

## Transformed

### *Finding God's Will*

*"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."*  
- Romans 12:2

I began serving as a youth pastor at age 21. My wife, Shannon (also part of CVM) and I joined the team of Winder First UMC after we got married, right after undergrad at UGA. I had limited knowledge of Scripture—the same with skills and experience, but passion for God and serving people carried us through. This verse was a regular for me – so much so, that when we left to serve another church, one of the youth made a shirt for me with this verse on it.

Looking back, I'm glad I routinely used this verse. It says a lot in a few words! How do we navigate the world as a Jesus follower? How does transformation happen? What's God's will for each of us? It's all there. While this verse is connected to what comes before and after, let's take a few minutes to unpack Romans 12:2.

Right away, Paul reminds the church at Rome to not conform to the pattern of this world. Conforming is easy. It feels like the road more travelled, with less hardship, that will allow us to fit in. Conforming is always calling to us. And while what conforming looks like changes year to year, generation to generation, it makes itself known.

That's the thing about God, though. God is consistent. Unchanging. Faithful. All loving. Always graceful. Fully in love with all persons, as God would call us all sons and daughters. When I look at people who have fully given themselves over to the pattern of this world, I don't see total love and joy.

At the same time, it can be tempting to conform to the patterns of this world a little bit, in order to draw people toward God. The term "Christian" carries baggage for some people. And, we've earned some of that. I could list some reasons and examples, but I don't have to do so – you can think of plenty, unfortunately. So, it's tempting to fit in a little just so we show people not all Christians are like "that" whatever that is. This is a tough line to walk, and I don't know the full answer here. But, as a Jesus follower, there will always be a part of us that won't conform. At the same time, we are to love the world, and the world isn't loved if we're hostile towards it and constantly telling it what it's doing wrong.

Let's do what Andrew did for his brother, who turned out to be the great disciple, Peter. *"The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus."* -John 1:41,42. Simple. Bring people to Jesus. Then Jesus, and them, and you can go from there.

So, we are also to be TRANSFORMED. That's an emphasis for CVM this year. And, according to this verse, it begins with the renewing of our minds. Our thinking drives a lot of our actions, words, and how we live our lives. I believe this verse is highlighting this, and how important it is

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to have an eternal perspective, a worldview with God at the foundation. Believing in God is a start, but we are not only to believe, but to follow Jesus. Following Jesus and being transformed is a lifelong process. Life can be like lab, where we test and approve of what God's will is. The good news is, there's grace all over this process. We will make mistakes along the way, but we will be transformed by the continual renewing of our minds. Then, we will be able to see what God's will is.

And that will is good, pleasing, perfect! What's better than perfect? I believe that's why I repeated this verse all those years ago, working with middle and high school students. There were many options before them as they began to take ownership of their lives. And no matter where you are today, there's always the chance to change. We see many options today on social media, TV, and those around us. And some of those lifestyles can look pretty good. But, do we trust God to be who God claims to be? This God has a will for our lives that is good for us, pleasing for us, perfect. That's what I want. I hope you'll join in on this transformation in your own life, and I hope many others will do the same. Maybe we'll even make t-shirts about it.

- 1) What does it mean to be *'conformed to the pattern of this world?'* How do we love the world well while not conforming to its patterns?**
- 2) What does *'renewing your mind'* mean to you? What are some intentional steps we can all take to being transformed by renewing our minds?**
- 3) How do you *'test and approve what God's will is?'***
- 4) Take some time this week to ask yourself if you know what's better for your life, or does God? Feel free to approach God with what you consider to be good, pleasing, and perhaps perfect. Listen for the Holy Spirit, and see if there are any next steps for you to take with the Lord.**



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