

Monday June 29, 2026

The Holy Spirit Brings Transformation

Romans 12:2

As you enter your time with God today, take a moment to quiet your mind. Breathe this prayer: "Come, Lord Jesus, come. Fill me with your Spirit. Open my heart that you might share your words of life with me."

We read today from Romans 12:2. Read the passage now or at the end of this devotion. What does this passage teach us about the Holy Spirit bringing us to places of transformation?

When I was in 7th grade creative writing class, our teacher gave us an assignment to write a work of fiction with the theme of "pressure". We were talking about conflict as fundamental to story-telling and she wanted to understand how conflict could be introduced to a story in different ways. When someone is in a place of tension and pressure, it shapes how they respond to life around them. She wanted us to explore how that might look in our stories.

I wrote my story on peer pressure. That's something we were hearing about all the time. There is a great fear among educators and others who work with middle school kids, rightfully so that teenagers will allow peer pressure to take them down the wrong roads. I think the research bears out that this is something that should be talked about a lot with 7th graders. Peer pressure is real.

The character in my story (Ryan) felt the pressure to conform. He went on a shopping spree that he had saved up for years to enjoy. He bought \$80 'cool' jeans (this was 1986). He bought designer shirts with embroidered horses on them. He bought the best shoes. He bought the (fictional) 'Cross of the Alps'; an expensive Swiss watch that his favorite movie star wore. He spent over \$5000 in one day looking the best that everyone thought the best looked.

Of course, for Ryan, the purchases didn't change anything. He was still rejected by people in his class who didn't like him and liked by those who were already his friends. People noticed the clothes, but they didn't really change how they saw HIM. In a couple of weeks, he realized how uncomfortable he was in the clothes and gave all of it to a charity store. The only thing he held back was the watch. He kept it to remind himself of what had happened.

I closed my story with this ridiculous line (yes, I still remember it).

"And Ryan kept the watch. He never wore it, but from time to time, he would take out to remember how foolish it was to try to conform to people's ideas of who you should be. It was just a little bit of class, in a no-class world." Gag.

I didn't get the best grade, but the memory remains. Oddly enough, my ridiculous little story still reminds me of how we are called to be different than what the world expects that we should be.

"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."

In context, Paul is calling the Roman church to 'die to themselves' as 'living sacrifices' before the Lord. He calls this an act of worship. When we give our self-agenda, we are transformed by the Spirit and are more deeply connected to the will and heart of God.

And as I consider where I am at this point in my life, I am compelled to believe that perhaps we should never stop talking about peer pressure. Sure, it has power in our teenage years, but let's be transparent with ourselves; each of us feel the tug to 'conform' to something in the world around us. Even when we may have figured out the 'sex, drugs, and rock and roll' of our early adulthood, we realize that new temptations come from the world around us to suck us into a more mature 'worldliness'.

We conform to social media expectations. For me, it started with MySpace, moved to Facebook and I think I've settled on Instagram. There's a different expectation of conformity for my children.

We conform to cultural and social movements. We get concerned about the things the world talks about (divided politics, social justice issues, world conflicts, etc.) when others begin to be concerned by them. (Note: these issues are important and must be addressed, but since the issues particularly, and world conflict generally have always been present, shouldn't we always be praying for and discerning them instead of waiting for it become a hot-button issue?)

We conform to fads and hobbies as they arise in our world. I'm finally seeing some of my Christian friends move past their 'having chickens' or 'sourdough' phase, only to see them pick up golfing or home woodworking because that's what influencers have moved to.

Christ calls us to be fueled towards life differently. He calls us to be transformed by his mind, not ours nor the world's. He calls us to invest our mental, emotional, and behavioral space in his kingdom first. When we are fueled by his Spirit through his Word and supported by his community, we are less prone to fit in with the world around us which is just as he intends.

This does not mean that any of those things above are sinful and needed to be rejected outright as conformity to the sin of the world. It simply means that if we become a political activist who has chickens and knows how to use a bandsaw, we do so because the Spirit has transformed us and called us to serve the kingdom in those spaces. We allow God's leadership to set our agenda.

May we be those who reject the worldliness that consumes and distracts us from the kingdom. May we be fueled by the leadership and transformation of the Spirit. May those around us notice the difference and in what they notice, may they see Jesus.

That's a way better closing line.

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord turn his smile towards you and give you his peace.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

I love you all. Blessings.

Feel free to share this devotion with others.

To contact the author, please email: elgersma@therivercrc.com