

WHAT IS FORMING ME?

Dave Geldart, September 27, 2026, Romans 12:-12, Life Between the Sundays #1, TruCC

1. [1] Intro Squishy Toy - *[Hold up a squishy toy. Squeeze it slowly as I talk.]*

- a. I brought one of my kids' toys today.
- b. You've probably seen these — a Needoh -- the squishy blob things you can smash and press and mush into pretty much any shape with your fingers.
- c. There's something strangely satisfying about playing with this.
 - i. I couldn't tell you exactly why.
 - ii. Maybe it's the resistance — just enough to feel something happen, not enough to fight back.
- d. You press it, it gives.
 - i. Let go, and for a few seconds it holds whatever shape your hand left in it
- e. I've caught myself squishing this thing all week without meaning to.
- f. Here's what I keep noticing, though:
 - i. this little blob doesn't get a vote in what shape it becomes.
 - ii. It just takes whatever shape gets pressed into it —
 - 1. for as long as that pressure lasts.
- g. So here's the question I want us to wrestle with.
 - i. Not just for the next hour, while we're sitting here.
 - ii. For Monday morning. Tuesday afternoon. Thursday night.
 - iii. Saturday, when nobody from church is around —
 - 1. and nobody's pressing on you but life itself.

iv. [2] What is forming me?

- h. We tend to think of spiritual formation as something we do on purpose.
 - i. We come to church. We read our Bibles. We pray. We join a LIFE Group.
 - ii. But underneath it is something more basic: **we are constantly being formed.**
- i. The question was never whether you're being formed.
 - i. The question is what's doing the forming.

j. [3] That's what this new 3 week mini-series, Life Between the Sundays, is about.

- k. I believe deeply in what happens when we gather here on Sunday mornings.
 - i. But most of your life doesn't happen in this room.
 - ii. It happens in the meeting at work.
 - iii. In the car, sitting at the light on Tuttle Creek Boulevard.
 - iv. Bored at school.
 - v. Standing in line at the grocery store.
 - vi. Scrolling your phone
 - vii. Watching something.

- viii. Folding laundry.
- ix. Stressed about money.
- x. Angry at somebody in your family.
- I. That's where your life is actually lived —
 - i. and whether we notice or not, that's where our formation is actually happening.

2. [4] WE ARE ALWAYS BEING FORMED

- a. Think about what's constantly shaping you:
 - i. [5] Maybe social media, or the news, politics
 - ii. your phone, AI, advertising,
 - iii. movies and shows and music and books,
 - iv. maybe it's pornography,
 - v. Maybe it's a lifestyle of anxious hurry, overscheduling, busyness.
 - vi. Or a culture of simple greed so normal it's basically invisible,
- b. And underneath all of it, deeper cultural messages doing the real work —
 - i. [6] secular humanism telling you that this life is all there is, so maximize it;
 - ii. a passive, consumeristic individualism that tells you your highest good is your own comfort and choice.
 - iii. relativism telling you truth is whatever you decide it is;
 - iv. political correctness telling you which opinions are safe to hold;
 - v. the steady pressure to anchor your hope in politicians, institutions, and legislation instead of God and His Kingdom;
- c. [7] We're formed by what we are squeezed by — consciously or not.
 - i. You don't sit down and say, "Today I'm going to let Instagram disciple me."
 - 1. You just open the app and begin scrolling.
 - ii. You don't decide, "I'd like this advertisement to reshape my desires."
 - 1. You just see it.
 - iii. You don't consciously choose, "I'm going to let anxiety become the main voice in my life."
 - 1. You just worry.
 - iv. But over time, all of it shapes what you think, what you believe, what you love, what you hope for, what you fear, what you assume is normal, what you think a good life looks like.
- d. [PERSONAL STORY: PHOTOGRAPHY] I do real estate photography on the side, and often I shoot some really nice houses.
 - i. From time to time I catch myself dreaming about what my life would be like in this house, with that level of income, with this nice yard, neighborhood

1. If I could buy this house THEN my life would be amazing
 2. Then I'd feel secure.
 3. If I just had more money... then I'd be happy
- e. Most of us are spending so many hours being unconsciously formed by the world –
 - i. that an hour on Sundays doesn't touch our overall formation.
 - f. We are far more disciplined by our screens, our culture, our friends, our anxieties than by God's Word and his family.
 - i. And if that's true, the church can't compete with culture on culture's terms.
 - ii. We'll become a peripheral player — a quaint old voice at the margins of our attention.
 - iii. You'll gladly attend on Sunday, pay homage, nod your agreement, and go about the rest of the week unaffected.
 - iv. This is real life, our unconscious minds assent.
 - v. It can become the rhythm of our whole lives:
 1. one hour on Sunday saying "yes, I believe that,"
 2. and six days of quietly being formed by something else entirely.
 - g. And eventually the Sunday version of us and the Monday version of us are barely recognizable as the same person.
 - i. But this doesn't have to be true.

3. [8] GOD WANTS TO TRANSFORM US

- a. You become like what you love. And you love what you admire —
 - i. what you gaze at, what you attend to.
- b. We can't manufacture new hearts for ourselves.
 - i. But we can decide what direction we aim our gaze.
 - ii. What we feed ourselves.
 - iii. How we spend our time and energy.
- c. Gaze at Christ, and he transforms you from the inside out.
 - i. Gaze anywhere else, and something else will do the forming —
 1. the world, and behind it, the enemy.
- d. So how do we actually do this?
 - i. How do I aim my attention at Christ in the meeting, at school, in my free time?
 - ii. Do I have to disconnect from the world entirely to be formed by God?
 - iii. Must I withdraw into a cave?
 1. delete my Insta, trade my smartphone for a flip phone,
 2. read only the Bible and never watch a movie rated above G —
 - a. maybe PG if I'm feeling dangerous?
- e. Thankfully, God has already told us how in his Word. Our feature text for today:

- f. **[9] Romans 12:1–2 — Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God — this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.**
- g. Paul starts with mercy. Not "do this so God will accept you" — the exact opposite.
- i. God has already shown mercy. Already acted. Already given grace.
 - ii. So, in view of that, offer your whole life back to him.
 - iii. That's the bedrock — not earning the gospel, responding to it.
 - iv. A life submitted, however imperfectly, to God and his formation.
 - v. Paul calls that real worship.
 - vi. Not just what happens when we sing or raise our hands here on Sunday — but a whole life, handed over.
- h. And then he gets practical: **don't conform, be transformed.**
- i. Picture it — don't let yourself get pressed into the mold around you.
 - ii. Remember that toy. It doesn't fight back. It doesn't get a vote.
 - iii. It just takes the shape of whatever's pressing on it, for as long as the pressure lasts.
 1. It's the same with you.
- i. There's a pattern to this world and the pressure it brings, a shape it wants to squeeze you into, a way it teaches you to think and live that stands in quiet or direct opposition to Christ's reign.
- i. Go with the flow and you will be shaped by it, guaranteed —
 - ii. not because you decided to, but because you never resisted the pressure.
- j. But Paul says: don't just conform. Be transformed.
- i. Notice the grammar: "be" is passive.
 - ii. **Let** yourself be. There's something we do — a conscious choice, some real to-do
 1. but the big work is being done to us, on us, for us.
 - iii. If we let God change our minds — not first our behavior, our minds —
 1. the patterns of our thinking, our beliefs, our assumptions,
 2. then we'll actually be able to test and approve what God's will is:
 - a. to understand it, and — this is the surprising part — to desire it.
 - b. Not grudgingly obey it while wishing we wanted something else.
 - c. Actually want it. Love it.
 - iv. God wants to re-form how we think, believe, and live.
 - v. Everything else flows from there.

4. THE BATTLE IS IN YOUR MIND

- a. [10] Paul reinforces this in **2 Corinthians 10:4–5** — *The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*
- b. SO -- how do we fight being formed by the world?
 - i. Not through acts of power or magic talismans — through our thoughts.
- c. The evil one doesn't usually start by telling you to do something obviously evil.
 - i. He starts by getting you to believe something untrue —
 - 1. about God, about yourself, about the good life.
 - ii. And God says this is where the real war is fought:
 - 1. in arguments, in the quiet claims about reality running underneath your feelings and actions.
- d. Here's how it plays out: You feel something — anxiety, fear, desire — and underneath it is a truth claim you never said out loud: "That's what I need to be happy."
 - i. "If I just had more money, I'd finally be secure."
 - ii. "I need this pleasure to feel satisfied."
 - iii. "If this person in my family would just change, I could finally be okay."
 - iv. "If everyone would just recognize what I've done, then I'd finally know that I matter."
- e. Here's the practice:
 - i. [11] notice, examine, reject, replace.
 - ii. Notice the thought.
 - iii. Then Examine it — what am I actually believing right now, and what does God say?
 - iv. If God's word contradicts it, reject the lie:
 - 1. "That's not what God says. God says ultimate fulfillment is found nowhere else but in Christ himself."
 - v. And replace it with God's truth — choose to believe what God says instead.
- f. [PERSONAL STORY: MY ANXIOUS THOUGHTS] For me, it often looks like:
 - i. **noticing I'm anxious** — my chest is tight, breathing is shallow, punctuated by large sighs.
 - ii. Then I examine my thoughts and realize I'm thinking that I'm going to fail at something and that everyone's going to see that I'm a fraud and reject me.

1. And if I press even deeper, underneath that is the claim that ultimately My deep security and acceptance is based on what other people think of my performance
- iii. Then I reject that claim – since it contradicts what God says in his word
 1. No, my security and acceptance are NOT dependent on what other people think of my performance
- iv. Instead, I choose to believe what God says – I am accepted and safe with God not based on my behavior, but based on what CHRIST has done for me
 1. **Ephesians 2:8–9** – *"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."*
- g. That's the great majority of spiritual warfare.
 - i. Quiet. Unseen. Fought in the strongholds no one else can see.

5. TRAIN YOURSELF IN THE TRUTH

- a. The power to do this comes from God. But it takes practice.
- b. **[12] Paul tells Timothy: 1 Timothy 4:6b–8, 10** — *[Be] nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed... train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come... we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe.*
- c. Nobody walks into a gym once and says, "Well, I did it, I'm strong now."
 - i. Training takes repetition. So does godliness.
- d. Choose what nourishes your faith. Reject culture's answers to the deep questions of life and satisfaction.
 - i. Practice. Train. Again and again
 - ii. Because in the moment of conflict, you can only draw on what's already been put into you.
 - iii. **The Spirit will not recall what the mind has never installed.**
 - iv. With God's Word, access is not the same thing as formation.
 - v. Scripture is the weapon — but what good is a weapon you don't have with you, or only vaguely know exists, or never learned to use?
- e. **[13] Psalm 1:1–3** paints the picture: *Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked... but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither — whatever they do prospers.*

- f. The good life — the deeply flourishing, fruitful life — isn't found by following whatever voice is loudest. Or wherever the crowd is going.
- g. It's found by meditating on God's word until it stops being a chore and becomes your deep delight.
 - i. Rooted. Fed. Stable. Fruitful. Alive.
- h. [14] C.S. Lewis famously put it this way:
 - i. *"It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."*
- i. God isn't trying to trick us into something dull.
 - i. He's inviting us into a delight and joy bigger than we've imagined.

6. IN THE WORLD, NOT OF IT

- a. Maybe you're following along and now you're thinking: OK -- so I need to withdraw.
 - i. Get away from all of it. The WORLD is bad for me, so I need to get as far away as I can.
 - ii. Jesus disagrees.
 - 1. In a prayer he gives for his disciples, both the original ones and all of us who would follow him after, He prays to His Father and says:
- b. [15] John 17:14–16 — *I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.*
- c. Jesus doesn't pray us out of the world — he prays us protected in it.
- d. We can be not of the world and still be in it. In fact, we have to be.
- e. Think about it: how else could we ever obey his command to go into all the world and make disciples?
 - i. We're not here just marking time, hiding out until he comes back to rescue us.
 - ii. He's given us an actual mission — to be in the world while not being of it, to go engage our neighbors, our coworkers, lost people all around us -- even our enemies, and show and tell them the gospel.
 - iii. A church that only knows how to withdraw can't do that job.
- f. This gets messy. Some Christians, wanting to play it safe, have rejected not just sin but proximity to the people caught in it —
 - i. "let's just stay this far away so we don't get dirty."
- g. But Jesus — the very one we're called to become like — was called a friend of sinners.

- i. He got close. Went into their homes. Ate with them. Spent time with people who didn't share his beliefs —
 - 1. even those who had committed extremely bad sins —
 - 2. all without becoming sinful himself.
- h. Paul makes the same point to a confused church in the Greek city of Corinth:
- i. **[16] 1 Corinthians 5:9–10 — ⁹I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— ¹⁰not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world.**
 - i. Paul's point: don't excuse unrepentant sin among believers —
 - ii. but don't wall yourself off from your sinful unbelieving neighbors either,
 - 1. or you'd have to leave the world entirely.
- j. **[17] Remember: proximity is not pollution.**
 - i. Temptation isn't sin — it's the start of the battle.
 - ii. Jesus himself was tempted to sin.
 - 1. What determines the outcome is what we do next:
 - a. notice, examine, reject, replace.
 - 2. And He's with us still.
- k. Wisdom does matter here, though.
 - i. Not everyone's in the same place. And so not all our boundaries look the same,
 - 1. and that's not hypocrisy — it's maturity intersecting with real life.
 - ii. In Proverbs 5-7, King Solomon — a man who knew firsthand how easily desire could rule a heart -- tells his son to avoid even walking down the road in front of the adulterous woman's house.
 - 1. Not "engage carefully" — avoid.
 - iii. Some situations call for a season of distance, not proximity, and that's wise, not weak.
 - iv. There are people, places, and habits some of us simply need to stay away from, full stop, at least for now.
- l. **And right alongside that, Paul makes a different but related point to the Corinthians about meat sacrificed to idols.**
 - i. Some mature believers in that church knew eating it was fine — an idol is nothing, so the meat in the marketplace is just meat – to be received with gratitude.
 - ii. But some younger believers' consciences were genuinely pricked by it, and for them, violating their consciences and eating it would have been sin for them.

- iii. Paul's answer wasn't legalism for everyone, and it wasn't license for everyone either — it was grace, extended in both directions,
 - 1. toward people at different places in the same journey.
 - m. Someone walking out of addiction may need to abstain completely for a season —
 - i. not go near the bar, not hang out with the old crew —
 - 1. even though that's typically not permanent.
 - ii. Someone recovering from a sexual addiction may need to delete social media or lose the smartphone for a while.
 - n. Your training regimen isn't necessarily mine.
 - i. Some of us watch R-rated movies with a clear conscience;
 - 1. some of you shouldn't, and that's fine too.
 - ii. Over it all – GRACE and humility.
 - iii. The goal was never uniform rules.
 - 1. The goal is formation —
 - 2. and formation looks different depending on where you're starting from.
 - o. One more word here: If you're currently in the grip of addiction — as many are
 - i. drugs, alcohol, sex -- anything — **I want you to hear this clearly:**
 - ii. Your next faithful step this week is not "go engage your using friends as your mission field."
 - 1. That's not withdrawal-as-cowardice; that's wisdom!
 - 2. like Solomon avoiding the road where the adulterous woman lives.
 - iii. [18] Your next step is **reaching out** —
 - 1. to me, to an elder, your small group leader, to a counselor, to someone who can walk with you, today, not just alone in your own head.
 - p. And that's true for all of us in a smaller way too.
 - i. Notice-examine-reject-replace is a real weapon we must all use.
 - q. But this spiritual battle was never meant to be fought solo.
 - i. Notice-examine-reject-replace works best inside community and accountability, not instead of them.
 - r. It's been said that the opposite of addiction isn't sobriety – it's CONNECTION
 - i. Addiction grows in isolation
 - s. So if you've been trying to think your way out of something that community and honest help could actually heal,
 - i. Let this be the week you stop white-knuckling it alone and ask for help.
 - 1. That's not failure, that's courage and wisdom.
 - 2. And that's your next step of **formation**, pushing back on our world's diabolical lie that you have to do everything on your own.

- ii. We're broken in relationships, and so we must be healed in relationships.

7. [19] THE PRACTICE -- So here's my invitation for you this week.

- a. Sometime — probably more than once — you'll notice a strong emotion:
 - i. anxiety, desire, frustration, fear.
- b. When you do, run it through our four moves.
 - i. **Notice.** What's actually happening in me right now?
 - 1. Don't rush past it, don't just act on it — notice it.
 - ii. **Examine.** What am I believing? What is this emotion telling me is true?
 - 1. What am I telling myself will make me happy, safe, or fulfilled?
 - iii. **Reject.** Is that actually true? Does it line up with what God has revealed in his Word?
 - 1. If not, reject it. Explicitly — in a coherent sentence or two.
 - iv. **Replace.** What's true instead? What has God said?
 - 1. Choose to trust that instead. — put it into words — even just in your head -- about what you're choosing to believe.
- c. We're going to take a minute right now to practice this:
 - i. Think of one thing that's been taking up real estate in your mind lately —
 - 1. anxiety, money, frustration with someone, a desire, a longing, something you feel like you need for life to be okay.
 - 2. Don't try to solve it. Just notice it.
 - ii. Then ask: what is this situation trying to convince me is true?
 - 1. What am I actually believing?
 - iii. Then ask: what does God say about it?
 - iv. And then the question underneath the question: What would actually change this week — in your mood, your decisions, your relationships — if you trusted God's truth more than you trusted the voice in your own head?
 - v. Sit with it. That's where formation begins — not "what did I do this week," but "what have I been believing this week."

8. CONCLUSION

a. [20] So back to where we started: **what is forming you?**

- b. Something is. Always. You're becoming someone —
 - i. the question is whether that's happening by accident or because you're letting God do it on purpose.
- c. You become what you love, and you love what you gaze at.
 - i. So — what's got your gaze this week? What voices are shaping your imagination?

- ii. What's squeezing you into its mold?
 - iii. And what would it look like to turn your eyes toward Christ instead?
- d. In view of his mercy, offer him your whole life.
 - i. Don't conform — **be** transformed.
 - ii. Let him renew your mind.
 - iii. Not all at once. But over and over.
 - 1. In small and even seemingly trivial moments and thoughts. Monday through Saturday.
- e. Train yourself in godliness. Meditate on his word until it becomes delight.
 - i. Memorize it so it's in your heart and mind when you need it.
- f. Take your thoughts captive. And make them obey Christ.
- g. And then go into your Monday-through-Saturday life —
 - i. not afraid of the world, not shaped by it, but present in it.
 - ii. Loving your neighbors. Serving your neighbors.
 - iii. Showing and telling the gospel through relational proximity.
 - iv. Becoming, a little more each week, someone who actually looks and lives like Jesus.
- h. Because that's what discipleship – what spiritual formation -- actually is:
intentionally becoming more like Jesus.
 - i. And that doesn't just happen on Sundays. It happens in the life between them.
- i. **What is forming me? And what is God calling me to do about it?**
- j. *[Hold the toy up one more time, or just gesture toward it if it's still sitting there.]*
 - i. **This little thing doesn't get to choose its shape. You do.**
 - ii. Every moment, something is pressing on you —
 - 1. and you get to choose whether you resist it,
 - 2. or whether you let Christ be the one shaping what you become.

9. PRAY



**WHAT IS
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LIFE BETWEEN THE SUNDAYS



WE ARE ALWAYS BEING FORMED

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- social media
- the news
- politics
- your phone
- AI
- advertising
- movies, shows, music, books
- pornography
- anxious hurry
- overscheduling
- busyness
- greed

WE ARE ALWAYS BEING FORMED

- secular humanism
- consumeristic individualism
- relativism
- political correctness
- hope anchored in politics

WE ARE ALWAYS BEING FORMED

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1 TIMOTHY 4:6-8,10 ^{6b} [Be] nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed. ⁷... train yourself to be godly. ⁸ For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. ¹⁰... we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe.

TRAIN YOURSELF IN THE TRUTH

PSALM 1:1-3 ¹ Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked... ² but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. ³ That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither — whatever they do prospers.

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C.S. LEWIS "It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. **We are far too easily pleased.**"

IN THE WORLD, NOT OF IT

JOHN 17:14-16 ¹⁴ I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. ¹⁵ My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.

IN THE WORLD, NOT OF IT

1 CORINTHIANS 5:9-10 ⁹ I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people —
¹⁰ not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters.
In that case you would have to leave this world.

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PROXIMITY IS NOT POLLUTION

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YOUR NEXT STEP IS REACHING OUT

THE PRACTICE

Notice

Examine

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