

**SWITCH ON
YOUR BRAIN**
*Every
Day*

**365 READINGS for PEAK HAPPINESS,
THINKING, and HEALTH**

DR. CAROLINE LEAF



BakerBooks

a division of Baker Publishing Group
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Dr. Caroline Leaf, *Switch On Your Brain Every Day*
Baker Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, © 2018. Used by permission.

© 2018 by Caroline Leaf

Published by Baker Books
a division of Baker Publishing Group
PO Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287
www.bakerbooks.com

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy, recording—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Control Number: 2018014309

ISBN: 978-0-8010-9360-9

Old Testament Scripture quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

New Testament Scripture quotations are taken from *The Kingdom New Testament* by N. T. Wright (New York: HarperOne, 2011). Copyright © 2011 by Nicholas Thomas Wright. Used by permission.

18 19 20 21 22 23 24 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

In keeping with biblical principles of creation stewardship, Baker Publishing Group advocates the responsible use of our natural resources. As a member of the Green Press Initiative, our company uses recycled paper when possible. The text paper of this book is composed in part of post-consumer waste.



Introduction

How to Get the Most out of These Readings

The Bible truly is a remarkable set of books. It contains so much: so many narratives, so many characters, so many emotions, so many events, so many eras.¹ It is shaped, stretched, and colored by the hopes, dreams, fears, and choices of the past, present, and future. It is the story of human effort, human victory, and, of course, human failure. It reverberates with the need for a transcendent purpose, a life greater than the sum of its parts.² And, after thousands of years, we have barely scratched its surface. After thousands of reads, we still have so much more to see and understand. It is not merely a series of documents set in the stone of time; it is a book of books that has a life of its own: it is in many ways “the living Word.”

The Bible is rather like the human mind. Dynamic, brilliant, powerful, and influential, it cannot be used with abandon, as it impacts not only the reader but the world. It is intricate and both obscure and transparent. It cannot

be divorced from the context of human experience. Jesus came to earth as a man: the incarnated God firmly planted himself in the midst of human history, with all its intrigues, variations, and undertakings. Human community, after all, preceded the written word.³ The Bible is therefore a collection of narratives that both reflects and shapes our memories and thus our identity, just as our thoughts shape what we think, say, and do.

With the advent of quantum physics, I would even go as far as to say that mind, or consciousness, underscores the biblical narrative from Genesis to Revelation. “In the beginning was the Word . . .” Perhaps one of the most iconic verses in the Bible, John 1:1, hearkens back to Genesis in a dramatic fashion, highlighting the significance of the Word, the *logos*, which in the Greek means reason, intellect, or intelligibility.⁴ This reason, this divine intelligence, shapes our existence, reworking the lines and sketches of our daily life. *Logos*, the divine consciousness,⁵ brings order to chaos, peace to destruction, love to hatred. God was, is, and always will be. He upholds the universe.

As I discussed in *Switch On Your Brain*, quantum physics helps us understand the importance of consciousness, or *logos*, in the Bible. Quantum physics, with its examination of science beyond the traditional paradigms of space and time, points directly to the belief that the universe has a creative mind behind it (consciousness) and therefore a creative purpose. Elementary particles like atoms and electrons are not “things” per se.⁶ These particles form a world of pure possibilities, which are made into actualities through the choices of the observer.⁷ We essentially create realities with our minds. And God is the ultimate reality. He is always observing, always present. Through him all things have their

existence. Through him all things are made, and made new (Gen. 1–2; 2 Cor. 5:17). If God is love, then love underpins the universe (1 John 4:8). Essentially, perfect love is the *raison d'être* for every “thing” as a thing that exists.

But what does all this have to do with us? If we are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27), if we have the mind of the Messiah (1 Cor. 2:16), if we are the children of God (Gal. 3:26), if we are called to reflect his glory (2 Cor. 3:18), and if we are the high priests and stewards of creation (Gen. 2:15), we have this power: the power of mind. Now that is certainly something to get excited about! It is also something we ought to take very seriously. We cannot call ourselves sons or daughters of the Most High God without realizing that our thoughts, feelings, and choices impact not only us but everyone and everything around us. We create realities that transform our world. It is up to us to decide what kind of realities we are going to construct.

These readings were created as a guide to help you understand the unique power of your mind, your choices, and your impact. It is, essentially, a beginner’s “how to” guide for creating realities, although it is by no means the final word on the subject. This book is more like a conversation, as opposed to a “This is how it is” lecture. I use passages and verses as the start, not the end, of a subject or an issue.⁸ Like the early followers of the Messiah, I believe that the Bible is a series of narratives that speak to, not rule over, human society.⁹

These readings provide a platform for discussion: every day it is up to you to examine the Scripture in question in an attempt to form a framework for dealing with life. In other words, this verse helps construct a worldview that can create realities of love through reading the Bible and allowing “it to read you.”¹⁰ These readings are essentially a way of tapping

into the authority of *logos* and manifesting God's love as "flesh" into your life, acting in love, just as Jesus was God's love incarnated. It is about bringing *heaven to earth* through your choices (Deut. 30:19; Matt. 6:11).

Each Scripture will be followed by a "Brainy Tip." Science is not only exciting but also another way of worshipping God. It tells us about his magnificent creation: where Scripture gives us the *why*, science tells us about the *how*.¹¹ We should not come to Scripture demanding it bow to science or vice versa. Understanding the science behind Scripture is a more holistic and meaningful way of approaching biblical narratives, allowing us to see and understand elements of the text that hitherto went unnoticed. It allows us to approach the text as a dialogue between two very different but often complementary vantage points. This dialogue encourages not only more questions but also an incredible sense of wonder at the magnificence of our Creator. I would go as far as to say that it helps us comprehend how the library of books that make up the Bible can be a "book of the people," one that facilitates community and love between various peoples.¹²

Some concepts are discussed over several days, while some verses are used for more than one day. Repetition is, after all, necessary for the protein synthesis and consolidation of memory! Each new reading will cover a different aspect of the verse, allowing you to read and think deeply about what it has to say and how it can impact your life. In the rabbinic tradition, each verse of Scripture is said to be like a jewel: every time you turn the surface, light is reflected in a different way.¹³ Every time you look at a verse from a different angle, you see something unique and beautiful, which is why it is important to respect both the context and the complexity

of every word, sentence, and passage in the Bible, as I have attempted to do in these readings.

Likewise, certain concepts, such as the power of thinking and choosing, will feature throughout these readings, since they form the backbone of a renewed lifestyle. As leading biblical scholar N. T. Wright notes, the apostle Paul's worldview "will only function if it is held together by humans with transformed minds, and who use those transformed minds constantly to wrestle with the biggest questions of all, those of God and the world."¹⁴ Our ability to think, feel, and choose has the power of life and death and will determine the way we live our lives today and in the new creation.

Following the Scripture and Brainy Tip is the reading of the day. I hope you won't just read it and move on. Rather, I encourage you to get a journal and write in it each day about what you have read. I recommend the following process to your writing: *ask*, *answer*, and *discuss*. These three actions underscore the intentional and deliberate *process* of learning that produces intelligent memory, which goes beyond merely reading some information you will forget at a later date (for more information on learning and memory formation, see my book *Think, Learn, Succeed*).

First, you *ask*. In your journal, write down several questions about the reading. Writing them down will help you start thinking about the verse(s) within the bigger picture of renewing your mind and reflecting God's glory through your thoughts, words, and actions. For example, you can think of questions like "How do you think renewing the mind applies to your life? Can you think of examples in your own life when you had to literally change your mind and how it impacted what you said and/or did? Have you ever felt that you were not good enough? That you could not cope with the

circumstances of life? How did you respond? What effect did this have in your life?” Your *ask* section does not, of course, have to cover every aspect of the passage in question—the Bible is a complex series of books that will take many lifetimes to explore. Rather, your *ask* questions are meant to provide a starting point for dialogue, much like questions we ask during our day-to-day conversations.

Next, you *answer*. Here you apply the passage to your own life by responding, in detail, to your questions in the *ask* section. It is important to remember that there are no right or wrong answers in this section—you are talking to the text, thinking about the questions you wrote down, and answering them honestly and realistically. You answer your own questions, which are shaped by your experiences and the unique way you think, feel, and choose (see my book *The Perfect You* for more information).

8

Finally, you *discuss*. In your journal, you further examine your own thoughts, words, and actions in light of the Bible passage, expanding your observations and discussing ways you can renew your mind and change your life. In effect, you are analyzing your responses in the *answer* section vis-à-vis the Bible verse of the day. If you are reading this book as part of a group study, you can compare your own thoughts and experiences on the text with those of the other members of the group. This approach encourages a natural dialogue with the text, allowing you to come back again, year after year, and discover new ways of reading the Bible that leave you motivated and transformed.

Much of the material in these readings has its foundation in my books *Switch On Your Brain*, *Think and Eat Yourself Smart*, *The Perfect You*, and my latest book, *Think, Learn, Succeed*. If you would like to know more about the many

topics covered in this book, and how to practice renewing your mind in a practical way, I would suggest you visit the Dr. Leaf Store at drleaf.com. I also have many talks available on my YouTube channel, and other books and materials available at both drleaf.com and retailers such as Amazon and Barnes & Noble.

One word on Scripture translations. For the Old Testament, I have used the New Revised Standard Version, as it is a fairly accurate translation, both in terms of language and in terms of cultural context. For the New Testament, I have used the *The Kingdom New Testament* by N. T. Wright, one of the leading New Testament scholars in our world today. Wright's translation pays close attention to the historical context of the New Testament Gospels and letters, allowing the reader to step into the world of the first century CE and truly experience the writings of the early followers of the Messiah. You are welcome to use other translations alongside these two versions. You can even translate the Scriptures yourself if desired. Shifting between translations will force you to analyze the Scriptures from a variety of different viewpoints, worldviews, and social nuances, which certainly increases mind health! David Bentley Hart recently came out with an incredible, raw, and intimate translation of the New Testament that I highly recommend as well.

Most important, however, is to remember the power you have in your mind as you work through these readings. Your choices, where you direct your thinking, and what you decide to meditate on, can change the world—for good or for ill. God has given us this incredible power to choose, a reflection of the mind of the divine, so choose life!

Day 1

What's more, don't let yourselves be squeezed into the shape dictated by the present age. Instead, be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you can work out what God's will is—what is good, acceptable, and complete.
—Romans 12:2

Brainy Tip: The brain is neuroplastic: it changes according to its environment. What we allow into our brains, through the choices we make with our minds, can change the structure of our brains for good or for bad.

We don't live in a bubble. We live in multifaceted, dynamic environments; each day it seems like there are a thousand voices telling us what we should believe, say, do, and wear. They tell us what life should be like and what we ought to be doing with our time. It is easy to give in to these voices, listening to them and allowing them to take root inside our heads. It is easy to “be squeezed into shape” by whatever is popular today.

But we do have the power to say no. We do have the power to say “This is not who I am. This is not who I want to be.” By observing and monitoring what we think about and the choices we make, we can change the structure of our brains, saying no to “the present age,” making the Messiah Lord over every area of our lives. We can say yes to his love, his glory—to the way he created us, to the passions he has placed inside us. We have the power to determine the direction of our lives.

Day 2

What's more, don't let yourselves be squeezed into the shape dictated by the present age. Instead, be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you can work out what God's will is—what is good, acceptable, and complete.
—Romans 12:2

Brainy Tip: Regardless of what has happened to us, or what is happening to us, we can change our brains through our choices! Change takes time, but it is possible.

Building a life of Christian character is an unremitting task, but thankfully our powerful minds are certainly up for the challenge! Each day we can choose to think differently, although we must remember that Rome wasn't built in a day, as the saying goes. True, lasting change takes time and not a little effort. How many times have you tried to change and failed? One of the great things about Romans 12:2 is the word “renewing”—the action is continuous, daily.

Our brains can change, and as we learn to renew the way we think, we change our brains, building Christian character and learning to act and speak like the Messiah. It is really all about learning how to be truly human again, reflecting the image of our glorious Creator. It is not instant—not just one prayer we say and “voilà!” we are perfect Christians. Each day, as we choose to follow the Messiah, we change the structure of our brains, a change that in turn impacts our thoughts, words, and actions.

Day 3

What's more, don't let yourselves be squeezed into the shape dictated by the present age. Instead, be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you can work out what God's will is—what is good, acceptable, and complete.
—Romans 12:2

Brainy Tip: Where our minds go, our brains follow.

What we have built into our minds through our experiences and choices shapes our unique worldview, which in turn impacts our thoughts, words, and actions. It is our filter, reflecting and refracting what comes in through our senses and shaping our mental architecture. Once we choose to follow the Messiah, however, we have to compare our worldview to God's worldview. We have a beautiful new filter that not only adds to our experiences but paints them in a new light, one that is “good, acceptable, and complete,” allowing us to see and respond to the world in a different way—in a truly human way. The more we choose with our minds to think and act like Jesus, the more we become like Jesus. Where our minds go, our brains follow.