



The following is one of Doug Hood's favorite meditations, originally written in 2016.

April 15, 2018

Figuring Out God's Will

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."

REFLECT:

Antoine de Saint-Exupery wisely said, "A goal without a plan is just a wish." It is ludicrous to suggest that any follower of Jesus lacks the goal of spiritual growth; lacks the desire to become more Christlike than they are presently. Adult baptism and membership in a church are intentional decisions. No one stumbles into the Christian faith. And ask anyone seated in church on Sunday morning if they would like to be a better Christian and I doubt there will be any surprises. There is really only one reasonable answer. Ask that question and I imagine you may receive some strange looks. Common courtesy may prevent an honest answer but stirring in the minds of many would be the curt response, "Do you know the trouble I had this morning to simply show-up at church?" No one stumbles into the Christian faith. And no one stumbles into Christian worship. Naturally, every follower of Jesus has the goal of spiritual maturity.

The difficulty is that in many faith communities, in many churches, there is so little evidence of Christian growth. Listen carefully to many church members and they sound no different than those who remain outside the church doors. Gossip abounds, grumbling is heard and self-righteous judgement is whispered in every pew. Perhaps each person guilty of such bad behavior desires to be better than this but there is simply no movement in that direction. The reason should haunt each of us. We lack an intentional plan for growth. Antoine de Saint-Exupery is correct, without a plan, the desire for becoming increasingly Christlike is nothing more than a wish. Worse, without a plan for growth, says Paul, the natural consequence is conformity to the patterns of the world.

If a wish is ever to become a goal, a plan is required. Weight Watchers offers a plan if the goal is to lose weight. Fitness Centers offer a plan if the goal is improved fitness and health. Language video and audio programs may be purchased if the goal is learning a new language. Any goal must be translated into a plan or it simply remains a wish. The same principal applies to spiritual growth. The plan need not be difficult or complex. In fact, the likelihood that a plan will be placed into action increases if it is simple to understand and follow.

Paul's words here offer a glorious promise. Identify a spiritual growth plan, remove it from the box and implement it fully and the result will be growing clarity of God's will. Some people despair because God's will is often difficult to know. Many times that is because they expect clarity without effort, without following an intentional plan for growth. The trouble is that God's will for our lives is always inextricably bound to a growing relationship with God. It is never one or the other. Pursue an ongoing relationship with God and God's desires will become apparent.

