

## Romans 12 (2) – Why the Word isn't Working

Romans 12:2 is a key text that can help you change your life. It can shape your spiritual vision and values. In other words, how you view your world, and how you determine what is worth it, what to do, and what not to do.

Imagine if you could see the world the way that God sees it, and understand the world the way God understands it. More than that, imagine if you could see you as God sees you, and understand you as God understands you. Imagine the influence that would have over you, and the way you live your life. Imagine the peace, and the joy it would bring to your experience. If you could live as God would have you live. Imagine becoming more like Jesus through all the ups and downs and all arounds of life.

Well, you don't have to just imagine. And you don't have to wait until heaven. You can have that as a reality. You can live out God's will for your life. Hear Romans 12:2 again. It says – *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.* This text is full of hope. It is full of possibility. It is full of power. It is full of promise.

Look at that word “transformed”. Another word for transformation is change. It is possible. For you. No matter what anyone else says. Even if you don't think so. Because God says so, and he invites you to test him on this. You can stop acting like you used to act. You can start acting like God wants you to act. You can stop your stinking thinking, and start thinking God's thoughts after him. You can prove to yourself and to your world that people can change. That you can change. Your experience can be the catalyst for others to experience the power of God for themselves. That's your witness.

Of course, the world will tell you that some people can never change. They will always be what they have always been. The world will say that once you are toxic, you are poison, and there is no antidote. The world says that certain people cannot be changed, they can only be managed. Maybe you

say that to yourself. But if you don't believe that people can change, then you don't have any hope for yourself, or for others. But God says otherwise. The word of God says you can be transformed.

This text is pointing to your need for the word of God in your life. The Bible is the means of renewing your mind, changing what you think, how you think, how you process life, and how you make decisions. A renewed mind leads to a renewed life.

The word of God is how you know the will of God. The word of God, empowered by the Spirit of God, this is what will give you the power to see as God sees, to live as God intends. You can experience change, and you can know that God can change others. The first step is by being born again, that is to say, to become a Christian in the first place. And then, your ongoing transformation, your ongoing change, is a matter of the ongoing renewal of your mind. Praise God for this precious text.

But there is an issue, right here in this text.

As the text clearly says, being transformed by the renewal of your mind is the way to avoid being conformed to the pattern of this world. And that is the issue. Transformation requires both positive and negative actions. In other words, you need to get the word of God working in your life, but part of that includes putting off those old patterns of life. Look at the text. *Do not be conformed...but be transformed.* This is putting off the world, and putting on the word. These things work together, in concert with each other. God is working in and through that process. But it means you must do both.

Here is how. Renewal is meant to be replacement. You're taking up your Bible, and this is what helps you let go of worldliness. And I'm not saying that you must do all Bible and no social media, all Bible and no social life, all Bible and no TV, all Bible and no texting, all Bible and nothing else. No, what you need is to make sure that the Bible is transforming the way that you think. Not just what you think, but how you think. The word of God should

be defining your values, shaping your vision. The Bible should be what informs, inspires, and influences your life the most. It should act as the filter by which you see everything else. The Bible is meant to help you truly know what to do, what not to do, and how much to do it, and the proper perspective and proportion in your experience.

If your intake of the word isn't affecting your intake of the world, you're missing something. If reading the word doesn't affect how you read life, how you see it, how you think about it, how you process it, how you approach it, then something is still not right. The word of God should affect how much you're taking in, and how you process what you're taking in. Of course, it isn't as if you can just read the Bible all day long and never interact with the world or worldly things. That's not what the Bible teaches. We are to be in the world but not of it. The issue is that God wants his word to be your main influence, the filter you see through and the focus you process through. It is for your own godly good. That is what this text in Romans is talking about.

Yes, we are supposed to participate in our communities, in society, in politics, and in most every sphere of life. But we are not to be polluted, contaminated, or corrupted by the world. You can be despised by the world without being defiled by the world. We are not to take ourselves out of this world. We are not monks, we are missionaries, ambassadors of King Jesus.

The Apostle Paul speaks elsewhere of putting off one thing and putting on another. And as you get more word into your life, you crowd out that old way of life. You learn to discern what God's will is, and your mind and your will are better equipped to want to do it. That's the way the word of God works. You put the good stuff in and it pushes the garbage out.

At least it's supposed to. But what about you, though? Do you feel as if the word isn't working for you? Is there a reason? Well, let me talk about one sure way that hinders the word of God in your life. There are others, but this is the big problem for most people.

The problem for most people is that they aren't letting the word get into every part of their lives. They compartmentalize their Christianity. Stay with me, this may not be what you think. In growing as a disciple of Jesus Christ, there will be other issues to address, but this issue must be addressed. You need to be immersed, marinated, saturated, in other words, fully engaged with the word of God. This is the only way that you will be renewed in your mind to such a degree that you are transformed in every area and arena of your practical life. Perhaps you've been dipped in it, maybe bathed a little in it, or even some parts of your life are full of the word of God. But again, you need to be immersed, marinated, saturated in the Scriptures. In other words, you need to be dunked in it, rolled around in it, and so well soaked that you are permeated with the word of God.

Now I'm getting at something here that may seem like you've heard it all before, but maybe you really haven't. I don't want to make you feel guilty, I want to show you how to grow. I want you to feel good, and hopeful, and confident that there is a clear path and definite plan for you to start getting the word to really have an effect in your life.

Sometimes people might not realize how little space they leave for the word in their lives. People are immersed in the culture, they marinate their minds with social media, and they are saturated with virtual reality, with politics, with any number of other things. That's what's having the most effect on them. That's what's shaping their goals and dreams. The word of God is crowded out, or placed in a "Sunday morning and maybe just every other week or so" space. That's the question you need to ask yourself. What is informing, inspiring, and influencing my life the most?

You might think you've got to have your alone time, your family time, or whatever. I'm not trying to begrudge you that. And I'll talk about your time in a moment. The point is that instead of the word saturating every part of your life, it is compartmentalized for when you think you need it. It is as if you expect that since the word of God is divine that it will replace your discipline. It will not.

Romans 12:2 comes on the heels of Romans 12:1, which says – *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.* When you put Romans 12:1-2 together, it tells you that you need to sacrifice some of those things you might like to do for the most important thing you need to do. There is your answer. You have to give up some things, sacrifice them, to make time, in order to get the word working in your life so you won't be fit into the pattern of this world and you'll be able to live out the will of God in your experience.

Now, speaking of experience, sometimes we look for emotional or transformational encounters outside the word of God rather than saturating ourselves with the word of God. We want a transformational moment but we don't want the transformational process. But we mean well. So, we hear a message like this, and we are convicted about it. But then we think it just means we need to spend more time in our Bibles. As if it is just one more item to add to your "to do" list. And when you try and do that, you wear yourself out, and then you reason that you just don't have enough time. And here we are, to the clarifying message I want to give to you from this text.

You don't need more time; you need to better use your time. To replace your time. To make time. You see, I'm not saying that you just need to add more and more Bible to your routine. I'm saying that you need to change your routine. I don't want you to wear yourself out. I want you to wise yourself up. Replace time in the world with time in the word. That will always work.

You can fool me, but you can't fool God, and please, don't fool yourself. You don't get to shortcut the process of transformation. And you don't get to the place of change without continuing to change. Transformation isn't a matter of memorizing Bible verses to use when you need a little extra help. Yes, you should memorize Bible verses. But transformation is about being changed, not just using the tools of change.

A lot of people can know a lot of Bible but still have only a little of the word working in their life. They treat God's word like a college course that they just need to get through in order to graduate. But the word of God working in your life is a lifetime journey. It's not something you graduate from. It's something you must keep pouring yourself into.

It takes time for the fruit of God's word to blossom and ripen in your life. Satan tries to steal it. Trouble tries to stop it. Desires try to suffocate it. But God's word will grow if you keep at it. God's word is seed. If you take care of your garden, it will grow on its own. But if you fail to take care of your garden, it will stop growing, and everything will wither and die. Maybe God's word isn't working because you're neglecting that growth instead of nurturing that growth.

This is where faith comes in. Romans 15:13 says that there is joy and peace in believing. Are you really believing what God has said? God's not asking you to be perfect, he's asking you to believe in Jesus, who is perfect. Are you lacking in the assurance of your salvation? 1 John 3:20 says *whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything*. What God says about you is true. What God says is more important, more valuable and truer than what the world or what your feelings say about you. If you have confessed your sins to God in faith, trusting Jesus Christ as your sin-bearing savior, then he has forgiven you. You are forgiven whether you feel like it or not. If you are desperate for change, the change you need is a change in you. And God's word can give you that change. It will tell you what's wrong, and how make things right. It will help you see the world the way that God sees it, and understand the world the way God understands it. And it will help you see you as God sees you, and understand you as God understands you.

Make a commitment to make the word of God the one thing that informs, inspires, and influences your life the most.

Turn to God, and turn some pages, and turn your life around.