

GROWTH EXPECTED

“How to Get God’s Best For Your Life.”
Romans 12:2; Daniel 1

OPENING DISCUSSION: The easiest way to care for your body is to eat what tastes good until you’re not hungry and to treat your body to rest and recreation. It takes purpose and planning to care for your body through a careful diet and regular exercise. This week we are going to talk about the path of least resistance compared to God’s path for growth. **What is an example of an area of growth that you need in your life that requires that you daily choose to go a different direction than the easy route?**

READ: ROMANS 12:2 (NLT)

Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

What are the things that a Christ follower must purpose and plan to address for growth in this verse? *The behavior and customs of this world.*

What is an example of a behavior or practice of the world that you carry with you into your life today?

READ: Romans 12:2 in *The Message* paraphrase

Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

How do we naturally adopt the behavior and customs of our culture without really thinking about it during the Christmas season?

The world *will* conform you to its pattern of thinking and acting if you don’t purposefully choose God’s direction for your life. Growth isn’t natural, it won’t just happen by you being a Christian or even hanging around other Christians.

READ 1 JOHN 2:15-16 (NLT)

Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. ¹⁶ For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world.

Vern defined three cultural patterns that we must beware of from this passage:

- 1) *Craving for physical pleasure* – The passion to feel (SEX)
- 2) *Craving for everything we see* – The passion to have (SALARY)
- 3) *Pride in our achievements and possessions* – The passion to be (STATUS)

What are some examples of how we indulge our bodies in unhealthy ways?

Poor diet, bad sleeping habits, neglecting physical exercise, neglecting a day off, substance abuse, sexual abuse....

What are some examples of how we pursue extravagant lifestyle to the neglect of a deeper inner life?

More & Bigger toys, Work harder to earn more money, get into deep debt for nicer possessions thinking they will make us happy.

What is an example of how we pursue our pride rather than God's glory? *Guarding our reputation, making our vocation the measure of our identity, pride in our kids' achievements....*

THE CURE FOR CULTURAL CONFORMITY

READ: ROMANS 12:2 (NIV)

Do not conform any longer 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.

If we are conformed to the pattern of the world by just living in the world, how does this verse say we will be transformed into God's pattern?

Give your group time to find this in the verse themselves....*By the renewing of your mind.*

What are some ways that we can transform our minds with God's word? *e.g. Regular intake of God's Word, Christian Radio, Christian websites & study sites, Christian books, positive information rather than negative.*

Vern explained that Romans 2 instructs us to stop the flow of toxins into our minds by choosing carefully what you put into your mind.

READ: Philippians 4:8-9 (NLT)

And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.

How can you apply this verse to your growth this week?