

N U R T U R E
F A I T H
with
Dr. W. Douglas Hood, Jr.

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Nonconformist

READ: Romans 12:2 (Common English Bible)

“Don’t be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God’s will is – what is good and pleasing and mature.”

MEDITATE:

Stand Up To Cancer is a division of the Entertainment Industry Foundation, a non-profit committed to mobilizing people and financial resources toward new treatments for those battling cancer in the U.S. and Canada. Their current marketing campaign, **Whatever It Takes**, invites people to join a growing movement of those willing to “swing for the fences” in seeking new advancements in cancer research that can have a life-changing impact. Implicit in the campaign are two classes of people: one small and one large – those who struggle together to challenge the ravages of cancer and those who stand on the sidelines and watch. It is the difference between those who are organized around a great cause and those who drift through life with no driving passion to participate in anything great.

The apostle Paul makes the same distinction – a division of people in two classes – here in his letter to the church in Rome. The first class of people is one whose mind and opinions and values are shaped by the world. Uniformity to popular culture extends to dress and manners, speech and thought. They conform to the world and its ways without discerning if participating with everyone else is best for them or even wise. They drift through life as leaves drift down a river. Where life takes them, they go without objection, accommodating to the environment and yielding to social pressures.

The second class is not shaped by the larger culture; they actively seek to transform the culture through a radical commitment to something larger, something nobler than simply going along. They say No when everyone else is saying Yes. They put character into their environment rather than take their character from the environment. Norms and conventions are challenged and a clarion call is made to strive for something larger than one’s individual life. In these few words of Paul’s letter to the Roman Church, Paul asks that the church pay attention to God and organize it’s life around God’s will.

To which class do we belong? Is society molding us more than we are molding society? Are we conforming to what the world wants us to become or are we being transformed by paying attention to God and seeking God’s desires for our lives? Paul is seeking nonconformists, people whose lives are organized around a steady conviction that we were created for something more than just going along with the world. Paul invites us to open ourselves to the shaping influence of God and to experience strength in our inner life by God’s active work in our bodies. This is the invitation of Paul when he writes, “be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God’s will is – what is good and pleasing and mature.”

