

Romans 12 (ESV)

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.

¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

²⁰ To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Our text today is the second verse in this great 12th chapter of the book of Romans.

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by

the renewal of your mind.” (picture background)



The human brain is the most complex organ in the human body. It is the command center for the central nervous system. There are approximately 86 billion brain cells and 100 billion neurons present in the human mind.

The most powerful computers in the world cannot match what is taking place inside your head right now. (And that is true even for those of you about to go into your mid-sermon snooze).

The human brain functions 24 hours a day from the first trimester in the womb. We attempt to measure the capability of the mind through intelligence, IQ, and cognitive skills, but that can be misleading.

A person can be highly developed in one area and totally lacking in others. Most of you know that our daughter Margie was born with a neurological condition called an occipital encephalocele.

It's a neuro tube disorder which required brain surgery on the day that she was born. That has certainly led to some obvious impairments.

But there are so many other areas that she excels in. She's our guest pianist and vocalist today. She also memorizes Scripture; not just verses or chapters, but books of the Bible!

The human brain is an amazing piece of work. Truly we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

But today we're not talking about the brain in the neurological sense. What we're dealing with today is the renewed mind.

Proverbs 23:7 (KJV) "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." The mind, the heart, and the spirit of a human being are all intertwined. They make you who you are.

Your thoughts lead to acts; your acts lead to habits; and your habits lead to character. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so he is." Our text says we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

The word transformed or transformation comes from the Greek word that we use for metamorphosis. It describes the inward and outward change that's necessary to become fully mature.

That kind of transformation needs to take place in the way we think, because the human mind has been corrupted by sin.

The world says that we are born with a blank slate, and our environment corrupts us over time.

The Bible says that we are conceived in sin. We are born sinners. However our first parents, Adam and Eve came into this world without sin.

They were meant to think noble thoughts. Their minds were sharp and unclouded. There was no pretense; there was nothing to hide.

The mind without the corruption of sin was full of wonder and awe as it pondered the beauty of God's creation.

Before sin came into the world Adam studied and named the creatures of the animal world. He worked the garden which implies that his imagination and skills were quickly developed.

When Eve was created, Adam saw her as the gift of God that she was. “This at last is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.” Human love uncorrupted by sin is pure and lovely.

When sin came into the world it changed everything. The way we think, the way we act, and the way we look at the world. Theologians call this the noetic effects of the fall. Sin taints everything that we do.

Most people equate sin in moral terms, which is accurate, but it’s not the complete story.

Sin distorts our ability to correctly understand the reason and purpose of our existence.

Our primary purpose in life is to glorify the One who made us, and to enjoy His presence forever. Sin makes us think that God is an impediment to our purpose in life.

We began our service with hymns that speak of the wonder of God’s creation. Sin causes us to overlook the magnificent splendor that is all around us.

Sin limits your imagination. It hinders your creativity. It restricts your abilities. It reduces your capacity to love, appreciate and fully enter into the significance of the life God has granted you.

It’s been said that we use only 10% of our brain’s capacity, which is really a misnomer. What is true is that the fall of man into sin has affected the way we think, the way we reason and the way we use our minds.

In the 2014 science fiction film “Lucy” a drug was developed to enhance the brain’s capacity. (picture)



Instead of using just 10% of our potential, this drug allowed the human mind to develop “godlike” capabilities of omniscience, omnipresence and even omnipotence.

The premise of the film is that if we could just unlock the human mind from its shackles, we could have unlimited potential.

That of course was the promise that the serpent made to Adam and Eve.

“You shall be as gods” was his assurance. Instead, the rebellion against God corrupted our minds and tainted our thoughts, intents, motives, ambition and imagination.

Al Mohler at a Ligonier Conference that I attended a couple of years ago listed 14 noetic effects on the human mind because of the fall of man into sin.

1. Ignorance
2. Distractedness
3. Forgetfulness
4. Prejudice
5. Faulty Perspective
6. Intellectual fatigue
7. Inconsistency
8. Failure to draw right conclusions
9. Intellectual apathy
10. Dogmatism and closed-mindedness

11. Intellectual pride

12. Vain imagination

13. Miscommunication

14. Partial knowledge

Despite all of these limits, the mind of man is still the most perceptive of all the creatures on the earth. We have been made in the image of God. Sin distorts but does not destroy that image.

The mind of man is also shaped by his environment. How you perceive the world and respond to the stimuli around you determines how you live your life.

Yet the mind of man has characteristics that seem to be inborn. Engineers are analytical in their thought process. Artistic people are creative. Visionaries can imagine what most of us haven't even thought about.

When the Bible refers to the mind of man, it usually is referring to the thoughts and intents of the will and the heart.

Isaiah 55:8 (ESV)

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.

Let's turn to the contrast between the mind of man and the mind of Christ.

1 Corinthians 2:14-16 (ESV)

The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

¹⁵ The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. ¹⁶ "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

JESUS is the only one born into the world uncorrupted by sin. (Both Adam and Eve were created beings; not born) In the incarnation we see what humans beings were originally meant to be like.

When JESUS was born of Mary, He was fully man, and fully God; yet he laid aside what we call his Divine prerogatives.

When He was a baby He cried. When He went to the Temple, He asked questions. When He exerted Himself, He was fatigued.

Yet in thought, word and deed, He sinned not. In our responsive reading from Ephesians 4 it says, “Be angry, but sin not.” That is the mind of Christ.

The mind of Christ is in communion with His Father. Contrast that of Adam and Eve who tried to hide from God.

The mind of Christ is compassionate, yet He never lowers His standards. JESUS told the woman caught in the act of adultery, “Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.”

The mind of Christ is wise and discerning. He perceived the motives of those who questioned Him and that shaped His answers.

When He was asked if one should pay taxes to the hated Roman Empire, He answered, “Render to Cesar what belongs to Cesar, and to God what belongs to God.”

The mind of Christ is protective and loving. He said that as the Good Shepherd, He lays down His life for the sheep. And He told His disciples, “Love one another as I have loved you.”

The classic passage that describes the mind of Christ is found in Philippians 2.

Philippians 2:5-8 (ESV)

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

The reason that our minds need to be renewed is that in the flesh, we don't have the mind of Christ. The thoughts and inclinations of our minds are the opposite of the mind of Christ.

Romans 8:5-7 (ESV)

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.

What does Paul get at when He talks about being transformed by the renewing of our minds? How can our minds be renewed? We'll list five brief points.

1. Discern the patterns in this world, and seek to live counter cultural lives.

Most everything that we're exposed to conveys a way to look at life; a worldview; a philosophy of life.

- Academics
- Politics
- Music and entertainment
- Fashions and personas that are popular

Wisdom gives you insight into the underlying messages that are being constantly communicated.

1 John 2:15-17 (ESV)

¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

Learn to discern patterns in the world's thinking, and seek to live counter cultural lives.

2. Make every thought captive to Christ. (testing)

“that you may test and approve what God’s will is.”

2 Corinthians 10:5 (ESV)

We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

(guard your mind from garbage)

What you watch for amusement and entertainment has an effect in how you see the world.

Is this helpful, edifying, uplifting and encouraging to me to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

3. Never stop learning and expanding your knowledge and understanding.

Romans 11:33-36 (NIV)

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! ³⁴ "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" ³⁵ "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" ³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

Wonder & awe

4. Respect, but don't limit yourself to the wisdom of man.

1 Corinthians 1:20-25 (ESV)

²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we

preach to save those who believe. ²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

5. Know that the perfection that we long for is found only in Christ. (see through a mirror dimly)

1 Corinthians 13:9-13 (ESV)

⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. ¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. ¹³ So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

The imperfections of life are to be expected; but we were made to know and be in the presence of God.

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