achieve; it's something we receive. Our transformation isn't a testimony to our willpower; it's a testimony to God's grace. And in that truth, we find the rest our souls have been craving.

Bible Verse

'So that no human being might boast in the presence of God.' - 1 Corinthians 1:29

Reflection Question

In what areas of your spiritual life are you still trying to earn credit or prove yourself rather than resting in God's grace?

Quote

Everything is by grace. Which means no one stands before God and says, I earned this.

Prayer

God, help me release my need for credit and recognition. Let me find my rest in Your grace alone, knowing that all transformation comes from You.

Day 5: Beyond Yourself

Devotional

The ultimate purpose of your transformation goes far beyond your personal benefit. While it's wonderful that you get to experience freedom, healing, and restoration, that's not the end goal—it's just the beginning. Your salvation isn't ultimately about you. You were saved so that others might be saved. The change God works in your life is meant to overflow into the lives of those around you. When people see the unlikely transformation in you, they catch a glimpse of what God can do in their own lives. This perspective shift changes everything. Instead of focusing inward on your own spiritual progress, you begin to look outward at how God wants to use your story. Your struggles become testimonies, your weaknesses become platforms for His strength, and your transformation becomes an invitation for others to experience the same grace. When we understand that our lives are part of God's bigger story of redemption, we find purpose beyond ourselves. We become living proof that the gospel really does turn everything upside down—and that's exactly what the world needs to see.

Bible Verse

'He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.' - 1 Corinthians 1:30

Reflection Question

How is God calling you to use your transformation story to point others toward His grace and power?

Quote

My salvation isn't about me. Your salvation isn't about you. You were saved so that others would be saved.

Prayer

Father, help me see beyond myself to the bigger purpose You have for my life. Use my story to draw others to You.