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The 3 Lies

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“The 3 Lies”

Marilyn Krichko | Romans 12:1-2

“Don’t be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God’s will is—what is good and pleasing and mature”. Today’s sermon is about transformation. So, let’s start by breaking it down with a few definitions.

What does it mean to conform? **To conform means to act the way others want you to act. You take on, mimic or imitate someone else’s appearance, beliefs or actions. It’s external.** When I think of conform, I remember what my mom used to say before we went swimming in the summer. She would say, if your friends decide they want to jump off that bridge today, it doesn’t mean you have to. My mom was wise and over the years, I learned she was talking more about life than swimming as she gave me that warning when I walked out the door.

As believers, Romans 12 instructs us to not adopt the values and behaviors of secular society, but instead renew our minds so that we can be transformed, know the will of God and live that.

“Transform” comes from a Greek verb derived from "**metamorphosis.**" Meaning to change form or shape. **To transform is to take on a completely different form or appearance. It is something that happens on the inside first and then shows on the outside by your appearance or behavior.** What comes to mind when I think of metamorphosis is the life of a monarch butterfly, which starts as an egg, turns into a caterpillar, then forms a chrysalis and finally it emerges as a beautiful butterfly.



Transformation means to undergo a profound and significant change in form, nature, or character. It conveys the idea of radical internal and external change, particularly in the context of spiritual or personal growth. **In Bible.org it says “this process involves the transformation of the whole person in thoughts, behaviors, and styles of relating to God and others. It results in a life of service to others and witness for Christ”.**

So, how do we do that? As Christians, how are we transformed?

Romans 12 makes it very clear that to be transformed we have to renew our minds. To make them new again. There is a lot to pull apart in this little verse of Romans 12:2.

I picked Romans 12 because I have struggled with parts of this verse for a good part of my own life. I get that if you want to really change something, if you want something spectacular to happen in your life, it takes hard work and dedication. I know that. But, then there's the part about being able to figure out what God's will is—what is good and pleasing and mature. That's where it gets a little scary for me. Because that brings accountability into the picture.

Well...the book of Roman's could not have been written by a better person than Paul because Paul experienced a profound transformation himself. In the book of Acts it says that Paul, was on his way to Damascus to arrest Christians when he had a miraculous encounter with Jesus that left him blind. During the encounter **Saul realized that he was talking to the risen Jesus Christ Himself.** His companions took him to Damascus where he was visited by a Christian named Ananias, who laid his hands on him and prayed for his sight to be restored. So, Saul's sight was restored (scales fell from his eyes), he was converted, baptized and transformed. Was it all in a matter of seconds, minutes or even hours? NO! After he was converted he began preaching the good news, But he was not transformed overnight. In Romans 7:15-20 he wrote "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do... Saul was human. He was on a transformation journey. For most of us, transformation is more like a process of healing than being suddenly cured and I was happy when **Megan** preached about that, because it gave me a clearer understanding of the difference.

Sometimes, we may not even know we need to transform. That was my case. Several years ago, after working for a church in Sweden, then leaving Sweden to finish my MBA and coming out as a gay woman, I experienced some hurt in my life by people in the church who did not respond with love and kindness. **Overtime, my relationship with God broke down and I felt very alone.** One day while I was taking a walk, I cried out to God, saying please help me. I just felt so terribly alone. At once, I felt the presence of God as it poured over me and I heard God say in my heart, “come out.” “What?” I asked. I have “come out” and that really did not work for me. “Come out,” he said. “You are dead, and you don’t even know you are dead. Come out of that dead place in your heart, and I will heal you.” That was such a powerful moment when the presence of God fell on me that day. I will never forget how it felt. It was my own Lazarus moment where God pulled me out of the grave my heart was in. **But it was difficult, because I still felt alone. I was raised from the dead, but not transformed and I definitely didn’t know what’s God will was for my life at that time.**

Something I have learned is that **Transformational change is something that does not happen to us, it happens within us.** And with that comes the responsibility to know the perfect will of God and live it.

That day, when Saul fell to his knees, he had plans. Plans to persecute and arrest followers of Jesus. But **God had other plans for him.** When Ananias prayed for him, he also **informed Saul that God had chosen him as an instrument to carry His message to the Gentiles.** It was one thing for Saul to be converted and another for him to live God’s plan for his life. **God’s plans are often bigger than our plans. And they don’t always involve just us.**

When it comes to living God’s plan, I have often struggled with three lies.

1. The first lie is "Someone else will do it". I have a full-time job. I’m busy at work and at home and I am a rower. It’s easy for me to say we have hired people at our church to do these things. When I was younger, my rowing coach Frank Cunningham, said to me “too bad for you Marilyn that God made you a rower”. I didn’t know for years what that meant, or why he said it. But recently I have started to understand the importance of it. Being in a rowing boat with another person literally puts you in the same boat together. There is no escaping it. Everything you do and everything you don’t do impacts the other person.

I've been rowing a lot this year in a double rowing shell at 6 am in the morning. 6 am is a special time to be out on the water. The sun is just starting to come up, it's quiet. It's been a hard year with illness in my family and my best friend from college passed away. She was the first one on our college tennis team to leave this world and the first friend I prayed with to become a Christian. So, I prayed that God would find me the right rowing partner this summer. As it has worked out, I now row about 3-4 times a week, with a man who rowed in college, who has also been a pastor for about the last 35 years. God does answer our prayers and it's not a coincidence that my rowing doubles partner is a man of faith.

Experiencing how he stepped up this summer to row with me, despite all the things he has going on in his life, has caused me to think about the importance of my own impact. When we are in the boat, I can't think "David" will do it. He will pull hard; he will keep the boat stable when the water of Lake Mendota is swirling all around us and wakes are hitting our boat. We have mornings like that, where I am tired, he is tired, and I wonder if we should even go out there. And I can't think "David will do it". No, it's a joint effort. We need each other, we have to work together. Because most days the water is not perfect. For it to work, we have to focus more on working together than anything else. We each have to do our part, because one person alone can't get us across the lake.

That was the same message Paul delivered to the Romans. At the time he wrote Romans, there were Jewish and Gentile believers who faced periods of persecution. They were in disagreement about adherence to Jewish laws and customs. There were theological issues. The entire book of Romans is full of lessons. Basically, Paul told the Jews and the Gentiles that they were all in the same boat, and they ALL needed to transform through the renewing of their minds. To believe the lie that someone else would do it, would not have worked.

Earlier this year, when I heard about the preaching class, I thought, that's for someone else, not me. But the more I prayed, the more I was open to the idea of taking the class and the desire grew in my heart. Through the support of the church, a group of us took the class together, we encouraged each other, and we all completed the class and now it's my turn to deliver "Good News from the Pews".

2. The second lie is "If I do something, it won't matter". This lie contradicts the idea of transformation in Romans 12, which emphasizes that renewing our minds does matter. Believing that our personal efforts won't make a difference,

leads to complacency and hinders the growth and renewal that God desires for each of us.

When I am in the boat with David, there are times I feel like I don't make a difference, that I am just hanging on. But it's not true. We make each other better; we make each other stronger. It's funny, when we get through the rough water and then stop and talk about what we just did, especially when it's really tough, we tell each other that because you kept going, I was able to keep going too. We let each other know that our efforts matter. We encourage each other.

And we need to encourage each other. **Melissa** talked about the church that encourages each other and how important it is. **You have all been given wonderful gifts and I encourage you to pray and ask God what you should do with your gifts.** They are not just for you; they are for the glory of God. In Matthew 5:14 Jesus said "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." You see, God has amazing things for you to do. Things that can change the world. Like **Brenda** said, **people are not who you think they are. You are not who the world would like you to think you are.** The world tells us, we are not enough. Not smart enough, not beautiful enough, strong enough or rich enough. We just aren't enough. What we do does not matter. **But you are so much better than that.** You are a gift from God. Don't let someone else drive your behavior, get you to conform or tell you your actions won't matter. Instead, spend time with God. If you want to know what God wants you to do with your gifts, ask God. God will answer.

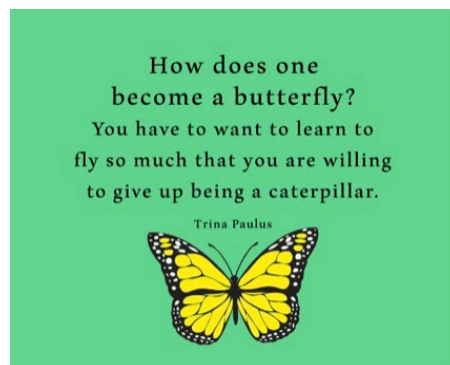
God is working in my life as I mentor people at work, giving them advice and helping them navigate the waters of a changing international company. This year I became the Chair of our RISE committee and am now serving on our DEI Council. Both have challenged me in many ways, and with God's help, I am doing my best to make a difference.

3. The third lie is "If I ignore it, it will go away". You heard **Carrie** preach about being born for this time. Friends, you were born for this time. You have the gifts and skills needed to meet the challenges for this day. The lie that if you ignore it, it will go away hinders transformation by promoting avoidance instead of intentional engagement. The world is a broken place. You see the things you

see; you feel the pain you feel and you also feel the love and compassion you feel for a reason.

Like with rowing, the water of life will be rough at times, It might not be easy. But, despite how hard it gets, you will be filled with Joy because you got in the boat in the first place and trusted God. You did not ignore what God wanted you to do. You will be filled with Joy because you will know you are living the will of God.

To be transformed we need to open our eyes and not ignore what is around us, **we need to be willing to let go of who we are today and become who God wants us to.**



Romans 3-21 says we all have been given different gifts. In the Presbyterian Ruling Elder, Essential Guide, Paul S. Write explains that “We must face boldly the challenges of worldliness and not let ourselves live a worldly life of comfort under the illusion that we are still Christian”. **For me the worldly life of comfort would be to let the preacher preach, and assume my gifts are not needed. But, since God has given me an abundance of hope, positivity and energy I hope to use my gifts to inspire you to use the gifts God has given you.**

So, how do we renew our minds? How do you renew your mind? I think it might be different for different people. I personally like going outside, rowing, spending time in nature, praying, reading my bible, unplugging from the world. This journey has brought me here today.

Who would think that 10 years ago, I didn't want to go to church any longer. 7 years ago, we moved to Madison from Seattle. The Mid-west was the one place I said I would never live again because I grew up in it. I grew up in a small farm town with bad winters. And here I am. Not only are we here, we love it here and have no plans to

leave. This year, I became an Elder, I took the preaching class, and I am honored to stand here and encourage you to renew your minds like I have been renewing mine.

Do not conform to this world, but renew your mind. Paul gave this same message to the Romans because to know God's perfect will for them, they needed to renew their minds. They also needed to change their perspectives about each other, their traditions, their theology and the way they lived. They were in the same boat, but they were not rowing the best they could. Are we? Are we doing the best we can? Are there behaviors we need to change? Is God tugging on your heart to step up and help, to stop and listen, to take some action?

Why did God make me a rower? Well, I'm starting to believe that rowing helps me experience working with other people in all kinds of situations. God doesn't intend for us to be alone and I learn a lot of life lessons in the boat. Somedays, we talk about everything and others we don't talk at all. I feel my mind being renewed as I ponder different scriptures and pray for God's direction in my life. It's given me a fresh perspective. Especially about the church. It was the church who left me, and it is the church who has helped me transform. **Over the past several years, this church and the people in it have helped change my life and I am grateful for that.** I ponder these types of things while we battle with Lake Mendota.

Doug talked about the person who sells all he has to buy the field where the treasure is hidden. When I think of that field, I see all of you. You are the treasure of God. God paid a big price for us. He gave us everything he had so that we could access his kingdom. We are his beloved children, his treasure and he wants nothing more than for us to renew our minds so that we can know his good and perfect will and live it. God's response to spending time with him, is that he changes us, gives us new life, new perspective, eyes to see, ears to hear and hands to do his work, so that we can, in turn, make a difference in this world.

If you want to be transformed, go to God with an open heart. Don't ask God to change something, ask God to renew your mind, to help you see things clearly and to change you. He will do it and when you look at the journey you have been on, you will think, just like I have, what a wonderful journey it is. Not always easy, but wonderful.

Please pray with me:

Heavenly Father thank you for your word, your love, your patience and for each other. We are all in this boat of life together. Thank you for renewing our minds, so that we can be transformed and be more like you. So that we can help those in need and make a difference in this world we live in.