

I've been playing guitar for about 10 years now.

I started trying to learn electric guitar, but I realized I'm not as cool as Truddy, so I put down the electric, and I picked up the acoustic, and on July 10, 2016, I played my acoustic guitar at NorthernLife or Hornsby Baptist for the first time.

And the very first time, I was completely glued, completely glued to my sheet music. I could not even look up for half a second. I needed to know exactly what the chords were.

Weeks and weeks and weeks of playing and practicing like this. And eventually, I could look up for half a second. I could look up just to see the leader, and then straight back down.

Over time, months and years of this, I eventually realized I was relying on the music less and less and less, until one day I got rid of the music entirely, and I was standing up there without anything because I had just memorized the song in my

head. But I had actually intentionally memorized it. So I had spent a lot of time going, OK, G, D, B minor, A, memorized the chords. Over time, years of this, and eventually I realized I wasn't memorizing the song, I was just playing the song.

Because the song, the chords of the song had gone from my brain into my bones, into my fingers. It's extremely ironic that I tell this story because I made a mistake. I had made multiple mistakes.

I know Joel saw it in that first set. It doesn't happen very often, but it keeps me humble when it does. The reason I tell this story is to not make you think that I'm a great musician.

But repetition rewires your brain. Repetition rewires your brain. Repetition, no.

We're in the middle of our waveform series. We're looking at spiritual formation in the way of the master. Wayform.

Last week, we looked at 2 Corinthians, chapter 10. There are strongholds of deception in your and my life that can be torn down by the power of the gospel. The title of that message was the Replacement Principle.

Find the lie, replace it with the gospel. Tonight's sermon is the part two, because these lies are not just once off believed, but they've been believed over a long time, and they're really deep in who we are.

And so, to remove the lie and replace with truth has to take time. So, tonight's called the Rewire Principle if you're a note taker. Let me pray.

Father, thank you for the privilege that it is to gather together in the room and online with your saints, your children, to encourage each other as we sing and have community and celebrate the big stuff of our life.

It's a privilege, and we come under your word now together. We pray you would speak clearly to us, correct us, rebuke us, teach us, train us, and help me. Amen.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing, and perfect will. The word be transformed in Romans 12.2 is metamorpho.

It's this word which means a total change of inward fundamental character or condition. It's the same word which has come into English in another way.

When you think of the caterpillar coming out of its cocoon as a butterfly, metamorphosis comes from this word, metamorpho. Here's another definition.

The process of transformation from an immature form to an adult form in two or more distinct stages when it comes to my formation and your formation, if only it were two distinct stages.

In reality, it's a hundred kabillion stages, two steps forward, one step back. But this is what the word metamorphosis, metamorpho means. It's a total transformation.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. What's interesting about this word metamorpho is it's a passive imperative. Any grammar nerds knows what that means apart from Jack.

I did Greek with Jack at college. A passive imperative is a command for something to be done to you. You are not the subject of the verb, you are not the one transforming, you are the one who is transformed, and yet you receive the command.

So, if I were to say to you, be called by your mother, be pooped on by a bird, be struck by lightning, you would rightly say, I can't, I'm not the one doing that, you can't command me to do something which somebody else does to me.

And so there's a tension, a paradox here, that Paul is playing with, where he is commanding us to be transformed. I love the quote that says, without him, God, you can't, but without you, he won't.

Spiritual transformation is a partnership of human with God. If I could, I would have a full, rich beard like Begsy's. Unfortunately, it's not the genes I was given.

I have shaved, I can get better than this, but I'm trying to keep it tidy. But I learned a lesson that you cannot squeeze facial hair out of God by doing that. You can't squeeze transformation, not facially and not spiritually.

That's a profound point. You cannot squeeze transformation out of yourself. You can't by sheer willpower, make yourself into the person that God sees you to be, but he by his spirit can change you.

So, Metamorpho, this passive imperative is commanding you and I to be transformed by the Holy Spirit in this tension and this paradox.

I was reading through journal entries this week from when I was 16, six years ago, and one of these repeated lines which kept coming up was, it seems that God is not in a rush to make me the person he wants me to be.

And I read that this week with all this sermon in my mind, the passive imperative, and I thought, yeah, yeah, okay, sure, my brother, my self, six years ago, God is not going to just, boom, transform your life in the outward sense.

So, he does take time, but I was feeling like nothing was happening, and I wasn't becoming more like Jesus, and I don't think that was because God was slow. I think that's because I wasn't doing anything. That's the thing about spiritual formation.

It has you in it. You have a role to play, as the Lord has a role to play. He will not transform you.

Without him, you can't squeeze it out of you, but without you, he won't do it. He won't transform you without you. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but what?

Be transformed. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Notice that by.

What are we transformed by? Oh, it's not there. Fair enough.

We are transformed by the renewing of your mind. This word renewing is *anachinosis* in Greek. It means new again.

We are to be made new again in our mind, and Paul says that transformation will come out of that newness again. This diagram with the circles is one that we spend a bit of time in in this series.

It's kind of a picture of the totality of a person, the executive order of a person. In the first week of the waveform series, if you were here, we looked at the dead center. That's a pun.

That's clever, because it is a dead center without Christ. But the Holy Spirit, and I'm going to write a book about that. That's good.

It was a dead center, but if you're in Christ, it is now a living center. Amen? All right.

My book's coming soon. We looked at spiritual formation has to start with the surrendering of the will to the Lord. That's the center of your being.

You must put your will before the Lord, forsake the impulsive will, choose by the power of the Spirit, the reflective will, and then he can transform you from the inside out. Well, in the fourth week, we're moving a tier out.

And Paul says be transformed by the renewing of your mind. If your mind is renewed, it will affect your emotions, your body, your social context, and your soul. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

This is huge in spiritual formation, the renewing of the mind. So, the question is, how do you get a new mind? That has to be the question.

Before we get to the answer to that question, let's take a detour into the world of neuroscience. I'm not a psychologist, neither a psychiatrist, or a neuroscientist, or any kind of medical expert. Obviously, you know that.

I have no expertise in this area, but I can repeat to you what other people have said about the brain. Psychiatrist Dr. Kurt Thompson says this about the human brain.

Neurons that repeatedly activate in a particular pattern are statistically more likely to fire in that same pattern the more they are activated. That means you think one thought, you're more likely to think that thought again.

Once the initial neurons in a network fire, there is a very high probability that the related neurons will also activate and move along the same bio-electrical pathway to the end of that network. I know I just lost half of you and myself.

The more frequently those patterns have been fired, the more easily they will fire in that same pattern in the future. In simpler language, neurons that fire together, wire together. If you don't know what this means, join the club.

Neither do I. I actually don't know what I'm talking about. But I think this, I know this much, and I'm going to give you this much knowledge.

I think they're getting at this idea called neuroplasticity. Science has shown in recent years that the brain like plastic literally molds itself around our thoughts, our repeated thoughts at a chemical neurological level. It rewires itself.

Repetition rewires your brain. Repetition rewires your brain. Repetition rewires your brain.

Repetition rewires your brain. Repetition rewires your brain. If you're a visual person, and this is not making any sense, here's a metaphor.

You're in a jungle. Dense vines and thickets and undergrowth, and you have a machete. The jungle is the billions of synapses and neurons in your brain.

You and the machete is your thought life. When you have a thought, you are hacking a path through this jungle, and at first, it's like a thin, sketchy little path.

But the more you think that thought, the more you walk down that path, it gets more clear and the jungle gets pushed back, till it gets to the point where, like the aisles here in the seats, if I stand here, it's easy for me to get to the end, but

hard for me to get over here, because the brain rewires itself around our repeated thoughts, like a machete-wielding maniac in a jungle. This is a good thing, by the way.

Thank God that he made us like this, because it's the reason why you can brush your teeth. It's the reason why you can drive a car. If you're musical, it's the reason why you can play an instrument.

If you sew or crochet or embroider, whatever you do that takes fine motor skills, it's the reason why you can do that, because the repetition of an action has rewired your brain around how to do this action. It is a really good thing.

Repetition rewires the brain. Repetition rewires your brain. Repetition rewires your brain.

When I was typing this sermon, this is true, so get ready. When I was typing this sermon, every single time I typed, repetition rewires your brain, and I've said it about a dozen times already. I wrote, repetition rewires your Brian.

I wrote Brian instead of brain. Every single time, it was infuriating. My fingers were going, repetition rewires the Brian.

Repetition rewires the Brian. And once I got through the initial frustration, I realized it's actually very profound. It's ironic.

It's meta. Here's me. I make one mistake.

Repetition rewires the Brian. And I did it again, and again, 12 times, until I had to go, repetition rewires the B-R-A-I-N. Repetition rewires the brain.

Repetition rewires the brain. You probably know everything I've said so far. There's a saying, practice makes perfect.

We all know you get better at things by doing them repeatedly. But did you know you can make someone believe a lie just by repeating it? Psychologists have called it the illusory truth effect.

You could say something that is utterly untrue, but if you repeat it enough times, the brain of the hearer or yourself, if you're saying it to yourself, will rewire itself around this lie, because repetition rewires the B-R-I-N.

Repetition rewires the brain. It's a good thing, but it can be a bad thing, because you can believe lies. What was the lie you discovered last week?

Last week's sermon was talking about these strongholds of deception, these lies that we believed once, maybe when we were a kid, and through repetition, they've become deeply ingrained in who we are. We had this helpful process.

Number one, identify the problem, as in, look at the symptoms of your life. Ask probing questions. Why do I do this?

What's going on in my heart? When do I do this? And how does that help me understand why I do this?

And then pinpoint the lie. If you can pinpoint the lie, then you can start to change it, because you can't change what you can't... you can't change what you can't confront.

Thank you. The thing is, you didn't believe that lie once. If I say a lie to you, it doesn't affect you, probably.

But you've believed this lie for years and years and years and years. So it's deeply ingrained in you. Maybe your lie is that you're not good enough.

Where did that come from? Maybe in kindergarten, you were the last person picked for the sports team.



And maybe the only way that your five-year-old mind could comprehend what has just happened is you said to yourself and you believed it, I'm not good enough.

And then maybe in year two, you had an assignment that you were really proud of and you hand it in and then you get slammed by the teacher. And the only way you can deal with that is by saying, I'm not good enough.

And then you join high school and you can't make friends because you keep distancing yourself because you believe you're not good enough for them.

And this lie has been repeated, repeated, repeated your whole life and it has created a rut in your thinking. A rut is what happens when a car drives on a muddy road, multiple cars in the same channel. It creates ruts.

Maybe your lie is that you need the praise of other people. Maybe you have a great family, praise God.

But maybe you realize when you were two years old, that if you move a certain way or make a certain sound, everyone will give you all of their attention and they'll love you. And maybe you liked that.

Maybe you're in kindergarten and you did whatever you could do to get up on the platform so that you could receive the praise of other people.

What if that pattern is repeated your entire life and you realize that you have this lie that you need to be praised by people? You've fallen into a rut of bad habits and self-destructing thinking. You've believed the lie by repetition.

Maybe you feel you can't express yourself. Maybe in kindergarten, you expressed yourself in a new way, in a bold way, artistically, or musically, or verbally, and someone made fun of you, and you realized, I can't express myself.

So then your entire life is dominated by this pattern of you holding back and trying to fit in with everyone else, because you can't express yourself. Repetition creates ruts in your thinking and in my thinking. One more.

Maybe your mom is a great cook, praise God. But maybe the answer to all your problems when you were a kid was food. You skin your knee in kindergarten, you get an ice cream.

You have a bad day at school, you get a lollipop.

You come home from high school and you've had a bad day and the exams aren't going well and the HSC is stressful and life is busy, and you find comfort in food because you've believed the lie that food gives you comfort.

Repetition creates ruts and we get stuck in unhelpful behaviors and we get stuck believing lies. They're deeply embedded in us and they won't come out easily because they haven't gone in easily.

When you've believed the same thing for years and years and years and years and years, there is power in stating the lie and preaching the gospel at that lie, yes? But, you need to repeat the truth to rewire your brain.

We get stuck in ruts of thinking. And this is bad news, pretty depressing, really. But here's the good news.

Repetition is what created the old rut, and repetition is what will create the new trench. Ruts and trenches. A rut is an unintentional, accidental function of time and repetition.

A trench is a strategic, intentionally dug channel to divert resources. We get stuck in ruts of thinking, but you can create a trench of truth, and if you repeat it, it will rewire your brain in the truth.

My old bedroom used to get flooded all the time. The garden, we live in Mount Cola on a hill, like this, so all the water just flows into my bedroom. And the water had created ruts in the garden.

By repetition, naturally, unintentionally, it had created ruts that flowed all the way down the hill and into my carpet and into my entire bedroom.

And it wasn't until, I didn't do it actually, dad and mom did it, they created a trench to re-divert the water. The flooding stopped. It took a few tries to get the trench in the right place.

But the trench of truth channeled the water, and now my bedroom, well, not my bedroom anymore, but that bedroom doesn't flood so much anymore because I've created a trench.

You can, you can create new neural pathways and literally redesign your mind around the truth if you will repeat the truth. Even if you don't believe it at first, repeat it, repeat the truth, repeat the truth.

I feel like I've been living under a rock since 1997, three years before I was born, because I only just finally watched Good Will Hunting. It was great. It's a great film.

I watched it earlier this week and I had this sermon, repetition creates ruts, repetition can create truth, repetition rewires the brain. All of that was swimming up in my head when I was watching Good Will Hunting.

And we got to the scene at the end of the film, you'll, I mean, I'm going to spoil it, but it's 25 years old, so that's on you.

There's this scene where Robin Williams, the psychologist, is talking to the young Matt Damon, who was abused as a kid, and he says, It's not your fault. And Matt Damon says, I know. But he says, It's not your fault.

I know. It's not your fault. I know.

It's not your fault. And then, for me, the most powerful moment of the movie is he repeats this line, It's not your fault. It's not your fault.

And Matt Damon breaks down. The first time in the film, he has this enormous breakthrough moment, and they hug, and they have this immense connection. Repetition of truth can rewire your brain.

If at first you do not believe it, repeat it. So what truth do you need to hear? Really, I can't tell you that, because it depends on the lie that you've believed.

But I can tell you that this book has all the truth that will deal with every lie in your life. That's what we said last week. This book has divine power to demolish strongholds in your life.

Whatever the lie is, there is truth in the word of the Lord that can speak to that lie. And if you will repeat it, will rewire your mind around the truth. Try this.

If you believe you're not good enough, you could say, even though I fail, Jesus died for me while I was still a sinner. He tells me I'm worthy of his love, therefore I am good enough to him.

If you believe you need the praise of people, you might say this, my life is lived for the glory of God alone, I live to make him smile, and I don't need the praise of people.

If you believe you can't express yourself, you could say, my identity is in my father in heaven, I can truly express myself to him, and he leads me in doing that to other people.

If you believe you need to self medicate your pain through food, addiction, whatever it is, you could say this, when I'm stressed, when I'm in need, when I'm in the dark, I turn to Jesus, not to food or whatever it is.

Jesus gives me comfort, and I don't need food. Repetition rewires your brain. Repetition rewires your brain.

This is where we're building on last week. We had the process, identify the problem, ask probing questions, pinpoint the lie, and then preach the gospel at that lie. I love that image.

Once you've pinpointed the lie, you preach the truth of the gospel to your specific lie. But here's the catch. This is what this entire sermon is building up to.

If you get one thing, get this. You must repeat the truth over that lie. You didn't come to believe that lie by believing at once, and it will not disappear by stating truth once.

You must repeat truth over that lie. Write it, speak it, repeat it, until you believe it. Write down your declaration.

Find what your lie is, and find the truth of the gospel that directly addresses that. Write it down, speak it, repeat it, until you believe it. We asked the question earlier, how do we get a new mind?

I think this is the answer, by repetition of truth. Repetition of truth literally makes your mind new again. You can carve new paths through the jungle, new thoughts, new habits, new processes, if you will repeat the truth of God's Word.

Psalm 1 gives us a good model, I think, of what repetition of truth looks like.

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked, or stand in the way that sinners take, or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, who meditates on his law day and night.

That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season, and whose leaf does not wither, whatever they do, prospers. The word behind meditate is like mumble, babble. Keep the words under your breath.

As you do your jobs, keep ruminating on the truth. That's what the psalmist says. Blessed is the one who meditates day and night on the truth, for it will rewire your brain and give you the blessed life.

Joshua 1, 8 says the same thing. Keep this book of the law always on your lips. Notice lips.

I like that. It's not mind. It's not think about it once every three weeks.

Keep it on your lips. Meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Meditating on truth day and night rewires your brain. No matter what the lie is, the gospel speaks truth. And you need to repeat the truth to that lie.

As I've been working on this sermon, sort of chewing on it for the past couple of weeks, I've been trying to apply this and trying to find a place where I can write it, speak it, repeat it until I believe it.

And I realized I need to get a whiteboard. I'm going to get a whiteboard and put it in my bedroom, and I'm going to write a straight-up declaration.

And every morning, because it will be right in front of my bed, I'm going to wake up, I'm going to see it, I'm going to speak it and repeat it until I believe it.

I don't know what you need to do, but I know the answer is not, say one thing every three weeks and half-heartedly believe it. Repetition rewires your brain. There is no way around this.

Repetition rewires your brain. Write it, speak it, repeat it until you believe it. Write it, speak it, repeat it until you believe it.

We can come out of these ruts of destructive habits and thought processes by creating trenches of truth. Intentional, strategic trenches of truth can rewire our brains from the inside out.

Repetition rewires the brain, repetition rewires the brain, repetition rewires the brain. It is a good thing, and it's also a bad thing. Let's redeem it.

Let's use repetition for the glory of God. I like the fact that right now, I'm not stressed about the chords that I'm about to play in two minutes. I probably will make a mistake now that I've said that.

And really, it's not even that impressive a thing, but repetition, I've been playing these songs for six years, basically twice a Sunday and a lot during the week.

Repetition literally rewires my brain around how to do this, and it can do the same for you. Repetition rewires the brain. Repetition rewires the brain.

Let's create trenches of truth that dig to the bottom of our lives and replace them with truth. We're about to sing a song called New Wine, which is a good song to following a sermon like this.

The sermon talks about, when the kingdom comes, there is new power and new wine and new life that fills you. And I just encourage you, as we sing this song, think about the new mind that you have and you can have in Christ.

There is power and the kingdom is here as the song says. Let's stand and pray. Lord Jesus, we thank you and we praise you for the wonderful treasure that is the gospel.

The gospel has made us who have put our faith in you alive. We were dead and we are now alive. We were blind and now we see.

But I thank you that the gospel is not just a way of dealing with our afterlife, but the gospel transforms our life right now.

So I pray for every every person listening to this right now, whether in the room online or in the podcast in years to come. Lord, would you fill us with your spirit to see the lies that we have believed and made agreement with?

Would you turn our eyes to the truth of the gospel and give us the power and the ability to repeat truth and rewire our brains for your glory? Amen.