

VBS: BREAKER ROCK BEACH – BE TRANSFORMED!

6/9/24

Exodus 3:1-15

Sunday AM – Ben Woodard

At Breaker Rock Beach, we will learn to recognize the difference between what the world says is true and what God says is true. **Over the course of the next 5 days, we will encounter 5 everyday sayings that sound right, but dangerously miss the truth found in God's Word. Each day our kids will be challenged to know that God's truth never changes, even when it's radically different from what some people say.** As they do this, they will discover that God does not want them to be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of their minds so that they can discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

Romans 12:2 says Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

The Motto for the week is – *God's Truth Never Changes*

**Some people say - Truth can be different for different people
God Says - Truth comes from Me**

**Some People Say – Do What Makes You Happy
God Says – My Plan is Best**

**Some People Say - Being a good person gets you into heaven
God Says - Everyone sins and needs a Savior**

**Some people say - There are many ways to get into heaven
God Says - Jesus is the only way to get into heaven**

**Some people say - If you don't agree with me, you don't love me
God says - Speak the truth in love**

As I shared last Sunday, Vacation Bible School is more than a week of entertainment for children in our community. VBS allows our entire church family to serve on mission together. It is a place for us to learn God's Word, put it into practice, and walk in obedience together as we share His truth with EACH generation.

Notice my language in that last sentence: I didn't say that we will be sharing His truth with the NEXT generation. I said that we will be sharing His truth with EACH generation.

The reality is, that the essential belief that **God's Truth Never Changes** might be more deeply relevant for us adults in the room this morning than for the boys and girls who will be participating in VBS this week.

And while our mission is to introduce boys and girls to a personal relationship with Jesus as their Savior and Lord and ground their faith on the rock that never changes, as adults, we know how difficult it is to not be conformed to this age.

Let's look again at the slide with our daily points...

Some people say - Truth can be different for different people
God Says - Truth comes from Me

Some People Say – Do What Makes You Happy
God Says – My Plan is Best

Some People Say - Being a good person gets you into heaven
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Some people say - If you don't agree with me, you don't love me
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The majority of us here today have interacted with someone this week—in your work, in your community, maybe even in your home—who will have chosen to do what makes them happy instead of choosing God's best. Or have tried to make truth relevant instead of looking to God as the source of all truth. Or will have chosen conflict or hurt instead of speaking, **or hearing**, God's truth in love.

Church family, Romans 12:2 gives us instruction on how to be transformed as we stand for truth in an age where we can dangerously miss the truth found in His Word. And the only way for us to pass this on to the EACH generation is for our lives to become more like Jesus and point others to a relationship with God.

So, let's look at Romans 12:1-2 as we consider God's truth for our hearts this morning.

Therefore, **in view of God's mercy**, offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, for this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing and perfect will of God – Romans 12:1-2

We don't have time to focus on the full depth of both of these verses, but I wanted to read Romans 12:1 to give the over-arching application that what we see in Romans 12:2 is fully dependent on God's mercy from Romans 12:1.

It is ONLY BECAUSE we have a loving, merciful, powerful God that we are able to NOT be conformed, but be TRANSFORMED.

It is because we know the God of TRUTH that we can understand, interpret, and apply His Word in an age of darkness and deception.

In light of HIS mercy, we can be shown His good, pleasing, and perfect will for our lives, instead of having to wander through life in darkness.

So, we begin studying this text by being filled with gratitude for His mercy and power and presence in our lives.

I recently read a book by Pastor/Author Timothy Witmer about Shepherd Leaders and Shepherding Families where he gives the following illustration:

The story is told about a group of tourists in Israel who, after observing a flock of sheep and their shepherd, were informed by their tour guide that shepherds always **LEAD** their flocks from the front. The guide stressed to his attentive listeners that shepherds never drive their sheep from behind.

A short time later, the tour bus happened upon a flock of sheep along the road with the shepherd walking **BEHIND** them. The tourists quickly called this to their guide's attention, and he stopped the bus to step out and have a word with the shepherd.

As the guide reboarded the bus, he had a grin on his face and announced, "That wasn't the shepherd; that was the butcher!" – The Shepherd Leader at Home, Pg. 91

I love this illustration, because it is a picture that we are either being led by what God, through His Word, says is true, or we are being influenced by what OTHERS—some people—claim is true. As we consider Romans 12:2 we have to ask ourselves this question: *Are we being led by the world, or are we being led by truth?* We are also reminded that even when we are being led by God's Word, what others say is constantly surrounding and pursuing us. But when we are following the Good Shepherd, we can boldly and obediently follow through the renewing of our minds to know and follow God's perfect will for our lives.

Do not conform to the patterns of this age...

There is force to this negative warning "DO NOT CONFORM" that Paul uses multiple times throughout Romans 12 to share with his readers how their lives should be a reflection of God's

mercy. This is an echo of how God tells the Israelites when they prepare to enter the land of Canaan. Leviticus 18:1–4 says,

The Lord said to Moses, ² “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘I am the Lord your God. ³ You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices. ⁴ You must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees. I am the Lord your God.

Jesus uses the same strength of warning in Matthew 6:8, “DO NOT be like the Pharisees.”

The idea behind the word “**conform**” describes following a certain pattern, or being put into a mold, that is not reflective of what is within. Paul is urgently saying: because you have Christ in you, do not let your life conform to look like the world outside of you.

The summer of my freshman year of college I didn’t realize how important it was to look for summer jobs early, so when I got home from college and needed to get a job, the only work I landed was at a friend’s business, making landscape stone. From 7 am – 4 pm, in an un-airconditioned warehouse fighting the Georgia heat, I would combine the sand/water/concrete mixture, pour that mixture into a mold, and after the drying process, we would pull the landscape stones out of the molds to be stacked and sent out.

Throughout the summer I repeated that process thousands of times, and every single time I would go to the drying rack and pull-out stacks and stacks and stacks of stone that looked exactly like the mold. I never pulled out of the mold an elaborate water feature, a finished fire pit or a completed retaining wall that would beautify a yard. I always pulled out exactly what had been put into and conformed to the mold.

Which taught me 2 things...

1. Start early when you’re trying to find a summer job.
2. *What goes into the mold will always come out in the shape of that mold*

As we better understand the idea of NOT CONFORMING, we see the pattern in scripture woven together like this... **Do NOT do as they do in Egypt where they worship idols and not the one true God ... Do NOT do as they do in Canaan, where the sins and patterns of the culture will take you away from obeying God’s Commandments... Do NOT do as the Pharisees do, looking on themselves more highly than they ought... and even today, Do NOT conform to the patterns of this age, because of God’s mercy bringing you salvation and new life.**

Why is this message so clear and repeated so frequently?

Because as followers of Christ, our lives are supposed to be completely shaped and molded by following the pattern that Jesus set before us. Even more so, in view of His mercy, what people

SEE from us should be patterned after a heart that, in view of God's mercy, is living as a daily sacrifice.

One author puts it this way: "Stop assuming an outward expression which is patterned after this world, which does not come from, nor is representative of what you are in your inner being as a regenerate child of God" McArthur, pg. 149

Let me make a vital ministry connection for us right now. At this time, tomorrow, we'll have nearly 500 people on campus as we're starting our VBS. We'll have our boys and girls ages 4 years old – 5th grade who are participating. We'll have our adult teachers, and our youth volunteers, and we'll have hundreds of hours of blood, sweat, and tears that have been poured into the lessons and the environment to make sure our boys and girls know and understand what it means to live for Jesus. **The worship, the teaching, and the environment all add significant impact to how we can reach our community and share the Gospel with the kids who are here.**

But do you know what needs to be foremost on our minds as this VBS week unfolds if we want the ministry to be successful? It's not, are the kids having a great time? Or are they having fun? Or how many will make a decision to follow Christ; although these are all important. **What needs to be the most present in my life, and our focus as a church is: are my thoughts and my actions following a pattern of this world, or are they being transformed as I follow Christ.**

Being completely honest, this isn't always easy for me. There will be times when I want to speak before I think, or where I will feel tired and lose patience, or where I might just feel completely overwhelmed. **But here's what I know: If myself, our volunteers, and our church are a visible pattern of Jesus, not being molded to look like the world but to clearly look like Christ, then as the kids see a pattern of transformation, they will better know what it looks like to give their lives to Christ and truly follow Him.**

One of Satan's oldest schemes, the battle plan he uses against the church, is to try to make the church look like the world. I'm not talking about what style of music or what programs are or how traditional or contemporary the church feels. I'm talking about the scheme where Satan wants to make the people in the church—who by definition ARE the church—look, feel, and act less transformed, and more like the pattern of the world.

Please hear me family—when I as an individual, and you as an individual, or us as a collective body of Christ—fall into a mold of conforming to the pattern of this world it greatly diminishes the power of God in our lives and the ability of the church to be a light in this world. **The power of God never changes, but the visibility of that power must not be hidden or camouflaged in our lives by patterns of this world.**

That's where the "trick" or tactic Satan uses becomes so deadly. **Some people say, "Do what makes you happy" Some people say, "My truth is relative" Some people say "If you disagree with me, you don't love me."**

And in the heat of the spiritual battle, even if we're able to respond with truth, the voice we can easily hear is one that we first heard in Genesis 3 – Did God REALLY say... “My plan is best?” Did God REALLY say, “Truth comes from me?” Did God REALLY say “Speak the truth in love?”

Yes. God REALLY did say those words, and many more. So, when Paul writes—DO NOT CONFORM—it means that we look to Christ and the truth of His Word to set our standards, not the world. The second we take our eyes off of Christ and his pattern, we begin that process of conforming. We start to be molded by another image, instead of the image of Christ.

Chip Ingram puts it this way – “Stop allowing yourselves to be molded by the influences and pressures of the present world we live in. Stop allowing Satan to dupe you, con you, use you, trick you, promise you life and love and power through a seductive world system that will only deliver disappointment, defeat, depression and make you a slave to sin.”

Be Transformed –

As we look at what it means to be transformed, I want to make a really important point that will address a lie that some of us may have been thinking as I described the idea of conforming to the patterns of this world.

When I talked about the conforming mold, some of us may have gotten a little uncomfortable. Because of the rampant individualism in our culture, and the pressure to be unique, be different, be individual, or be the best you, our culture and the messaging in our world often says that we have to “break the mold” to find our true and unique selves.

Here again, that is Satan crafting a lie out of something that God actually designed with a special purpose.

Being transformed doesn't mean that every Christian looks or sounds the same. Conforming to a philosophical mold and identifying as part of an exclusive tribe is actually a very secular, worldly concept.

Scripture is teaching us that being transformed means that as the Holy Spirit is working in our lives, doing a work inside of us that we are unable to do ourselves, we begin to look more like Jesus and discover our unique gifts, talents, and callings that He has created us for. Being transformed means using those gifts to show the world what it looks like to be, act and live like Jesus. Being transformed means our lives are a reflection of the glory of the Lord, because of the Spirit's work in us.

2 Corinthians 3:18 says *“But we all, with unveiled faces, looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”*

On your own this week I want you to keep reading in Romans 12, because just a few verses beyond where we are today, in Romans 12:6, Paul writes this: “Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us let us use them...” This continued reading in Romans will continue to give you a more complete picture of what our lives will look like as we’re being transformed.

As we are convicted to not be conformed to the patterns of this age but transformed by the renewing of our mind, I want to close out this morning with 3 quick applications on how we can be actively renewing our minds to have our lives be more reflective of Jesus, obediently following His will for our lives.

1) Being Transformed Takes Practice

Last year I began to recognize an unhealthy molding of my life where I wasn’t getting the weekly rest and spiritual renewal that I needed, specifically on weekends leading into Sunday mornings. I was still having my daily time with the Lord, my prayer life and quiet times were consistent, and I loved serving and spending time doing what I was doing, but I didn’t have a healthy pattern of rest or Sabbath where my heart and mind could be renewed.

As I talked through this with others and prayed about how to address this, I came across a new devotion book by Paul Tripp called “Sunday Matters” that was written to point readers to the beauty and significance of the church and prepare their hearts for Sunday morning worship gatherings.

This year, beginning back in January, I have set aside Friday mornings for my “Sabbath Rest,” as a very intentional time to renew my mind. Fridays work for me not just because Sunday mornings are full of serving and ministry, but because this is a vital reset in renewing and focusing my mind on Christ leading into Sundays being the start of my week. Rachel and I protect Friday mornings as much as possible to catch up on needed rest, break the pattern of busyness from our week, focus our thoughts on worship, and prepare for the ministry that will happen in the days ahead.

Obviously, everyone has busy schedules, so for you and your family, Friday morning probably isn’t an option. But maybe Friday nights are an option. Or Saturday evening before Sunday worship. Or Sundays after church. The day and time part is not as important as the purposeful breaking of worldly patterns and renewing your mind to what God wants to see in your life. It will take intentionality and practice, even sacrifice to be transformed, but this is the calling that every Christian has on their lives.

2) Being Transformed Takes Purpose

Not all transformation is created equal. If I wanted to transform my body to become a weight lifter, it would look a lot different than if I wanted to transform my image to become a competitive eater.

The transformation of looking different from the patterns of this world might a difficult process. It could require a re-ordering of priorities or a dramatic shift in where your time, talent and treasure are used. It could require extra help from outside people, friends, mentors, counselors or accountability partners.

Even in the hard things, never lose sight of why this transformation and renewing of your mind must take place: So your life looks more like Jesus in a way where others will be able to know him more.

3) Being Transformed is Priceless

One of the main reasons why the church should not conform to this age is life in this age is fading away.

I loved this quote in one of the Romans commentaries I read. **“Christians have been introduced into the life of a world to come; what a tragedy, then, if they conform to the perishing world they have left.” Pillar Commentary, 435**

Our minds, our hearts, and our lives should be constantly renewed because there is so much more to look forward to than what we have now. Our thought patterns, our emotions, our actions, and most importantly our hearts must not be focused on worldly comfort, but looking forward the eternity with our creator.

When our minds our transformed in a way that we see our time, talent and treasure through the lens that things of this earth are fading away, then our purpose becomes transformed to focus on what it priceless.

Romans 12:2 - Do not conform any longer to the patterns of this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Truth matters. This week we are reminded that what God says is true, and His truth never changes. He leads us to look different from the world by boldly and obediently following His pattern that continually transforms us into people who reflect his character. As we become more like who he has created us to be, we will demonstrate to our families, our neighbors, our community and the world, the great mercy of our God and the hope we have in him.

Transformation requires intentional practice, is motivated by the clear purpose of becoming more like Christ and pointing others toward him and the reward is the priceless gift of an eternal relationship with God.

This week, we have the opportunity to show our community the difference that Jesus makes in our lives. This week, we have the opportunity to teach how to listen to God's Truth instead of

what **some people say**. This week, you can commit to the practice and purpose of renewing your mind with priceless, eternal reward.

We are either leading in the culture or you are being pursued by it, and we must be able to recognize the difference and stand for God's Truth with **EACH** generation.