

We know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purposes. Romans 8 28, anyone have that one locked away as a memory verse? It's a common memory verse.

We know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.

But I wonder if sometimes for you, the way it's stored in your mind is something more like, we're pretty sure that in most things, God sometimes works for some people. What do you think? I think we can move to that at times.

It's not what the Bible says. In all things, all is all encompassing. In all things, God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purposes.

Today, we're considering the third part of the renewal of the mind, the reframe principle. The reframe principle. What do you see?

Half empty or half full. In more fancy language, it's talking about cognitive bias. It's talking about, have things happened in my day, my week, my year, my life, such that I see life through a lens?

Of course, it's what we all do. We have cognitive bias. We have a bias in our mind that often we don't know is there, and it colours like lenses that are so close to our eyes, like sunglasses or spectacles.

They affect how we see the world in such a way that we don't realise that that's what's happening. Half empty or half full.

If you walk around NorthernLife Baptist Church mid-week or Monday or Tuesday in particular, and you see a middle-aged woman that looks a lot like the person that was doing announcements.

And you see her, if you were spying on her, you'd see her walking around every now and then. She'd just start doing air guitar. That's weird.

Or she would, you'd see her walk along and she'd do, I can't do it, she'd do these clicking her heels. Or she'd be walking along and see the silhouette of her from a distance. She's a glass half full type of gal.

Amen? If you know Linda. And that's not just because she's happy, happy go lucky.

I've had the privilege of being in a life hub for a couple of years with Linda and her husband, Lindsay. And they're amazing people. They have this faith-filled view of the world.

It's half full most of the time, filled with faith. But that wasn't something that I don't think they were just born with.

They've learned that over their lifetime, and in particular, the last four years, as they've worked through the scary possibilities of cancer. And they've come through that in large degree.

Last week, I think, close to last week, Linda had a birthday. Does anyone lament birthdays? Sometimes you hear people sort of go, oh, it's another birthday.

Shh, we speak not of my birthdays. It's funny, Linda does these ones every birthday. And it's profound if you do, because she's realised and her family's realised, every birthday is a gift from God.

Hallelujah, I'm still alive. Yes, that is a reframe that's happened in their thinking, because of some challenging stuff that they've lived through.

We know that in all things, God is working for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. If we can believe this, and you don't have to go through cancer to believe it.

If we can believe that our God is good and he has a purpose for our lives and he's working in everything, he's drawing it all together for his good and our good, that can and will reframe our thinking, amen. It's a key. Our minds are important.

We're in the fifth week of our series on spiritual formation. We've called it Wayform, spiritual formation in the way of the master. And the thesis of this series is really shown by this helpful diagram.

We have looked at the fact that God wants to save us through the gospel, which is involving a transformation and renewal of our heart. It's called regeneration. Our spirit comes alive because we have believed the gospel.

He wants to renew and transform our minds as you move out in the concentric circles. It represents our whole life, our whole soul. And that changes our dominant emotions when we're thinking right thoughts about life and ourselves.

And it affects our bodies, our mind and our emotions, our spirit affects our bodies, and then how we interact with community. We've looked at the easy yoke in the first message, which also involves hard work.

We've looked at the importance of knowing that we are a child of God by grace through faith, that we can only become the people we're called to be because we know we belong. We have become by grace, through faith, a child of God.

We've looked at the replacement principle, identify the lie and replace it with the truth. We've looked at the rewire principle, repetition rewires the brain. Some of you wanted to say Brian, but it's not if you were here last week.

Repetition rewires the brain. All these messages are online. If you want to check them out and catch up, if maybe you're new today, you want to just check it out, look up NorthernLife.

And today we're looking at the reframe principle.

Well, if some of these titles sound cool, well, it's because they were written, those titles were written by a cool person, Craig Groschell, he's a pastor from America, and Replacement Principle, Rewire Principle, Reframed Principle.

They come directly from his book entitled Winning the War in Your Mind. I would recommend it. It's a great book about renewal of the mind.

This series, Wayform, is not from a book. It's a conglomeration of learnings I guess I've done over the last many decades. But the part about the mind, we've used some of the sayings and the titles.

So to pay homage to my American brother, Craig, let me tell you one of his stories. It's a great story that he says. His father was a professional baseball player in college domain.

So he had good baseball genes, and when he was 12, he was a pitcher doing very well. They're going for the state championships. And the night before the state championships, his dream, his dream was to be a professional baseball pitcher.

This is a guy, Craig Groeschel, pastor of a church in the States. And he tells the story of going to a batting net, like we have a bowling machine as cricketers, but the baseball players, he's a pitcher, so he still bats.

And he's lined up, and he's getting a little bit overconfident, and he puts, he sets the pitching machine to too fast.

And it comes at him too close in, and he can't get out of the way, and it hits his fingers, smashes them, smashes them, and with the smashed fingers, smashes his dream. He can no longer pitch. His baseball dream is over.

He doesn't play for many years. In fact, he never goes back to it. So he's stuck in a pretty depressed state, and then the family moves to Ardmore, I think it is, Oklahoma.

He says it's a fairly sleepy part of America. And then he has eyes for a young girl. He's just 12, 13 years old.

And so he notices that she's a tennis player, so he gets involved in tennis. He's never played tennis before, but he's got good athletic genes. So he ends up being a fantastic tennis player.

The team, long story long, the team goes to the National Estate Championships, and they win. He gets profiled in that. He's a great tennis player.

He gets an all-expenses-paid university scholarship. That takes him to a particular god. He doesn't know what's god-ordained, but god-ordained university, prestigious one.

He starts playing tennis, but what really he was there for was to meet the love of his life, Jesus. He gets saved and then falls in love with a woman, Amy, who is bananas for Jesus herself.

They form an unstoppable team, and by the time they're 25, he plants a church called Life Church.

It's now grown to be one of the biggest churches in the world, and the reason that you can watch online is because Life Church give away online church, which is worth millions for free every week.

So that's a cool story of god being at work, isn't it? What do you reckon if you were to take a Polaroid, a freeze frame of his life, I think he was a god-fearer, after he'd smashed his hand?

He might have been forgiven, but for being a little bit cheeky and saying, God, what are you up to? Don't you know my dream? Does anyone know what this is like?

What are you doing, God? I think every one of us knows what this is like.

If we look back in the memory bank, and we see these frozen frames of pain, of confusion, they're memories that are stored in limbic templates like Polaroids that we can pull out of our memory banks and go, oh, that has associated confusion with it.

And maybe you're still in it because God didn't do what he was meant to do. He didn't act. And you know, when we sit in that place and we don't get unfrozen from that memory, it can lead to a lot of disappointment and ultimately unbelief.

That's where it takes you. When God doesn't act the way we expect him to act. I feel for you if you're right in this at the moment.

I hope I don't get emotional, but every time I have a run through this sermon, I get emotional. And it's because this stuff is core to life, and it's filled with just deep pain when God doesn't act the way that you pray for him to act.

It's very confusing and just hard. It's hard stuff. The Apostle Paul had a strategic plan for advancing the Gospel.

He wanted to get to Rome because he's a smart guy, and he thought, if I can get to Rome, I can get the ear of the government officials, and with the power of the Gospel, I can see people get saved and take the Gospel all over the world.

He did go there, but it wasn't as an official. He went there as a prisoner. So he goes there, locked up under house arrest to Rome.

He's got his dream, but not in the way he hoped for, chained to a rotating contingent of guards awaiting possible execution. Paul's circumstances were out of his control.

I think we know that you can plan a lot in life, and some of us have personality types that like to do that more than others, but you can't control everything. Circumstances ultimately are out of our control. They were out of Paul's.

And so Paul wrote to the church at Philippi about what was happening to him, and he could easily have written this. He could have written, now, I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me is super disappointing.

I wanted to spread the good news through preaching to government officials, but that has not happened. As a result of this hell I've been through, I've decided prayer doesn't work, and I'm never going back to church again.

Paul didn't write that, could have, but he didn't. Paul couldn't control what happened to him, but he could control how he framed it. Amen?

You can't control what happens to you, but you can control how you receive it, and this is what he actually wrote to the Philippians. I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel.

As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace garden to everyone else that I'm in chains for Christ.

And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear. Paul was saying, I had a plan, but God had a better plan.

I had a really well thought out plan, but God had a better one. Paul reframes. He reframes and realises this is not too bad, you know.

The guards who are on an eight hour rotation are chained to me. And I'm really keen on sharing the gospel.

So they're stuck listening to this guy who's not only a good gospel sharer, he's anointed by the Holy Spirit to be a proclaimer of the good news to all the world. And these guards have the ear of influential officials.

God is at work even though it didn't look like he was. What do you need to thank God for not doing? What do you need to thank God for not doing?

See, God didn't protect Craig's hand, but now, with the benefit of hindsight, he looks back and says, thank you God for not protecting my hand. I never would have picked up tennis. What do you need to thank God for not doing?

You'll only thank God for not doing something if you're convinced that Romans 8 28 is true and it means something for you. If you believe that God is good, I've decided I'm sold on it. You can't convince me otherwise.

It's not gonna be based on my feelings. It's not gonna be based on my circumstances because they are gonna go up and down. I can't control them.

But I will reframe every circumstance under the truth that my God is for me because I love him. By his grace, he's drawn me into his love. Is that what you've decided?

That repetition that God is acting for the good of all those who love him, who are called according to his purpose, will rewire your brain. We've all heard of collateral damage.

Something happens that's not great, and it's sort of the collateral damage is those innocent bystanders nearby that get hurt as well. A great idea about reframing is the term collateral goodness. God acts, and there is collateral goodness.

I've been reading the Sermon on the Mount over and over because it's a great place to hang out when you're studying spiritual formation. And I noticed that Jesus says, love your enemies, and then he gives a reason why.

He says, because your father in heaven, God, the creator of the universe, he sends rain on the evil ones and the good. He makes his sun, the sun, shine on the evil and the good. It's collateral goodness.



It's common grace. God is good to all. So you'd be good too.

It's collateral goodness. Did you know that deciding to see God's collateral goodness is actually a habit? Just like whingeing is a habit.

Most people, I suppose, some babies are born a little bit more whingey than others. But on the whole, it's a habit you learn, don't you think? You learn to not be content.

Ben talked about it last week, this idea of neural plasticity, that our brain is malleable. We learn stuff the way it connects through nerves to our bones and muscles and skin and moving our limbs. And then what we think, the emotions, we learn it.

It's a habit. What does it mean to see God's collateral goodness as habit? Well, this is what Paul is telling us in Philippians 4, in verse 11.

He says, I have learned to be content. It's an interesting word there that we can just skim over. I have learned, we're talking about the mind, haven't we?

I have learned, it took me time. I had to apply myself. I have learned, Paul has learned to be content, whatever the circumstances.

He has reframed what it looked like, but he's thinking, you know, God's at work. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty.

I've learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

I can't control the circumstances, but I'm going to reframe and find contentment in my God who is at work in my life. And when I do that, he says, I can do all things through him who gives me strength.

The secret to reframing is knowing that God is at work and with you. Amen. It's just a reframe of position.

Is God a long way away? Is He sort of forgotten us? No.

As Ben mentioned in the worship, He is great and awesome and other. Yet through His Son and by His Spirit, He's decided to be right up close to us. God is working all things together.

If you look it up in the Greek, it has this idea of orchestral synergy. It's pretty nice, isn't it? He's just taking events in life, moments in history, other people.

He's bringing it together. He's weaving it together for something beautiful. He's doing that with your life and mine.

You know he is if you love him. That's what the text says. And we love him because of his grace drawing us to him.

What frames in your life do you need to unfreeze and reframe to see God's hand at work? What frames? By God's grace, we can reframe our past.

By God's grace, we can reframe our past. And we can pre-frame our future. We can reframe our past.

To discover cognitive bias, we need to think about our thinking. And we probably don't do that too much. What are the lenses that we see the world through?

Is it in a super simplistic way? Is it glass half full or glass half empty? Have you discovered this, that most of the time you find what you're looking for?

What do you reckon? Some people are shaking their heads. Fair enough.

Others are nodding. Consider our fine-feathered friends. One of them lucked out in God's plan for looks.

The vulture. The vulture doesn't look great and has bad habits as well. The vulture can smell rotting, rancid roadkill from a kilometre away.

Great skill to have. And not only that, he's got eyes that can see it. And he'll fly 50 kilometres at a time looking for stuff that's dead and rotting.

And he finds it day after day. Well, you've got the hummingbird. Those amazing little wings flapping madly.

Looks for nectar, sweet nectar. And the honeybird finds sweet nectar most days. You've got to admit, that's a pretty great illustration, don't you reckon?

What are you looking for? You find what you're looking for. That's cognitive bias, as well as some other stuff inside these birds.

When we reframe what happened in our yesterday, it changes our today. And we can find the nectar. If you can see God at work in your past, you can pre-frame to look for him in the future.

Hallelujah. Pre-frame the past. He was always at work.

In the really tough stuff. Go back to that frame and go in there by God's grace and look around and you'll find Jesus in there by his spirit.

And as you go into the future, and as I walk into the future, the trick that Paul learned is I'm gonna see you God, because you're working all things together for good. So if I can't see it, that's my problem, not yours, Lord. You are there.

I think one of the keys is we sort of try to wrap this up. It's a very simple idea of reframing by grace, seeing God's goodness, and pre-framing our future, seeing God's goodness.

I think one of the keys is to realise, as much as life seems a lot about us, and you know, who could be forgiven for not taking a lot of care for yourself? We're meant to love others as we love ourselves.

So, you know, we look at ourselves in the mirror, hopefully we don't fail to look after ourselves, but, you know, one of the keys of Christianity is realising life is about God, yes? Life is about the glory of God.

Life is about the glory of the gospel of God's Son, and how that interacts with us. That's what life is truly about. So we come to this amazing memory verse that we have on fridges and in our hearts, restored and memorised in our minds.

God is working all things together for good, for those who love him, that's me. Who are caught according to his purpose, that's me. I guess it's about me.

I guess you died for me, basically. Yes, he did, he did die for us, but he died just as much or more for the glory of himself.

Because God is not an idolater, he's doing everything for his own glory, and when he does, it's good for everyone else, amen? When God does things for his glory.

So let's just very quickly, and I mean super quickly, think about where Romans 8, the beautiful memory verse, sits in the context of Romans and in the context of the universe.

Romans is this densely theological, the most wonderfully theological letter we have in the New Testament. It explains the gospel.

Paul's writing to Rome, and in chapter one and two, in chapter 1-16, he says, the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for all who would believe, and the gospel is God's righteousness revealed. So try to stay with me.

This whole book of Romans is about God proving that he's good. It's about his rightness, his righteousness, his covenant promise keeping nature. That's chapter one.

The gospel is a proclamation going, God is righteous. He's done everything he said he would. And then chapter one, Romans chapter two and three, if you know Romans, it extrapolates who isn't righteous.

Everyone else, Jews and Gentiles, it doesn't matter. But one is, one is God's son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 3.20, there's one righteous.

And that one righteous one gave his life for us, Romans 5.8, moving through these chapters, leading up to chapter eight. But God demonstrated his love for us in this, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God gave his son to pay for our sin. Then we come to chapter seven, and Paul is lamenting, I still do what I don't want to do, and I can't do the right thing. Who will rescue me?

At the end of chapter seven, who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God, Christ has done it. Christ has died in my place.

And then Romans 8.1 begins and says, therefore now there's no condemnation for all who believe, who put their faith in Christ. Wonderful chapter, maybe the most significant chapter in the whole Bible, Romans 8.

And then we come through, you need the Holy Spirit, Romans 8.16, I believe it was, we looked at it a few weeks ago, the Spirit testifies to our spirit, you belong. And then it leads in to Romans 8.28. God is at work in everything.

But just before we get there, Romans 8.18, I'm not going to read it all out, but I want to leave it with you to think about what this says. Romans 8, Paul is putting the Gospel in context. Creation itself is groaning that it would be redeemed.

This doesn't mean every human will be saved, that's universalism, we don't believe that at this church. It's by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. But this passage, Romans 8.18 and following, it says, creation's groaning.

For the children of God to be revealed. And it's big, amen? It's big, the whole, it's so much bigger than us, but it's not less than us.

It's all of creation. Looking forward to God doing His very best. The greatest good, when He saves and He renews the whole earth.

And we start again in new creation. That's what Psalm 19 says, the heavens declare the glory of God day after day, night after night, they're pouring forth, speech declaring, God is great. And God is good.

And His goodness is most perfectly displayed in the goodness of His Son, dying on the cross for our sins, hallelujah. And rising again, defeating death and the devil. And then maybe you know after 828, which says, you know, is it work?

Is it work in every part? It ends up with these glorious verses, 831 and following, which basically says, who can separate us from the love of Christ? Who can stop the goodness?

Who can stop God being good to his children? We are more than conquerors. No matter what comes against us, God is good.

Whatever you are going through, God is good. And we... We speak that out.

Knowing that... And when you are in the middle of the thing you're going through, it doesn't feel like that, is the truth. But we get to choose whether we reframe it.

And this is, as we sometimes say, this is graduate Christianity. This is the real deal of what we are called to believe. But God is at work.

Because of His Son, because of His Spirit in us, and His Spirit moving in our community and where He places us in the world, we are to be light and salt. He's at work. Amen.

Reframe the past. Ask him, would you show me your fingerprints? Because I'm struggling to see them.

But look, it's all for your glory. Can I see some fingerprints in those freeze frames in my past? Because I want to see your fingerprints all over my future.

Amen. I'm going to pre-frame what I'm looking for. Give Him the glory for the grandeur of His works.

Express the gratitude that's in your heart. Enjoy His sovereign goodness. Embrace your kingdom purpose because you've got one.

Move forward with an eternal perspective and see that the glass is not just half full. It's overflowing. It's full.

It's full with His love and goodness towards you and I. We know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.

We don't tend to do it much in the morning, but the reason there's a space over next to the prayer wall, which has got the cross there, is so that people can have a chapel-like experience if they want.

They could have an altar call experience if they want. So that's over there. If you're just struggling with seeing the goodness of God, or you see it and you're like, oh wow, I don't have to just physically change my posture and kneel.

If you would like to do that or stand, if that's helpful, there's a couple of songs that we're singing together, and that's just an opportunity. The band would like to come up. Let me pray.

All glory goes to you, Lord God, because you are good. Forgive us for not seeing your goodness. Help us to do so.

Lord Jesus, we give you all the glory this morning because you have made a way for us to know Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to experience your love, to be guided by your truth, to be filled with your light, and to have purpose.

Thank you for the gift of eternal life, which has started for those of us who have put our faith in you. Lord, for those today who don't know you, I pray you would reach and seek and save the lost. In Jesus' name, amen.