

VISION 2026



Segment 2 (week of March 9th): What does it mean to seek and submit to God's leading in our lives with respect to stewardship?

Sources: James Montgomery Boice, "Romans Volume 4: The New Humanity (Romans 12-16)"; R. Kent Hughes, "Romans: Righteousness from Heaven"

Reflections on Pastor Josh's sermon on Mark 5:21-43: *The Hope of the Hopeless*

This sermon continues to address the question, Who is this One? In prior weeks, we see Jesus displaying his power over nature in the form of a storm, last week we saw him display his power over the demonic world, and this week we see his power over sickness and even death itself. In this account Jesus shows his healing touch in the life of a woman with a chronic, debilitating health condition, and toward a girl overcome by the sleep of death. Jesus commends and nurtures the faith of Jairus and this woman as they come to Him in their desperation. By faith Jesus restores them to wholeness—physically, spiritually, and socially thereby reversing the effects of sin. As recipients of Jesus' healing power, our spiritual worship is carried out as we offer our bodies as living sacrifices. In drawing upon his rich mercies we are to use this sacrifice—all aspects of our lives, including our time, talent, and treasure—to bring healing and wholeness to a broken world through the obedience of faith.

Study of Romans 12:1-2 (part 2)

Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)

1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

In these verses, we read Paul's succinct, yet rich exhortation to commit ourselves to God. This passage shows us what it means to seek after and submit to God's leading in our lives. Paul describes the basis of this commitment, the character of this commitment, the demands of this commitment, and ultimately the effects of this commitment.

Last week we focused on the first two of these elements—the basis and character of this commitment. This week we will focus on the last two—the demands and effects of this commitment.

In verse 2, Paul shares with us the two demands of this commitment—one negative and one positive. We are not to be conformed to this world (the negative demand), but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (the positive demand). We can fight against conformity to this world by weighing everything against the truth of Scripture. The Greek word for “transformed” is only used four times in the New Testament—twice to refer to the transfiguration of Christ (Matthew 17:2 and Mark 9:2) and twice to refer to our sanctification (here and in 2 Corinthians 3:18). The message here is that we are changing into something else entirely! And is this something we do ourselves? No! We are to “be” transformed. The actor here, of course, is the Holy Spirit. Paul is commanding us to submit to the Holy Spirit’s transformation of our lives, which is done through the renewal of our mind. Furthermore, the present tense of this verb (“be”) shows that this is a process, not something that is complete until we are face to face with our Lord.

Finally, Paul culminates with the effect of this commitment, which is nothing short of discerning the will of God. But does this mean that if we adequately submit to the Spirit and demonstrate total commitment that God will then disclose the specific answer to a particular question we may have—what job to take, who to marry, where to send our child to school? Not exactly. The will of God is so much more than simply the answers to our human questions. Theologians generally distinguish three separate meanings when we talk about God’s will—(1) God’s sovereign will, which is not revealed except through the unfolding of history; (2) God’s moral will, revealed in Scripture; and (3) God’s specific will for individuals, which is often hidden to us, although God sometimes chooses to reveal that will in specific situations. And herein lies the beauty of Paul’s message to us. When we consider the context of this promise in the rest of this passage, we see that God’s will for us is that we present our bodies as living sacrifices, refusing to be conformed to this world but being transformed through the renewing of our minds. As James Montgomery Boice notes, “It is this that we are to pursue and thus find to be good, pleasing, and perfect, though, of course, if we do it, we will also find ourselves working out the details of God’s specific will for our lives.”

Discussion Questions on Romans 12:1-2 (part 2)

- As Christians, we have been introduced into the life of the world to come. The word for world is often translated as “age” which means there is a temporal force to it. Why is transformation at its deepest level infinitely more significant than conformity to this age or world’s pattern?
- In the verses that follow, the apostle Paul answers the question: How do we, who have had our minds renewed, think about ourselves? About other believers? About our gifts?



- What does he say about how to think rightly about ourselves? (See verse 3.)
 - *(In reference to thinking rightly about ourselves, Paul speaks to the truth that in our flesh we love to over-think about ourselves. This can reveal itself in two key forms-self-elevation or self-deprecation-both of which are self-serving attempts to gain the approval of others. If we truly make Christ our standard, we will experience the reality of the opening beatitude, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This transforms the way we serve because it curbs the natural tendency to exalt ourselves by comparing ourselves with others, and leads us to a humble service. Pride thinks, “this ministry is privileged to have me” whereas Humility thinks, “I don’t deserve to serve in this ministry but am privileged to do so because of God’s mercy and grace”. Instead of an independant, self-sufficient spirit, it leads to a dependent spirit that recognizes the needs of others and is prayerful and collaborative in nature.)*
- What does he say about how to think rightly about our gifts? (See verses 6-8.)
 - *(We all have gifts. They are given to us by God. Ask those in your group if they have ever been led to discover their spiritual giftings? Why would someone go to a school or college counsellor or give many hours of thought to their natural gifts and not take steps to discern their spiritual gifts? To identify our gifts is just the beginning. We then go on to use our gifts, leading us to ask questions like: Have I listened to the Spirit’s voice? Have I been spiritually alert and dependent upon the Holy Spirit? Have I gone to the Word of God to refresh my own soul before speaking to others? Have I tried to live what I say? Am I acknowledging and repenting of sin when the Lord shows them to me? Have I recognized moment by moment my complete reliance upon the Lord? Have I been lazy? Have I been diligent? These questions pertain to any gifting-prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, generosity, leadership, mercy (note that this is not an exhaustive list, so it may not be helpful to try to look at a list like this and try to find ourselves in them).)*
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- Have you identified your area of gifting? You may be serving in an area that you feel isn't where your gifts lie. Consider taking a spiritual gifts inventory together and discuss it as a CFG or with your leader.
- How are we to view more menial and urgent needs within the body in light of this teaching?
- In what ways can you say that you have grown since you have begun using your gifts? How has the church grown?
- Are there areas where you can take another step toward serving in the use of your gifts? What would need to change in order to do so? How might this shape your prayers?

Application Questions

- Meditate on Ephesians 4:1-8 and the link between Jesus' ascension and his people. What did he give them? For what purpose?
- Have you identified the gifts given to you by Jesus?
- How has your service through the use of your gifts led to greater discernment of the will of God- what is good, acceptable and perfect?
- Just as blood circulation is important for the health of the body through exercise, how might the Spirit bring greater health to your spiritual life if you were to take a "next step" in the use of your gifts? (Refer to the Vision 2026 booklet. Are you a first time, occasional, intentional, tithing, or abundant giver, both with respect to money as well as time and talent? Where are you now? Where is God calling you to be? What are the steps to get there?)

