



# Reframe and Restore

June 24-July 1, 2023

## **MAIN POINT**

God transforms us through the renewal of our minds.

## **INTRODUCTION**

What image immediately comes to mind when you hear the word “transformation”? Why?

Come up with a working definition of the word “transformation.”

The gospel is not only the message that tells us how we can be saved, but it is also a message with ongoing power to change our hearts. When we trust in Christ as Savior, an ongoing process of transformation begins. God desires to transform us by renewing our minds, and He uses the power of the Holy Spirit and the study and application of God’s Word to do so.

## **UNDERSTANDING**

### **READ [ROMANS 12:1-2](#).**

Paul encouraged his readers to offer themselves as living sacrifices to God.

What does it look like practically to do this? How is doing so an act of worship?

Paul pleaded to his fellow believers to give their bodies to God. The reason that Paul gave for this action was that God had done so much for them. Their response should be giving their daily lives to serving Him in all they do.

Why is it easy to conform to the behavior of the world?

In what areas of your life might you be doing so?

Did Paul think that people can transform on their own? Why or why not?

What are some of the ways God renews our minds?

What are some of the obstacles that stand in the way of your daily transformation?

How did Paul describe God’s will for us?

Does His will always seem good, pleasing, and perfect?

What evidence can people see that God has transformed you?

Why is it important for Christians to stand out from the rest of the world?

Paul wanted the Roman believers to be transformed by God, which happens when we allow God to renew our minds through His Word and the influence of the Holy Spirit. God’s will is that we would become new people who daily sacrifice our lives to follow His will. God’s will is good and pleasing and perfect. Many times it does not feel that way, but in the end God wants what is best for us, even if we don’t see it at the time. Living transformed comes from God and His changing of our minds and hearts from the old self into a new being who gives everything for Him. Paul goes on to describe this transformational work of God in [2](#)

## [Corinthians 3.](#)

### **READ [2 CORINTHIANS 3:14-18.](#)**

**When you came to saving faith in Christ, did it in any way seem as if this veil had been lifted?**

**What is the only way the veil can be removed? What happens when the veil is removed?**

As Moses' veil kept the Israelites from seeing his face clearly, we all have veils obscuring our vision of God's glory before we turned to Christ. When we turned to Christ, the veil was removed (v. 16). Our vision of God's glory in Christ is now clear—this is the result of the Spirit's work in us.

**Based on these verses, what can we conclude is the goal of our Christian walk?**

**Into what are we being transformed? Is this process ever painful or challenging? How long does this process of transformation take?**

**How do you know if this work is happening inside you?**

As disciples of Jesus we are constantly, daily, being transformed into His image. God is always at work to conform us "to the image of his Son" ([Romans 8:28-29](#)) and this is a process that will continue until Christ returns or we go to be with Him. While God is at work transforming us, we also have our role in the process, the role of active faith. We believe and trust in the gospel message. We gaze upon the Lord's glory through the disciplines of prayer, Bible study, and worship. We cooperate with the Spirit's work to produce God-pleasing character in us.

### **APPLICATION**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**One of the most common excuses for not devoting ourselves to that which would promote spiritual transformation is that we don't have time.**

**How might your priorities need to change to give God the room to renew your mind?**

**From what do you need to renew your mind? How will you partner with the Holy Spirit this week to take on the character of Christ, from your mind to your heart and hands?**

**Sometimes even good things can distract us from focusing on God. What good things in your life are most likely to distract you from beholding God's glory?**

**How might your relationship with those things need to change?**

**With everything in the Christian life, the goal of spiritual transformation is that we become people who glorify God and make His name known. How could you use a new truth God has taught you to make His name known?**

### **PRAYER**

Close your group time in prayer together. Thank God for the active role He plays in transforming you through the renewal of your mind.

## **COMMENTARY**

### **ROMANS 12:1-2**

**12:1.** Paul urged all believers to present themselves as a “living sacrifice.” Such language must have clashed immediately in the minds of many. The common understanding was that only the first and best animals were fit to be offered as sacrifices. The sacrifice Paul had in mind was radically different. Jesus had given Himself as the once-and-for-all Sacrifice for sin on the cross. Believers thus were to live in light of Jesus’ all-sufficient sacrifice, bringing glory to God. The idea of Christians’ presenting their “bodies” as a living sacrifice harked back to the discussion of the body being dead to sin because of the life-giving presence of the Spirit (see [8:10](#)). To live by the Spirit is to offer oneself completely and daily as a “holy and pleasing sacrifice.”

Paul further explained that living as a holy, pleasing sacrifice was a believer’s “spiritual worship.” The word rendered spiritual also can be understood as meaning logical or reasonable. The Greek word translated worship often was used to refer to carrying out religious duties or services. Thus Paul taught that in light of God’s gracious redemption (by the mercies of God), living as a sacrifice was the logical and pleasing way for Christians to serve God.

**12:2.** As Christians, we’re also to please God with our minds. The temptation is to go along with the dominant attitudes of the “age,” to adopt the prevailing cultural worldview characterized by self-worship (sin). The apostle urged his readers to reject worldliness and “to be transformed by the renewing of the mind.”

The phrase be transformed in the Greek is a present passive imperative form. This form suggests three important truths. First, the present tense describes a continuing action. Transformation of our thinking and attitudes is an ongoing, lifelong endeavor. Second, the passive voice indicates that the indwelling Spirit is the Source of our transformation. We can’t transform ourselves but rather must be transformed. Third, however, is the truth suggested by the imperative that we must consciously place ourselves at the Spirit’s disposal for transformation to happen. The Spirit will not transform us against our will.

The result of having our minds renewed by the Spirit is to grow in our ability “to discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.” The word translated “discern” literally means to prove by testing. Christian living is not about emptying the mind—as some religions claim—but rather about thinking intelligently and logically in accordance with God’s ways. God wants His people to know what pleases Him because by living according to His ways we will experience the most abundant life possible (see [John 10:10](#)).

### **2 CORINTHIANS 3:14-18**

**3:14-15.** Paul stated metaphorically that the same veil remained when the old covenant was read. When Jews in Paul’s day read from the Torah, they saw glimpses of God’s glory, but no more than glimpses. Only in Christ is the veil that obscured the glory of God on Moses’ face taken away. Christ is the revelation of the glory of God in a much greater way than Moses ever was. Yet, because unbelieving Jews in Paul’s day rejected Christ, when Moses was read, a veil covered their hearts. They saw only a small bit of God’s glory because the veil over their hearts also made their minds ... dull, hiding the full truth from them.

**3:16.** By contrast, whenever anyone turns to the Lord in repentance and faith, his or her condition changes. Paul alluded to [Exodus 34:34](#) which spoke of Moses removing his veil, but he shifted the language toward Christ. Those in Christ see the glory clearly because the veil

that dulls their minds is taken away. Christians possess renewed hearts and minds, enabling them to see the revelation of God more fully than those under the old covenant had seen it. Many things still remain hidden (see [Romans 11:33-34](#)), but compared to its visibility under the old covenant, the glory of God is now highly visible in Christ.

**3:17.** Continuing to draw attention to the change that had taken place in Christ, Paul stated, Now the Lord is the Spirit. This sentence is difficult to interpret because it appears to assert an identity between Christ and the Holy Spirit. Such an identification would contradict the doctrine of the Trinity which states that God is one substance, but three Persons. The Persons of the Trinity are not identical to one another. The context indicates that Paul used the term Lord here and in 3:16 to refer to Christ and that he spoke figuratively about the relationship between Christ and the Holy Spirit. He did not intend to describe an identity between Christ and the Holy Spirit. As the immediate context makes clear, Paul did not always speak literally. In the preceding three verses, he had described the related realities of Moses' veil and contemporary Jewish dullness by identifying one with the other. Thus, it is likely that when he identified Christ with the Spirit, he used a figure of speech (see [Philippians 1:21](#)).

He really meant something like “the Lord is the one who sent the Spirit” or “the Spirit is of the Lord.” This is evident from 3:17b, which refers to the Spirit of the Lord. This second half of the verse assumes that the first half does not equate the Lord with the Spirit, but asserts a close connection between them. Paul had already drawn this connection between Christ and the Spirit a number of times in this context.

Paul explained how those who turned to Christ had the veil removed by declaring that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. Paul had not yet touched on the theme of freedom in this context, but elsewhere in his epistles this idea is clear enough. Those who seek salvation through obedience to the Law of Moses (as many Jews did in Paul's day) are in bondage to the law and death (see [Romans 6:6-22](#); [Galatians 2:4](#); [Hebrews 2:15](#)). Those in Christ, however, are free from the dominion of sin and death (see [Romans 7:6](#)). In Christ, believers are set free from sin's guilt and influence. Believers are no longer slaves to sin, incapable of resisting its influence over their behavior. Instead, they become free to withstand sin and to do good instead of evil. Freedom stood as one of those words that Paul used to summarize the experience of salvation in Christ.

Paul did not mean that believers were free from all obligation to obey God. Rather, for Paul freedom in Christ was only freedom from sin—it was not also freedom from righteousness. In fact, freedom from sin was slavery to righteousness. Only this slavery to righteousness enabled a person to serve “in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code” ([Romans 7:6](#)). It is easier to understand Paul's perspective and vocabulary when one considers that he probably drew the image of freedom not from slaves and freemen in the Roman empire, but from Israel's freedom from their slavery in Egypt. Thus, he did not contrast slavery to another's control with freedom to be autonomous. Instead, he contrasted slavery to a sinful power that prevented proper worship with the freedom to be ruled by God—to obey Him and to worship Him.

**3:18.** Paul closed this section with a description of the new life of freedom that all believers enjoy in Christ. He declared that we ... with unveiled faces all contemplate the Lord's glory. By “we” Paul identified himself and those who ministered the new covenant with him, just as Moses ministered the old covenant. Of course, the same is also true for every minister of the new covenant. Ministers of the gospel of Christ all reflect the Lord's glory. By this Paul did not detract from his statement that all believers (not just ministers) have the veils removed from

their hearts. He simply returned to his main issue: defending his own ministry and actions.

With the phrase “contemplate the Lord’s glory,” the NIV translation becomes problematic. This phrase may also be translated as “beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord” (NASB). Both translations fit because they conform to the analogy set up between Moses and the ministers of the new covenant. Moses both beheld and contemplated the glory of God. Like Moses, the ministers of Christ are being transformed into His likeness as they are sanctified by the Spirit of God. But the transformation that takes place in followers of Christ has ever-increasing glory, unlike Moses’ fading glory. This expanding glory comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.