

## Introduction

# Time for a Reset

**I**t happens far too frequently. I am busy at the computer, working on a project I've put off for too long, when all of a sudden, my internet connection fails. Now I'm even further behind. What a pain!

In frustration, I get out of my chair and head downstairs to the basement, where the modem is located. I follow the same routine: I disconnect all the cables and then wait for a minute before plugging them in again. Then I wait for the modem to reboot and pray the problem is fixed. Sometimes I have to repeat this process.

*Why does this keep happening?* I wonder. I decide to ask Google. I find an answer on [lifehacker.com](http://lifehacker.com):

There's no one universal cause...It could be that your internet provider changes your IP address often, and your router doesn't catch on. Maybe it's overheating, or maybe it's getting bogged down by too many connections at once....electronics are not built to constantly be running at all times, and power cycling helps with most issues. Like other electronics, one of the biggest reasons you may benefit from rebooting your modem is because when you leave your modem on for too long, it will tend to stop performing its best after a while....by unplugging the power cord from the back of the modem you are giving it the breather it needs....another reason is that when your modem's on all day,

every day, it is slowly desynchronizing from the internet service provider.<sup>1</sup>

I sit back, amazed. This answer, meant to help me understand my modem madness, actually helps explain what's been happening for years to my internal modem: my mind!

Here are the parallels I see between the issues with my computer modem and my mind:

- **“Your internet provider changes the IP address often, and your router doesn’t catch on.”** My life circumstances have and continue to change rapidly and unexpectedly, and my mind can’t always keep up. Within the past year, I lost my mom unexpectedly, and my wife’s best friend passed away, within a month of each other. While that was happening, I was trying to lead a large church, travel overseas to train Christian leaders, gear up for a multimillion-dollar campaign to raise funds to begin a fourth campus, establish eight to twelve thousand new churches in Asia, buy a theatre to house our third campus, and get ready for Thanksgiving and Christmas!
- **“Bogged down and overheating”**...otherwise known as burnout! I could feel my nerves sizzling. Several times over the past few years, I’ve felt like I was at a breaking point.
- **“Electronics are not built to constantly be running all the time...”** Neither is the human mind or body! Nevertheless, I continue to push myself, trying to prove otherwise.
- **“It [the modem] is slowly desynchronizing from the internet service provider.”** All this combines to make me feel desynchronized from God, my provider. I have often asked, “Where are You, God?”
- **“By unplugging the power cord from the back of the modem, you are giving it the breather it needs...”** When that works with the router in my basement, I experience great relief, and life goes on. But when I have to repeat the process

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1. Whitson Gordon, “Why Do I Have to Keep Resetting My Router, and How Can I Fix It?” Lifehacker, May 16, 2012, <https://lifehacker.com/why-do-i-have-to-keep-resetting-my-router-and-how-can-5910788>, accessed June 1, 2019.

several times, I grow angry and frustrated. *What's the matter with this piece of junk? Why isn't it rebooting like it usually does?*

What do you do when you can't reboot your mind?

That was the story of my life, and like every story, it has a beginning.

As is true for most of us, my mental and emotional struggles began way back in childhood. I was born overseas to missionary parents, whom I believe did the best they could to raise a normal healthy boy. But even the best attempts sometimes fall short. Unfortunately, my folks were naïve to predators masked as friends and family.

At the age of seven, I was seduced and abused by a man who came to visit the mission station my folks had established in the remote jungle of Papua, New Guinea. I was left alone with this trusted person for an afternoon. He took advantage of my curious nature and led me into an evil web, where my soul would remain entangled for many years to come.

I suppose if it had been a one-time event, I might have gotten over it or packed it away into some deep, dark cave back in my subconscious. But soon afterward, our family went home on furlough, and I had to share a room with my older cousin, who picked up where the other man had left off. The abuse was chronic for the years we lived with and near him. It led to what I discovered was a network of abuse with other family members as well. I was passed around. Pandora's Box had been opened, and out of it a world of strange feelings, guilt, shame, and fear continually swarmed my mind.

If God has a plan for one's life, I'm convinced that Satan, the enemy of the soul, does as well. The abuse continued in my life well into my junior high years. I have wondered why I never told my parents or anyone else. The fact that I grew up in a religious environment at home and church, which made sex seem like something dirty, may have contributed to my silence. I did not want to disappoint my parents, pastor, or other spiritual leaders. I certainly did not want them to be angry with me.

By the time I entered puberty, I felt so guilty about the strange feelings and desires. I believed everything that had happened in my life was my fault, including the struggles my parents began having in their marriage. My dad was gone most weeks, starting a business in Canada, while my mom, brother, and I stayed in Michigan. I couldn't stand

it when he came home on the weekends and they fought. I began to resent the emotional upheaval it created for me.

In the meantime, I was having a really hard time adapting to the tough blue-collar culture of the Midwest. We lived in a small town that had more bars than gas stations and where men and boys proved themselves with their fists. Unfortunately, I became a frequent punching bag. In junior high, I developed nervous tics similar to Tourette syndrome. I was in a cauldron of boiling emotions.

My religion did not help me. I grew up with a brand of theology that said you could lose your salvation when you sin. By the time I was a teenager, my soul had been thinly sliced by a thousand cuts of guilt, shame, and the fear that I was going to hell.

But I'm a survivor, and I always have been. I don't take credit for that drive, however. To this day, I believe that despite my circumstances, God was and is still in control. I realize that some people who go through what I've faced become angry at God. For some reason, I never felt that way. In fact, I felt just the opposite. I thought I was a very big disappointment to Him. I have never blamed God or turned my back on Him, though I did rebel, and I experienced the consequences of being exposed to the kinds of things that overtook my life at a young age. But God was faithful to me, even when those who represented Him were not. Eventually I would come to a truer understanding of His character and grace, which I share with you in this book.

Despite the odds that my life would turn out badly, I grew up to become a high-functioning dysfunctional adult. I somehow managed to keep all the pieces together enough to look "normal" on the outside, but within, my mental modem was melting down.

In 1995, an event occurred that I can only describe as an ambush on my life. I'll tell you more about that in the next chapter. It was a catalyst that propelled me toward finally discovering the secret to resetting my life mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, for the long term. On the way toward my freedom, I tried a lot of things.

My path was largely trial and error. I had appointments with great doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors. I tried several different types of drugs to help me with my mental and emotional battles. While these medications work wonders for some people, the side effects were debilitating for me. Of course, I also tried praying, reading Scripture, and claiming various promises over my restless soul,

but those didn't seem to work either.

But when my breakthrough happened, I suddenly saw how to think differently about what I was reading in God's Word. I discovered how to apply it in a way that began to change my life.

I'm not claiming I don't still have some mental and emotional struggles. But now I understand why I have them, which is half the battle. Knowing why has liberated me to reset my internal modem regularly and move on toward increasing victory rather than remaining stuck in a cycle of discouragement and lack of real change.

In *Reset: Live Every Day Like It's a New Day*, I hope to spare you the long road I had to travel and provide a direct route to your mental, emotional, and spiritual freedom. In the pages ahead, I describe how you can become free from the tyranny of past hurts and disappointments simply by changing your mind—which, in turn, will change your brain. I discuss sixteen aspects of resetting your mind as they relate to resetting your focus, identity, attitude, faith, and community. The Reset exercises provided within the chapters are designed to help you practice learning new ways to think and apply God's Word to your life. For your convenience, I have repeated all sixteen of the Resets, as well as all the Reset exercises, at the back of the book. Having them all in one place can facilitate your individual or group study.

Here are some of the benefits I've experienced and hope to pass on to you:

- Understanding the source of our mental, emotional, and spiritual battles (yes, we all have them!)
- Unpacking the truth of what God thinks about us in our struggles, regardless of whether we've brought them on ourselves or others have inflicted them on us
- Learning daily disciplines you can immediately apply that will reset and refresh your personal and relational life
- Learning how to grow through setbacks, which will occur!
- Understanding the importance of community in our healing

Now that you've read a bit about my story, what is your story? What's on your mind right now? I realize that no two stories are exactly alike, and I hope you have not experienced some of the things I have. But my guess is that your life has had some traumatic moments. Perhaps you're

in a difficult place right now. Or maybe someone you love and care about is struggling. Is it your spouse? A son or daughter?

My wife was recently speaking to a professional counselor, who told her she is seeing a steady increase of children who are so mentally and emotionally stressed out they cannot cope with life. If you are a parent, the practices I teach you will enable you to help your children, too.

What about your religion? Do you feel it has failed you? What messages have spiritual leaders given you that have left you feeling “I’m not good enough for God” or “I’ve failed Him too often. He must be sick of me because I’m sick of myself!” Maybe that’s a big part of the struggle people you care about are going through as well. I want you to hear a message from God that breathes hope and life, not judgment and condemnation.

Whatever your circumstances, I would like to invite you to join me on a journey that will lead to greater mental and emotional well-being. One of my favorite sayings, which I heard many years ago, simply states that our God is the “God of new day starts.” I have found that to be true in my life. Are you ready for your new day start?

Let’s begin!