

## A Transformation Mindset *Romans 12:1-5*

From Russell Moore, in *Adopted for Life*.<sup>1</sup>

“When Maria and I first walked into the orphanage, where we were led to the boys that the Russian wards had picked out for us to adopt, we almost vomited in reaction to the stench and the squalor of the place. The boys were in cribs, in the dark, lying in their own waste.”

“When...we returned to Russia to pick up our new sons, we found that their transition from orphanage to family was more difficult than we had supposed. We dressed the boys in outfits our parents had bought for them. We nodded our thanks to the orphanage personnel and walked out into the sunlight, to the terror of the two boys.

“They’d never seen the sun, and they’d never felt the wind. They had never heard the sound of a car door slamming or felt like they were being carried along a road at 100 miles an hour. I noticed that they were shaking and reaching back to the orphanage in the distance.”

“I whispered to Sergei, now Timothy, ‘That place is a pit! If only you knew what’s waiting for you—a home with a mommy and a daddy who love you, grandparents and great-grandparents and cousins and playmates and McDonald’s Happy Meals!’”

“But all they knew was the orphanage. It was squalid, but they had no other reference point. It was home.”

“We knew the boys had acclimated to our home, that they trusted us, when they stopped hiding food in their high chairs. They knew there would be another meal coming, and they wouldn’t have to fight for the scraps. This was the new normal. They are now thoroughly Americanized, perhaps too much so, able to recognize the sound of a microwave ding from forty yards away.

“I still remember, though, those little hands reaching for the orphanage. And I see myself there....”

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<sup>1</sup> Russell Moore, *Adopted for Life: The Priority of Adoption for Christian Families and Churches*, Crossway Books, 2009.

Ten revelations manifested in Paul's command to "*be transformed*" in Romans 12:2.

- #1 Evidently, you are not perfect yet.**
- #2 It is *you* who needs to change.**
- #3 Transformation is truly possible.**
- #4 Transformation is your calling in every stage of life.**
- #5 This transformation is a process, not a one-time event.**
- #6 Transformation is God's job, but it's your choice.**
- #7 The transformation God wants to do in you is radical.**
- #8 This transformation is required, not optional.**
- #9 This transformation has the goal of Christlikeness.**
- #10 God has given you all you need in Christ to be transformed.**

...one more revelation.... "*you (plural) be transformed*"

The command to "*be transformed*" is addressed to the whole assembled church, indicating to us that this transformation is something Christians do together in the context of the local church.

### ***Required: a Transformation Mindset***

Romans 12:2: "*be transformed by the renewing of your mind....*"

But what is this new way of thinking?

Romans 12:3 (literal). "*For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to THINK more highly of himself than he ought to THINK; but to THINK so as to have SANE THINKING, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.*"

## 6 Ways

*...we must think if we wish to experience transformation into Christlikeness*

#1 We must think like gospel-motivated, fully surrendered \_\_\_\_\_ of God.

- A. Romans 12:1. “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual [Gr. *logikos*] service of worship.”
- B. “*living sacrifice*.” Transformation happens when we are on the altar, having surrendered ourselves to God as a sacrifice, ready to die to our life as it now is, and ready to find true life on the other side of the dying.
- C. The root problem behind our lack of transformation is this: *we want to be in charge more than we want to be changed*.
- D. Genuine transformation happens when we surrender ourselves to God and make our lives an offering of sacrificial worship to Him – with Him at the center, with Him on the throne.
- E. Romans 12:1. “Therefore I urge **you** [plural], **brethren** [plural], by the mercies of God, to present your **bodies** [plural] a living and holy **sacrifice** [singular].”<sup>2</sup>
- Paul’s move from the plural to the singular indicates that, if Paul were speaking to a church of 500 people, he would not be calling for 500 individual sacrifices to God; he

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<sup>2</sup> “The shift from the plural *somata* (“bodies”) to the singular *thusian* (“sacrifice”) could indicate that Paul thinks of this presentation as having a corporate dimension, involving the service of the entire Christian community together.” (Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996).

would be calling for us to link up our lives together and present ourselves as a single, unified, corporate sacrifice of worship to God.

**#2 We must think like \_\_\_\_\_ against the \_\_\_\_\_.**

A. Romans 12:2. *“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind....”*

B. What makes the world so powerful is that there is something within each of us that resonates with the world, which appeals to the lusts of our flesh, the lust of our eyes, and our boastful pride of life; so, to resist the influence of the world means also to resist the influence of the worldly impulse within us, too.

C. Develop the mindset of a rebel.

D. The church of Jesus Christ is “the resistance.” If God has saved you, then that means that you are a part of “the resistance” against the spirit of our age.

**#3 We must think of the \_\_\_\_\_ of God as a most desirable thing.**

- A. Romans 12:2. “...*be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*”
- B. The path to personal transformation involves us looking at the will of God and believing that it is good and well-pleasing and perfect, and then intentionally letting God transform us consistent with His will, so that our lives can become a living demonstration of the truth that God’s will is the most desirable thing of all.

**#4 We must think humbly with gospel \_\_\_\_\_.**

- A. Romans 12:3. “*For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think....*”
- B. Proud thinking is an obstacle to change; and the reason is obvious. People who are proud do not usually think they are the ones who need to change. All they see are the ways that other people, and even God, need to change, or they complain about how their circumstances need to change.
- C. Romans 12:3. “*For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to have sound judgment....*”

Lit. “think into sane thinking”

D. What is sane thinking?

- Thinking humbly
- Thinking consistently with your new reality in Christ

E. Ray Stedman. “What has God said about you? Look back over all the tremendous truth given in the first eight chapters of Romans.... That is the way to think about yourself.”<sup>3</sup>

F. If you want to be transformed by the renewing of your mind, then think consistently with the gospel. Read your Bible and become a student of your new reality in Christ, and then learn to think accordingly.

**#5 We must think consistently with God’s \_\_\_\_\_ of resources for transformation.**

A. Romans 12:3. *“think so as to have sober judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.”*

“allotted”	=	“to divide up and distribute”
“measure”	=	a limited quantity of something
“faith”	=	(used in objective sense) Christ and the fullness of provision we receive from God through Him

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.raystedman.org/new-testament/romans/who-am-i-lord>

2021 Milton Vincent, *Legacy Conference: Faithfulness through Generations of One-Another Care*,  
Institute for Biblical Counseling & Discipleship

- B. John MacArthur. The expression, '*a measure of faith*' "seems to refer to the correct measure of...resources best suited to fulfill one's role in the body of Christ....Every person has his own special but **limited** set of capabilities."<sup>4</sup>
- C. Paul's language here means that God has *intentionally* withheld some of the full package from you, *intentionally* leaving you with deficits that must be supplied by the provision He has given to others in the church.
- D. If we think consistently with this understanding, then we will not only thank God for our spiritual gifts, *but we will also thank Him just as much for our deficits*, because God intends for our deficits to drive us into community with one another, so that we can be supplied in the areas where we lack.
- E. Tim Chester and Steve Timmis. "God Himself is a social rather than solitary being. And so His image cannot be borne by an individual..."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Romans 9-16*, Moody Publishers.

<sup>5</sup> Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Total Church: A Radical Reshaping around Gospel and Community*, Crossway Books, 2008.

#6 We must think like \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ's body.

- A. Romans 12. "(4) For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, (5) so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."
- B. Variety: "so we, who are many..."
- C. Unity: "...are one body..."
- D. Identity: "...in Christ..."
- E. Belonging: "...and individually members one of another"

### Conclusion

- Thinking in the ways Paul is identifying in these verses will not just put us on a path that leads to transformation. *Thinking in these ways will already reflect a profound transformation that won't remain invisible for long.* In fact, all the other transformation that God wants to do in us will flow downstream from these ways of thinking.
- "Your transformation is a community project."



- Sanctification is simply the art of getting used to your new reality in Christ, and then thinking and living consistently with that new reality.
- J.I. Packer. “Do I, as a Christian, understand myself? Do I know my own real identity? My own real destiny? *I am a child of God. God is my Father; heaven is my home; every day is one day nearer. My Savior is my brother; every Christian is my brother too.* Say it over and over to yourself first thing in the morning, last thing at night, as you wait for the bus, any time when your mind is free, and ask that you may be enabled to live as one who knows it all utterly and completely true. For this is the Christian’s secret...of a God-honoring life. May this secret be fully yours, and fully mine.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, InterVarsity Press 1973, 207-208.