



Sermon Series: Set Apart: A Life Lived for God

To be used with Session 4: Set Apart in the Way We Think

Sermon Title Possibilities: Transformed not to Conform

Scripture: Romans 12:1-5; 9-11

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the Bible study “Set Apart: A Life Lived for God” this sermon will challenge believers to rewire the thoughts that hold them captive and in contrast begin to center their minds on Jesus Christ. J. B. Phillip’s sums it up well: ‘Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remold your minds from within.’¹ In Romans 12, Paul begins to provide practical advice to instruct the believer in the best ways to implement their true act of worship.

Introduction: Ninety-six percent of Americans own a mobile device (Pew Research Center, 2019). Smartphone users spend on average 2 hours and 51 minutes a day on their devices. As a believer in Christ, a disciple is a follower that exhibits evidence of a transformed mind, and affections. If we are to experience transformation in our lives, we have got to focus more of our attention on Christ. In the twelfth chapter of Paul’s letter to the Romans, he confirms the theological foundation for belief he explains prior in chapters 1-11 and now he goes into practical ways to experience transformation by living in light of that truth. R.C. Sproul writes, “Christ calls us to a special kind of nonconformity: a refusal to conform to the sinful patterns of the world, to patterns of disobedience.”² The sin patterns of this world tend to lead the Christian astray. But when we come back to a healthy relationship with Jesus, reading, hearing, studying, understanding, memorizing, and meditating on His Word, he molds our minds to become like his.

¹ Stott, J. R. W. (2001). [*The message of Romans: God’s good news for the world*](#) (p. 323). InterVarsity Press.

² Sproul, R. C. (1994). [*The Gospel of God: An Exposition of Romans*](#) (p. 196). Christian Focus Publications.

1. Transformed Worship (vv. 1)

God created humanity to worship him. After Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, God set up a sacrificial system through the blood of animals that could turn them away from sin, pay their sin “debt,” cleanse the community and the temple from sin, and allow them to stay in His presence. But this was never his intention when he created men and women. Now that Jesus is our righteousness and has atoned for mankind’s sin, the law has been fulfilled towards the former sacrificial system. Paul attempts to reorient the Roman believers into God’s true desire for worship. God intended that men and women would represent him as living sacrifices embodying His holy and righteous nature. Genesis 1:27 foreshadows God’s desire, “So God created man in His own image; He created him in the image of God; He created them male and female.”

2. Transformed Thoughts (vv. 2-5)

Throughout the whole of Scripture, mankind has battled against the desire to please God or follow their own desires. Our culture today would tell us to follow our hearts because after all we are inherently good, but God’s Word says otherwise. Jeremiah 17:9-10 tells us, “The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable—who can understand it? I, Yahweh, examine the mind, I test the heart to give to each according to his way, according to what his actions deserve.” Scripture declares we must actively and intentionally pursue God that our minds may be transformed, and our thoughts rearranged. We must “flee from youthful passions, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22).

3. Transformed Love (vv. 9-11)

The Christian must also embody transformed love. God is love and sacrificed his son on behalf of his people. Therefore, we have an example that we can emulate. According to Sproul, “We human beings seem to be imitative by nature. We need a model to copy, and ultimately there are only two. There is *this world*, literally ‘this age’, which is passing away, and there is *God’s will*, which is *good, pleasing, and perfect*.” We must imitate the love we observed in Christ for his disciples and for the church. When we serve one another, we serve God. In Romans 12:5 it states, “in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another.” The transformed love that we display to one another is an example of the love extended to us.

Conclusion: Paul’s words that we do not conform to worldly patterns, but that we be transformed by the renewal of our minds may at times seem futile. When we become Christians, we still carry desires that can keep us bound. However, God is sovereign, and the brain is fully capable of being transformed and rewired for his glory. The scientific term is called, “neuroplasticity.” This is simple the brain’s ability to modify its connections or re-wire itself. How we direct our attention on God’s grace and mercy can re-wire our brain towards

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taking ungodly thoughts captive that our mind can be free from distractions to worship our Savior and King. What are you doing to transform your worship, thoughts, and love for God towards others?

Author Bio

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