

ROMANS

THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

STUDY TWENTY-NINE

How a Renewed Mind Thinks

Romans 12:3–8

Right actions occur because there are right thoughts, and right thinking begins when the mind has been renewed. As we are transformed in mind, we begin to see life through God's perspective.
—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

LIKE the central processor of a computer, our mind is programmed to operate as the control center of our lives. Our daily decisions, our most intimate passions, and our fearful or courageous actions find their genesis in our thoughts. Whatever thoughts we encode will eventually come out in our emotions and our actions. As we think, so we do.

We can let the world program us to satisfy our deepest longings by running after fortune, fame, power, and pleasure. Or we can let God change the way we think (Romans 12:2)—that is, let Him reprogram our minds with His Word by His Spirit.

As He renews our minds, we think correctly about ourselves, see others the way God sees them, and look at our circumstances from His point of view. What's the outcome of thinking like He thinks? We are transformed into the likeness of His Son. What breaks the heart of Christ breaks our hearts. What gives Him joy gives us joy. The acts of love He would do, we do.

In the prior *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we found Paul on his knees begging all of us to offer ourselves as “a living and holy sacrifice” to God and to experience true transformation (12:1). In this Bible study, we'll step into the control room of our minds and discover how we can be reprogrammed to think and act like Christ.



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Romans 12:3–8



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Only the all-knowing and all-powerful One can peel back the layers of our mind and reveal the hidden corners of our heart. Echo David's plea in this psalm. In your own words, ask God to use His powerful truths in Romans to help you renew your heart and mind.

*Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
Point out anything in me that offends you,
and lead me along the path of everlasting life. (Psalm 139:23–24)*



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In Romans 1–8, Paul focused on the vertical angle—how God reaches His great arms of mercy into the pool of humanity, selects us by His grace, and gives us Christ's righteousness when we place our faith in His Son as Savior. In chapters 9–11, he emphasized that the Jews' rejection of the Messiah opened the door of salvation for gentiles. What unfathomable wisdom!

Now in Romans 12, the focus turns from the vertical to the horizontal. Paul urged us, out of gratitude for God's mercy, to consecrate ourselves to God and let Him transform us "by the renewing of [our] mind" (Romans 12:2 NASB). The first step in mind-renewal is evaluation—rummaging through the mental clutter to decide what to keep and what to toss. Then we can get on with the business of serving others.



Observation: Renewed Thinking, Spirit-Gifted Serving

Observe what Paul said about how a renewed mind thinks by carefully reading [Romans 12:3–8](#).¹ Note how biblical thinking—or thinking from God's perspective (Romans 12:3)—impacts how we relate to others (12:4–8).

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Romans 12:3–8

Thinking Correctly About Ourselves—Romans 12:3

The apostle Paul used the same root word translated “to think” four times in [Romans 12:3](#) NASB. What warning did Paul give to all believers concerning the way we think of ourselves? What kind of evaluation should we have of ourselves?

*Paul renders it, “I say to everyone among you not to think (there’s the first one) more highly of himself than he ought to think (there’s the second) but to think (there’s the third) so as to have sound thinking” (there’s the fourth).
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

Thinking Correctly About Other Believers—Romans 12:4–5

Paul then moved his focus to our relationship with other believers. What word picture did he use in [Romans 12:4–5](#)? How does a renewed mind see the body of Christ and each member in it?

*Every part of our being is important, and the renewed mind remembers that.
What is true of the human body is true of the body of Christ.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

How a Renewed Mind Thinks

Romans 12:3–8

Thinking Correctly About Spiritual Gifts—Romans 12:6–8

Now Paul addressed the way we ought to think about our spiritual gifts. Name the seven gifts and how they are supposed to be practiced in *Romans 12:6–8*?

Spiritual Gift	The Gift in Practice
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	

What point did Paul make by specifying these gifts?

There is no such thing as an unimportant, devalued member in the body of Christ—though there are some gifts that are more public and prominent than others. No gifts are of greater importance than another gift.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Seeing Life Through God's Eyes

The next step of the *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, interpretation, helps us have an in-depth meaning of the biblical text as intended for the original readers.

How a Renewed Mind Thinks

Romans 12:3–8

Paul used prefixes to deepen the meaning of how we are to think. Look up the Greek words *hyperphroneo*, translated “think more highly,” and *sophroneo*, translated “to have sound judgment,” in the Greek lexicon available at billmounce.com (Romans 12:3 NASB). Or consult a commentary from your library. What message does this verse convey to all believers?

This word, phroneo, has a prefix, huper. We get our word hyper from it. So let's use that. "I say to everyone not to hyper-think about himself." In other words, don't think of yourself as above anyone else. Don't overthink. It's a statement against conceit and arrogance. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

When you are “honest in your evaluation of yourselves,” Paul said (12:3), you see yourself as God sees you individually and in relationship to others. In [Romans 12:4–5](#), what key principles did Paul emphasize regarding how the body of Christ functions?

This emphasizes three particular things about the body. First, the importance of unity, it works together, so it is in the body of Christ. Second is diversity, variety. Have you noticed how much God loves variety? And mutuality, we care for each other. We notice each other. If one of us hurts, the other one hurts too. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

A spiritual gift is an extraordinary ability given to each believer by the Holy Spirit that enables us to perform a function with ease and effectiveness. According to [Romans 12:6–8](#), how does correct thinking about using our spiritual gifts help the body of Christ function well?

When I begin to think with a renewed mind, what difference does that make? I start thinking like Christ, like the Scriptures. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Romans 12:3–8



Correlation: Thinking like Christ!

Thinking with a renewed mind means to think like Christ. Compare our passage with [Philippians 2:2–11](#). How would you describe the mind of Christ? Based on these verses, against what must believers guard themselves?

We guard against individualism to the extreme and unrestrained pedestalization of individuals. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Compare the various lists of spiritual gifts in [Romans 12:6–8](#); [1 Corinthians 12:7–11](#); [Ephesians 4:11–13](#); [1 Peter 4:10–11](#). What themes emerge from all four passages? Interestingly, the same Greek word for the gift of “serving” in [Romans 12:7](#) is used in [Mark 10:45](#) in regard to Jesus’ ministry on earth. What can we learn from this comparison?

“The Son of God came not to be served but to serve others” (Mark 10:45). Same Greek word used in Romans 12:7, diakoneo. He came to serve. Jesus demonstrated the gift of serving throughout His ministry. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Serving like Christ!

How does the renewed mind work in our daily lives? Application helps us drive God’s truths to the hidden corners of our heart. What has the Lord revealed to you about who you are through this study?

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Romans 12:3–8

Have a reasonable assessment of who you are. That's how to think correctly about yourself. Meaning, you have strengths. To deny them is to deny the truth. You have gifts. To know what your gifts are and to carry them out is a part of your obedience, your calling. To act like you don't have such gifts is not at all humble. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

You've learned important truths about yourself, about other members in the body of Christ, and about the spiritual gifts God has given to us. How can you internalize these truths and show appreciation for the other members of Christ's body?

Relating in love begins with realizing who we are in Christ. Don't skip this step! Do you know yourself well . . . your personality, natural abilities, interests, and, most importantly, your spiritual gift? Are you using your gift? Then you can value others for who they are and what they contribute to the body of Christ. That's how a renewed mind thinks, and that's how love works.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, what a joy and an honor to serve You in the capacity of my gifts. Help me to think biblically as I deal with life, to think reasonably about myself and my spiritual gifts, and to understand and value the spiritual gifts You have given to those around me. Be exalted in my life! In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen!

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Mirlenda Noëlliste in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2007, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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Study 29 • Page 7

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