

Good morning Hernando and Bolivia Outpost!

This past week was pretty huge! Josh Campbell and Sammi Sayger becoming a new family on Saturday and Hudson Elliot McCormick joined the Bryan McCormick tribe last Tuesday!

Alright, Rick challenged us to read two chapters a day in Romans and memorize Romans 12:1-2. How did it go? Did you get to read two chapters of Romans a day and memorize Romans 12:1-2 this past week? If you memorized it turn right now and tell it to the person next to you. Go! Get back on the horse if you missed out on this...the challenge still stands!

Last week we learned that we are to offer our bodies to the Lord as living sacrifices and renew our minds. In these next three verses he goes on to tell us how a living sacrifice is to think and to act.

Turn in your Bibles to **Romans 12:3-5 NKJV**.

³"For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. ⁴For we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another."

Three main thoughts about this passage:

I. Think Soberly ***³"For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith."***

To think soberly means you make an honest evaluation of yourself. Sober is – sound mind, sound thinking, a sane evaluation of yourself...Sober is the opposite of drunk – a drunk person isn't thinking clearly about themselves or anyone else.

In verse 3, Paul is telling us how a living sacrifice is to think. Remember that our minds are to be transformed by renewing – allowing Him to change and guide our thoughts as we offer ourselves to the Lord and be still before Him.

How you think affects everything you do.

The apostle Paul builds on verses one and two as he shows us in practical ways how we are to think as disciples of Jesus. First, He's telling us to not think more highly of ourselves than we should. In other words don't have the big head – don't be proud! Paul prefaced his instruction with why He has a right to say this, ***"For I say, through the grace given to me..."***

He's not speaking as one looking down on us, rather from the perspective of one who's been appointed as an apostle (sent one) of Jesus to speak these things.

It's really quite simple what he's saying... Don't be full of yourself. How you treat people starts in your head - If you think you are more important than other people, then you will treat them like they are unimportant. Do you know any unimportant people? If so, you've got a problem. Its called pride.

This is a call to think humbly. No one gets a pass on being humble -it applies to everyone! Paul was writing to the church at Rome, but it applies to Colonial Hills today. In Proverbs 6 Pride is listed as the first of the seven deadly sins. Pride is attributing to yourself the glory that rightfully belongs to God. Pride refuses to yield to God.

The pagan high king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, was guilty of this in Daniel 4, and God humbled him completely by stripping him of his kingdom and graze on grass like an oxen for seven years. At the end of those seven years God restored his mind and kingdom to him and he said of the experience, "And those who walk in pride He is able to humble." God surely hates pride. I've seen how this looks in my own life.

In May 2005 I had been on vacation in Alabama. Upon my return, as Rick and I were riding together to the office, I, in my flowery Hawaiian shirt, he in something snappy, casually said to me, "John, you might want to go by the Southaven Police Department. There is a warrant out for your arrest." When I came to, I realized he wasn't joking. So at staff meeting that morning we decided that since Jim May had the most experience with the police, and he would go with me. So, we went down to the police department where I heard the charges against me...disturbing the peace. My friend, Wes Fullilove, had way too much fun booking me in my flowery shirt, and taking my mug shot.

I had led worship here for the previous two years and Brent Climer had just come on as the new worship leader a month before. I actually hadn't lead worship in about six months. I was not guilty, but I was arrested! I remember hearing the guy on Channel 5 saying, John Sayger, youth minister at Colonial Hills Church arrested..." I thought, Hmmm, that's me. I began hearing from friends from all over the country.

From Texas and Arkansas I heard, "John was it you that got arrested? What did you do?" Somehow this news had made its way into the national media. And people had no idea why I had actually been arrested! Anytime a youth minister is arrested people think the worst. So in response to this I was pretty upset. I realized that my name had been tarnished. I remember meeting with the deacons and telling them that I was my name had been ruined and I had to get it back. I would hear people in stores talking about the youth minister at Colonial Hills who got arrested. I would reassure them that he was not guilty and was really a good guy!

Shortly after my arrest I was eating lunch with a friend in Fort Worth Texas, and was telling him what happened, and how my name had been ruined and how upset I was that I couldn't fix it. He calmly looked at me and said, "John, it sounds like God is trying to make you a man of no reputation, are you going to be okay with that?" I sat back in my chair and just looked at him. It was as if he had hit me with a sledgehammer. He exposed my pride. For years I have taught students Isaiah 26:8, ***Yes, LORD, walking in the way of your laws, we wait for you; your name and renown are the desire of our hearts.*** But at this time in my life I was more concerned with MY name, not His. He began to break pride off of me through this.

Philippians 2:7 tells us this about Jesus, "He made himself of no reputation." Another translation, "But made Himself nothing." This was a lesson I learned in stone through that experience. I would love to tell you that I'm completely humble today and do not struggle with pride one bit, but I would be a liar to say such! I'm still learning!!!

What about you? What will it take for you to stop seeing people as unimportant or important and to begin to see them as Jesus sees them – as lost or saved?

Did you know that Jesus never met an unimportant person? He treated people with great love and dignity; even the lowliest in society received His love! Romans 12:3 is a clear word that we are to not look down on other people. We are to see people as Jesus sees them. It does not matter what your position is in life, your talents, your social status, your economic status, your looks, your IQ, your anything, you are not more important than your brothers and sisters in Christ. Read James 2 when you get a chance.

So, if we are to not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought, then we are to think sorta highly of ourselves? NO...Jesus is our example. When He was walking around on earth how did He think of Himself? In total humility. He came to serve and not be served, to bring the Good News to those walking in darkness, to love people, and to save people!

Jesus is your standard, and His example is humility...to be a person of NO reputation...not a bad reputation, NO reputation. We are to be like Jesus.

In **John 3:30** John the Baptist said of Jesus, ***"He must increase, but I must decrease."*** If you spend your life making much of Jesus, you won't spend near as much time making much of yourself. That is what we are called to do, regardless of your spiritual gifts or place in the body of Christ.

Make much of Jesus by the way you think of yourself, the way you live, and by what your message is to those who don't know Him yet. If the Lord simply saved you to go to heaven, then why didn't He just save you then kill you and take you on to heaven? His purposes and thoughts are so much bigger than ours! He wants others to join us!

Those who are far from God surround us, and they need us to be real, to love them and to share the Gospel with them. The overall purpose of the church worldwide is to advance God's kingdom on this earth.

The report Tuesday of 11 Christians being martyred by ISIS reminded me that the Kingdom of God advances even in the most horrific places. A pastor/dad had to watch his 12 year old son have his fingertips cut off to try to force him to renounce his faith, finally crucifying him and his dad and beheading others and crucifying their bodies. They didn't renounce Him! The decision to be a living sacrifice must be made first before this kind of sacrifice happens.

Look at the last part of verse 3 – ***“as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.”*** God Himself gives you your place and assignment in life. You are not better or worse than anyone else in the body of Christ. Each of us has been given a gift by God...a measure of faith...this faith is what the Lord gives you to carry out your part in the body of Christ.

If you were able to do things on your own, then you could take credit and rightfully look down on others, BUT, since God is the Giver, then He gets all of the glory, not you and not me. “It is God who works in you both to will and to act according to His good purpose.” Philippians 2:13.

Two times in John 5 Jesus Himself said He could do NOTHING on His own, only what He saw the Father doing. We are the same! In John 15:5, Jesus told His disciples, ***“I am the vine, you are the branches, He who abides in Me and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”*** So let me ask you again, do you know any unimportant people? Are you thinking soberly about yourself?

II. Think many. ⁴“For we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function...” The church is both universal and local. Universal in this sense, that there are millions of believers worldwide that gather in various sizes of groups and flavors...But we are all one in Christ. We cannot forget our brothers and sisters in Syria and Afghanistan and North Korea and in other closed countries where it is illegal to be a Christian and where many are being tortured and persecuted for following Jesus. We must pray for them and help them however we can.

Also, there are a lot of other churches around here that believe in Jesus and teach the Bible. These are our brothers and sisters in Christ, so love them too!

Our particular body meets here in Southaven and in Hernando and in an Outpost in Bolivia and in small groups all over Desoto County, and is called Colonial Hills Church. Our strength is not in our uniformity, but in our diversity, just like our physical bodies have different parts. We need each other!

1 Corinthians 12:14-27, “¹⁴For in fact the body is not one member but many. ¹⁵If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁶And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? ¹⁸But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. ¹⁹And if they were all one member, where would the body be? ²⁰But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. ²¹And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” ²²No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. ²³And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, ²⁴but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, ²⁵that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. ²⁶And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. ²⁷Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”

Realize that you're a small part of a larger picture. Not unimportant, just small. The body of Christ is very diverse and the glory goes to Him as His kingdom advances through us. We need you!!! Don't hide among the masses, step out and be a part of the advance of God's kingdom!

Years ago I had been in a really bad church situation and was hurting, so I hid for over a year in a big Baptist church in Texas while I was in school. Are you hiding? Have you been hurt? What's stopping you from diving into serving Jesus wholeheartedly? Move toward the Lord and ask Him to heal you.

At a Passion Conference years ago, I heard Louie Giglio share this concept - You have a choice to either be a big star in your own small production (your life), or a small star in an immense production (God's kingdom advancing through His body, the Church). How the Lord chooses to use you is his business.

We are to celebrate how he has shaped and gifted everyone in the body of Christ. I fear that so many here are attenders, but not functioning as the Lord created you to function in the body of Christ.

Rick said this last week, the building is not the church, we are! Have you somehow limited serving God to this building or our Hernando location on Sundays and Wednesdays or when we have special events? There are only a certain number of people needed to carry out the functions in our meetings and events (By the way, we still need more people to help carry the load in every area of the church, so ask a pastor how you can grab a corner).

The body of Christ has so much more to do and be than what happens in our meetings. Spiritual gifts are to be used everywhere. Have you sought the Lord asking Him what your part is to be? If you are not actively following and serving Jesus, you are going to get bored and disillusioned, and eventually go do something else or you'll just stay miserable.

Listen, if you are uncertain on what your spiritual gifts are, then pray, read what the Bible has to say about spiritual gifts, and ask a pastor or leader to pray with you and help you discover what your part is to be.

The question before you right now, is this – Are you functioning as the Lord has gifted you or are you simply attending? I'm not saying this to guilt you into serving or doing more! This is a word to you who are, for whatever reason, sitting on the sideline. Spiritual gifts are meant to be opened and used for God's glory! They are not merit badges that exalt the individual, but servant towels so that each believer may serve the body of Christ.

Can you imagine a football team that stayed in the huddle for the whole game and never played a single down? That would be a boring game. Guess what? That's what attending church without being an active part of the body is like...staying in the huddle and never getting in the game. We have some serious needs for people to step into their God-given giftedness and join the advance of God's kingdom here!

Finally,

III. Think One. ⁵*“so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.”* This is the picture of unity. In Jesus' prayer in John 17 he asked the Father to make us one, just as He and the Father are ONE...totally unified and walking together. This is why we cannot think more highly of ourselves than we ought.

High thinking of oneself destroys unity. It is very difficult to be unified with someone you are constantly comparing yourself to or putting down. Please realize you were not called to compare yourself to anyone or to put them down. You are called to follow Jesus and fish for men. It's that simple.

We belong to each other and we need to live like it. We are quite literally brothers and sisters in Christ!

The danger of hearing a sermon like this is to affirm it and say, “Man, that's right, we gotta change the way we think and move toward each other and love one another and be unified.” And then not one thing change in the way we think or act. This is a call to action.

Please bow your heads.

What has the Lord specifically said to you this morning? Has He put His finger on your thinking? What are you going to do about it? Are you hurt or hiding? Can you offer yourself to Jesus as a living sacrifice today and lay your life down?

What would happen to the unity of the body of Christ if everyone of us in Colonial Hills Church began to live to see God's kingdom advance? Jesus prayed in **Matthew 6:10**, "***Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*** There is too much at stake for us to not move together in unity and love.

Jesus' purpose for us is that, as one, we represent him on this planet, living out his commands and loving people and sharing life with them. Jesus commanded us in **John 13** to love one another. ***For by this all will know that you are my disciples if you have love one for another.***

Love and unity go together. If you can understand that you are part of a larger picture you will allow the Lord to change the way you think, and realize that you are a part of something much bigger than you that is truly amazing.

Think Soberly

Think Many

Think One

Let's pray