



## WOW: Word Of the Week

### Renewal

June 22, 2022

Why is Isa. 40:31 so well-known? For many, this is a favorite verse: the Lord will RENEW our strength so we can mount up with wings like eagles, run and not grow tired. The next verse continues the theme of strength renewal (41:1). With only sixteen occurrences in the ESV Old Testament, the most common topic is the renewal of the covenant or kingdom.

As I did a mental survey of the theme of renewal in the New Testament, five passages came to mind before I checked the concordance. Guess what? In the ESV, there are only five occurrences! The “renewal” in Titus 3 is related to baptism. Perhaps most familiar is Romans 12:1-2: the renewal of the mind. Col. 3:10 speaks of being renewed in knowledge; Eph. 4:23 speaks of being renewed in the spirit of your minds. 2 Cor. 4 speaks of the renewal of the inward person as the exterior deteriorates, renewing the spirit in the reality of physical decline.

Why are “renewal” passages in Scripture so well-known? Probably because renewal is for most of us a struggle, even a mystery. We struggle to distinguish destressing from renewing energy. We seek to renew energy but fail to renew our spiritual life. Many pay little attention to “mind renewal.”

I know the struggle. In ministry, I struggled to establish my days off as days for renewal. I began ministry with Monday and Saturday as days off—time to rest, time for family. Early on I faced the challenges of what to do when “must do” events came up on those days off—funerals, hospitalizations, accidents, emergencies, Saturday youth events, and on and on. And, I discovered that I struggled to get everything done if my week did not begin until Tuesday.

At some point in my ministry, I identified Friday and Saturday as my days off, thinking it would be helpful to have two consecutive days. Eventually, I settled on Wednesday afternoons (despite my Wednesday night obligation), Friday afternoons and Saturdays.

My goal was to find a time for self—primarily for introspection, reflection, meditation, spiritual renewal. A time for evaluating, examining, planning for better decisions. A time for knowing myself—in silence and solitude. A time for prayer. A time for seeking God’s purpose.

Throughout my years in ministry, I struggled with the conflicts—I was committed to being there for others. But I also learned to compensate, either by choosing an alternate day or by seizing small moments that gave time for renewal.

Here are five summarizing observations.

- Distinguish destressing and renewal. It is one thing to take off the pressure, it is another thing to be renewed and rejuvenated. Destressing serves briefly, renewal gives strength for the longer term.
- Notice that biblical renewal (thinking of New Testament passages) is a mental and spiritual matter. Mind renewal aligns us with God’s will, be renewed in the spirit of your mind, spiritual renewal, renewal in knowledge.
- Spiritual renewal focuses on God, is often done best by spending time alone with God (again my phrase, “wasting time with God.”), searching for his will and way in our lives in this world.
- Spiritual renewal involves prayer, perhaps praying without ceasing, extended times of prayer and God-time.
- Spiritual renewal should help us establish and reaffirm God’s priorities in our lives.