

SERMON NOTES

SERIES: Romans: God's Power for Salvation
TITLE: Renewing Your Mind

SCRIPTURE: Romans 12:1-2

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The book of Romans is a masterfully written exposition of the gospel of God. Without a doubt, it is the foundation of authentic Christianity and the most articulate, systematic understanding of our faith found in the Bible. Countless lives have been changed by the truth found in this ancient letter, and it continues to change lives today. Interestingly enough, Romans was written to Christians. So, while the good news found in Romans can certainly bring people to faith in Jesus, the actual focus is on how the gospel helps Christians think rightly about God, life, faith, and Christian community. If you want to grow to know God more personal and intimate way, this letter is for you!

Every Sunday morning, we come to church, we open the Bible and we hear God's truth—*truth upon truth upon truth*, and sometimes, the Holy Spirit pinpoints things in our lives that need to change: relationships that need to change, habits that need to go, circumstances that need to be re-evaluated. We agree with the truth we hear and we want to *be* different and *do* different and we think—"When I go home things are going to be different." But sometimes, when we take the *do's and don't's* and the *oughts and the ought not's* of Scripture back into our homes and schools and jobs and relationships, sometimes, the things that God tells us to do don't always make a whole lot of sense in our daily lives.

Why is that? ... Why is that what makes so much sense in here on Sunday, makes so little sense everywhere else the rest of the week? ... And why is it that we can be sure of what we ought to do and yet it be so difficult to be consistent in applying that very thing that we're so sure that the Bible teaches and that God would have us do? ... That's the questions I want to address this morning.

In writing to the church in Rome, Paul addressed a divided church—a church made up of Jewish Christians and Greek Christians who didn't like each other very much. He wrote to try to lay a doctrinal foundation strong enough to heal the divide between the two groups. Both groups knew and believed Gospel doctrine, but living it out was a problem.

Here's the problem for them and for us—Biblical application apart from biblical thinking results in short-term obedience and long-term frustration (Andy Stanley). The problem is that many Christians know that what God says is true and right and good, but because we don't have God's perspective on all of life, actually applying what we know, doesn't always make sense.

Romans 12:1-2 addresses this question—*Why is there a disconnect between what we say we believe and how we live?* The answer is—Because we may not have made a decision to present ourselves to God as a living sacrifice and then followed that decision with many other daily decisions to not allow ourselves to be conformed to the lies of this world but rather be in a serious process of having our minds renewed with God's truth. Three commands:

1. Present yourselves to God as a living sacrifice. That is, in view of God's mercy and grace, the most logical thing you can do is to present yourself to God by saying, "Wow God, your grace is amazing! So, God, you name it, and I'll do it." Make a decision to give yourself completely to God.
2. Do not be conformed to this world. That is, stop being conformed to the lies this world is telling you. To be conformed to this world means that I take my values, standards, and priorities from the world around me. The problem of being conformed can be short-circuited by being transformed.

3. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. That is, commit yourself to a serious process of developing God's perspective on all of life.

The reason there's a disconnect between what we know we ought to do and our actually doing it, is because even though we know what God tells us to do, we're not consistently in a process of having our minds renewed. As a result, we continue to believe the lies of conformity we breathe in every single day.

But let's dig deeper into what it means to have our minds renewed. Three steps to renewing your mind:

1. Take off the old—Identify the lies of conformity that you believe. Evaluate your temptations. Evaluate your reactions. Evaluate your feelings. Think about the lies under these three things that allow you to rationalize why you don't think what God says really applies to you.
2. Put on the new—Replace the lies with truth. In view of the fact that we have been and are being conformed to the values, standards, and priorities of this world—we need to realign our values, standards, and priorities with God's truth—with how God sees things.
3. Plug the holes that allow the lies to seep in. Or, said another way: Flee what is harmful and feed what is helpful. First, make a decision. Second, remember, input equals output. Make wise, daily decisions about what's coming into your life on a daily basis.

For Discussion:

1. If "someone" who did not hear this morning's message, asked you, "What did Charlie talk about this morning? How would you answer that question? Let several people try to put the main idea of the message into their own words. Try to shape it and refine it together.
2. If after that "imaginary person" heard the answer you just gave above—if they then asked—"What did he say about that?" How would you answer their second question? There will be lots of things to talk about in answer to this question.
3. Out of all the things you just talked about, which ones were "aha's" and "take-aways" for you?
4. Do you remember a time in your life when you made a decision to give everything over to God? ... If so, share it with the group.
5. How should Romans 12:1-2 shape the choices and decisions you make each day?
6. What's the hardest thing about applying this passage to your daily life? What gets in the way of you applying it?
7. Why is it not legalistic to take God's *do's and don'ts and oughts and ought not's* and to try and figure out how to apply them to your life by having your own personal standards to live by?

Or try this approach:

Have someone read Romans 12:1-2 and, then ask: "From what you heard in Charlie's message or what we just read right here--*What are some of the "AHAs" you took away from what you learned?*" When someone volunteers an "AHA"...ask follow up questions to dig deeper and to keep the discussion going. Ask the group, "*Anyone else have this same "AHA"--what do you think about this insight?*" After you've exhausted topic. Throw the original question back out to the group--"*Who else had an "AHA"?*" Repeat the pattern above. Use follow up questions and get input from the group. If someone says, "*I didn't really have an "AHA," it's more that I don't understand ...*" Then go that direction. Ask follow up questions to help them clearly articulate the issue then ask the group for input. "*Anybody else think about that/struggle with that?*" ...*So, how would you answer that question?*" Whoever answers--ask follow up questions and get input from the group on that answer (*What do you think about that?*), etc. It's been my (Charlie) experience that you can have a great discussion around this approach to community group conversations.