

LESSON 6

ANCHOR 6

Allow God to make the transformation changes He wants to make and stop trying to make them on my own.

Romans 12:1-2 – “And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all He has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice - the kind He will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship Him. Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.”

PRAY

Ask God to speak to you as you read His Word. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a revelation of God’s truth and love and give you understanding of what you are about to read. Pray that you will have an Encounter with God as you earnestly seek Him. Don’t rush through reading everything and don’t rush through praying. Take some time to stop and listen so you may hear anything God wants to say to you.

After you read the scriptures, ask:

- “God, what are You saying in these scriptures?”
- “God, what are You saying to me in these scriptures?”
- “God, how do You want me to apply this to my life?”

Write in your journal as you spend this time with God.

You could say that the passage of **Romans 12:1-2** is central to Christianity. It gives clear direction to followers of Jesus on how one should respond to all God has done for them. This passage is key to personal change and transformation in the life of a Christ follower. Some commentators have equated it to that song and dance called the hokey pokey. You start by putting a foot, then an arm, then a leg - each separately - into a circle and shaking them before you “turn yourself around”. It requires action and leads to a command to “put your whole self in”.

Consider how much of yourself you are willing to **put in** to be **turned around** - to be transformed. We never truly worship God fully until we put our whole selves into following Him. That translates into offering your body as a living and holy sacrifice to Him. To play upon words, it requires going in wholly to become holy. Real worship happens when you repent and confess your sins to God, turn from your sin, and then offer yourself completely and wholeheartedly to God. To use more words from the hokey pokey song, “That’s what it’s all about”.

The NIV translation of **Romans 12:1-2** says, – “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.”

It is clear that, in this letter to the Roman church in chapter 12, Paul is referring back to what he has previously written. The NLT translation starts out with, "and so". The NIV translation starts out with, "therefore".

Both these and other translations indicate that Paul has already demonstrated in his prior writings that God is merciful and good. Paul has reached the conclusion, and wants the Roman church to fully understand and know that *in view of God's mercy* and *because of all He has done* for them, *their response of true worship should be to give their bodies as a living sacrifice to God.*

In **Romans 12:1**, Paul's basis for giving yourself completely to the Lord is to consider what God has done for you, to recognize and think about His mercy. Think about how your sin imprisoned you to a death sentence with no hope of parole, apart from the saving grace of Jesus Christ. His life was sacrificed as the only acceptable substitute of payment for your sins and the sins of the world. That is a big price. That is a big payment. That is a Big Savior! What a gift Jesus has given you!

Because of Jesus, you have been forgiven and declared "not guilty". Because of Jesus, you can have peace and joy despite your circumstances. Because of Jesus, you have an eternal home in heaven with Him. Because of Jesus, you have gone from a death sentence to a life of glory. Because of Jesus, you can be free. *In view* of that kind of mercy (the gift He has given you and all that He has done for you), Paul says that you are to offer your body to Him as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to Him. This is an act of true worship. This is a lifestyle. *In view* of such mercy, your gratitude should move you to worship Him and celebrate Him wholeheartedly, with everything that you have and in everything that you do.

The end result of true worship is transformation. God transforms you when you allow Him to make changes in your life. It requires a decision to surrender your old ways and beliefs to God's way and truth. It requires commitment and discipline.

Before you can change, the One who can change everything has to capture your heart with His mercy and goodness. *In view* of His mercies, you should be in awe of Him. You should meditate on His mercy, relish it, cherish it, embrace it and think about it with thanksgiving and praise. It leads to worship in every part of your being - mind, heart, body and soul.

If you don't have a proper perspective of God's mercy and forgiveness, and the impact it has on your life, you can easily lose sight of how much God loves you. As a result, your pathway to experiencing change and transformation will be especially challenging for you.

You can become nearsighted and blind if you don't apply spiritual growth to your Christian walk - **2 Peter 1:9**. It's been said that the only kind of blindness that is worse than physical blindness is spiritual blindness. Spiritual blindness can be permanent if one does not recognize and *see* their need for Jesus. Helen Keller once said, "The only thing worse than being blind is having sight with no vision". That is spiritual blindness. Not growing in God's Word keeps you in spiritual blindness and you more readily believe and practice the ways of the world than believing and practicing the ways of God.

The world says you own your own body and many people live just like that is true. They do whatever they want with their bodies, whenever they want to do it. Their motto is, "my body, my choice". It saddens the heart of God. It is a lie from the enemy. The bible says that God formed you in your mother's womb. *In view* of all God has done for you, *in view* that He created you and saved you, your life is His. Your body is His. Your beliefs regarding this are critical because they

dictate your actions. How you respond to the mercy and promises of God will determine the level of transformation and change you will experience in your life.

Many people, even Christians, think attending a church service on Sunday morning and singing a few songs is **worship**. It may be a way to express worship, but God views true worship as **how you live** your life.

A.W. Tower once wrote, "If you will not worship God seven days a week you do not worship Him on one day a week". When you worship God wholeheartedly you wake up every day thanking Him for all He has already done for you and offer your complete life and self to Him as a sacrifice in which He may do whatever He wants to do. It's a complete surrender of your will unto God's will. It is a decision to yield your own will to God's good, perfect and pleasing will and allowing the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit to replace your natural inclinations to be humanly selfish and inwardly focused. Worship is not just something done at church. Worship is not merely singing the words of a worship song. Worship is truly a lifestyle of being thankful to God in and through the way you live your life. It's never too late to give God the appropriate kind of worship He deserves from you. You can start wherever you are and in whatever you are doing.

In **Romans 12:2**, Paul goes on to talk about your mind. In the NIV translation, he says, "do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind". In the NLT translation, he says, "don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think".

You have undoubtedly heard it said that the battlefield is in the mind. That is an accurate statement. Many allow their feelings to influence their beliefs instead of allowing their beliefs to influence their feelings. Satan targets both your mind and your feelings, but if you let him have control of either, he will wreak havoc in your life. If you want to be transformed, you must replace the lies you have believed in your mind with the truth of God's Word. If you only follow your feelings, you are often following the customs of this world.

A friend once said that different emotions and feelings are like a spinning roulette wheel. You never know which ones you are going to wake up to. If you follow your feelings instead of trusting in God's Word, then your life will seem like a spinning wheel of emotions and feelings, constantly changing. It's exhausting, and too often chaotic and detrimental to your life and relationships.

Romans 12:2 says to let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. **Then** you will learn to know God's good, perfect and pleasing will for you. This is the ultimate "Let go and Let God" scripture. You **let go** when you stop trying to change in your own limited thinking and abilities. You **let God** when you allow Him to transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. When He changes the way you think, it will change the way you act. You will start to choose better and right thoughts and behaviors as you choose to read, believe and apply God's Word to your life. Knowing and applying God's truth leads to a grateful heart that learns to worship Him more completely in and through your life.

The Holy Spirit will always guide you into truth and He will never direct you away from the will of God. His will for you is that you know Him and His truth. When you do, you will worship Him accordingly. Your mind will choose to believe truth and your body and actions will follow in love and gratitude. Feelings will follow when your heart is surrendered to the will and the Word of the Lord. Knowledge, alone, never effectively changes anyone. Many people have biblical knowledge, but it does not always lead to heart changes and actions. Becoming a true disciple of Jesus, growing

spiritually and living in God's Word (read **John 8:31-32**), agreeing with Jesus and loving Him with your heart, mind, body and soul is what changes you.

Change requires learning God's truth and applying it to your life. Change requires a better way to think. Change is dependent upon the Holy Spirit. Change requires better choices and actions. Change requires tapping into God's power and not relying on your own willpower.

Many of us have tried to make changes in our life on our own. We try to change our habits. We try to change our behaviors. We cling to mantras and depend on our own willpower. We may have a certain degree of success, but we can never do in our own willpower what the will of God can do in His power.

The entire essence of being a follower of Jesus is following Him! When you follow someone, you follow that person's lead. You do what they do. You follow them in word and deed. You do what they instruct you to do. You allow them to teach you and train you. You become *like* them. You give them permission to redirect your life. What we have learned to embrace at Encounter is that lasting change never happens until we truly follow Jesus and become *like* Him in personality and purpose.

A friend to Encounter, Pastor Marty Walker, defines discipleship as becoming more like Jesus today than I was yesterday, and becoming more like Jesus tomorrow than I was today. It is one of the best definitions of discipleship, because discipleship is a process. It is a lifestyle. It is a commitment. It is a labor of love. It is a reverent submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in your life every day. It is purposeful living for God, because God is purposeful about His love and plans for you. It does not compromise. It is an *all-in* state of mind, backed up by *all-in* actions – aka *worship*.

Being a Christian is one thing. Being a disciple is altogether something different. Spiritual growth is a layman's term for discipleship. At Encounter, spiritual growth is one of our four pillars - along with recovery, evangelism and community. Without spiritual growth, it is difficult to live out your purpose. Not every Christian becomes a disciple, because they simply don't make the decision to go *all-in* and love Jesus according to His definition of love. Jesus says that to *love* Him is to *obey* Him. Some of us are reluctant to go *all-in* because we are way too comfortable in our sin; we like our sin and we don't want to obey God's direction regarding our sin.

God wants you to grow in your faith, to become a disciple of Jesus so you can become more *like* Him daily in Word and deed. With this in mind, read the following scriptures:

Matthew 28:18-20

Luke 24:45-46

John 13:35

John 14:21-26

Galatians 5:16-26

Ephesians 4:22-24

Ephesians 5:1-20

Philippians 2:12-15

Philippians 4:8-9

2 Peter 3:9-18

1 John 2:3-6

Anchor 6 starts with one word, "Allow". **Allow** God to make the transformation changes He wants to make. **Allow** God to change you. Give God permission to make the changes He wants to make in your thinking and acting and stop trying to make them on your own. You are like a hamster on a wheel when you operate in your own strength. You may be moving, but you are not getting anywhere.

It is our responsibility to renew our mind by applying God's truth to our lives. He won't just put the living Word into our minds; we have to read it, learn it and memorize it before it transforms 45

us. There is no transformation occurring if we are not renewing our minds with God's truth. If we renew our mind with truth, God will transform us. Our job is to renew. His job is to transform. You allow God to give you a better way of thinking and you will discover a better way of living.

Beth Moore refers to it as "re-wallpapering your mind". Sometimes you have to strip the nasty old wallpaper from the walls of your mind and refresh it with a clean slate. Demolition has to take place - you demolish every argument, every lie - that sets itself up against the knowledge of God and take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ - See **2 Corinthians 10:5** NIV. That's what **re-wallpapering** looks like. That is renewing your mind with God's truth to replace lies that have been on the walls of your mind for far too long.

God is sovereign and faithful in His promises. He wants what is best for you, but He does require you to do your part; it doesn't just happen by osmosis. A relationship requires participation. God will do what He says He will do, but He wants you to do your part - so that His part can be accomplished in your life. It is up to you to do certain things in your own life. Unless you do those things, positive changes won't occur and you won't change.

Here are some examples of the above. When you believe God and trust Him, God saves you. When you renew your mind with God's truth, God transforms you. When you let the Word of God dwell richly in you, God makes you a new creation. When you obey God's truth, God gives you peace. When you think great thoughts, God gives you the mind of Christ.

Jesus was speaking to His followers in **John 8:31-32** when He said, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free". The truth does not set you free by your own plan, it only sets you free by God's transformation and discipleship plan. You must remain faithful to His teachings, to the truth of God. Allow God to change the way you think. Don't conform any longer to this world and its value system. Stop believing in the importance of worldly appearances and lifestyles, and secular wisdom. Start believing what your new nature, your new mind in Christ and your new godly value system deems important.

As a believer and follower of Jesus, you no longer have the obligation to let the world influence your behavior and determine what is important to you. Christ has set you free from your old patterns of thinking and acting. You can, and should, start thinking and acting like a disciple of Jesus by being Spirit-minded and Spirit-guided. That means that you can allow the Holy Spirit of God living inside of you to lead you and guide you according to God's good, perfect and pleasing will for you.

In Roman 12:1-2, Paul tells us to be transformed into a new person. Thankfully, that is God's job and not ours. But it will only happen if we are willing to go through a metamorphosis type of transformation. The Greek translation for **transformed** is **metamorphosis**. The implication of this process is that the outside is transformed due to an inner nature or work. We use it in terms of describing how a butterfly goes from being a caterpillar to what it was always meant to become, a butterfly. It is never meant to remain a caterpillar and it does not remain so. It has to grow, though, to become the beautiful butterfly that matches its inner nature and identity as a butterfly.

Likewise, those born into new life in Christ now have the nature of Christ within them and they must grow and be transformed to become what the inner nature says they already are. As Christ followers, we must grow up so the nature of Christ within us can be seen on the outside. He transforms us so that our outer appearance and actions match the Holy Spirit of God living within

us. We are to **grow** in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ – see **2 Peter 3:18**.

The caterpillar crawls upon the ground and eventually climbs into a cocoon to undergo a period of metamorphosis. When it emerges, it is no longer a crawling caterpillar. It is a beautiful and colorful butterfly that has wings to fly freely. That is a perfect analogy of the spiritual growth God wants to occur in our lives as His disciples.

God doesn't want you to continue to crawl around in the muck and mire of your old life and your old nature. He wants you to crawl up into His arms and the cocoon of His love. It is what you are meant to do, and who you are meant to become. If you are willing to grow, He is willing to transform you. He can transform you into a new and beautiful creature that can fly freely in the new inner nature He has given you. You can't do that without Him. God, alone, has the power to transform you.

You are to have a metamorphosis by making your walk and talk on the outside line up with the One who lives inside of you. When you allow God to make the necessary changes He wants to make in your life, He allows those inner changes to emerge so they can be seen on the outside. Metamorphosis comes by the renewing of the mind. Metamorphosis comes when you soak up God's Word and make it the authority over your life. Metamorphosis comes when you take the Word of life and translate that truth into practical biblical living.

Jesus said that people would know His disciples by their fruit. When we stop trying to make changes on our own and allow God to make the changes He wants to make, our life starts to reflect good fruit and people start to notice the changes in us. The fruit of the Spirit is an inside job that is produced by the Holy Spirit of God. You can't produce it on your own. It is the supernatural work of God. But you must allow it to happen - **Galatians 5:16-26**.

Transformation is not something to compartmentalize or put on a shelf periodically, so you can take it down when you feel like it and do it in stages. While there are stages of growth, there is only one way to follow God. That is full-speed ahead with the determination of going **all-in**. Jesus never made an exception when it comes to this principle. He wants your whole heart, your whole life. When you can give your body to Him and let Him change the way you think, **then** you are truly worshipping Him. Consider this: **If** God is not Lord **of all** in your life, then He is not Lord **at all** in your life.

QUESTIONS FOR YOU:

1. What changes have you tried to make in your life in your own strength? How did that work or how is that working for you?
2. Considering what God has done for you, how grateful are you, how dependent are you upon Him? In what ways does your life reflect your gratitude to God?
3. Ask the Holy Spirit how He would have you offer your life, your mind, even your body, as a living and holy sacrifice to worship Him in a way that He finds acceptable? How is that different than what you are doing or how you are living today?
4. How do you define worship? Write out a statement and plan of how you are going to worship God according to what you have learned in this lesson. Ask God to seal it with His Holy Spirit, and ask others to hold you accountable to living it out.