New Roots Review

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NEW ROOTS MINISTRY

Subtly Conformed OR Consciously Transformed

by Fred Wilgenburg

Lately, the following Bible passage has challenged me:

"Do not conform 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" Romans 12:2.

Conforming to the pattern of the world can be so subtle. I could share several examples in my own life—TV viewing, how often I attend worship services, and how often my family and I have devotions. I will just highlight my TV viewing here: I laugh along with millions of others, including my fellow Christians, as we watch TV shows like *Modern Family* and *Big Bang Theory*, to name a couple. I admit, they are funny. *The Bachelor* is on in my house. Worse, occasionally *Bachelor in Paradise* is playing. Hey, they're primetime shows so they can't be worse than PG-13, right? Maybe by today's standards. It is quite subtle in that thirty years ago, I would not have watched these shows—the lifestyles promoted are misaligned with God's Word, and my mom would have turned off the TV. Awww, what harm is there in a few light-hearted laughs? And, you can watch these shows to learn how not to have relationships. That's exactly what the producers want us to figure as they make money through our viewing, especially as we subtly become okay with it, that is, with what is contrary to God's Word.

We were blessed by several service groups this past summer. They worked in immigrant & refugee-owned stores. Fun and learning were enjoyed by all!

Laughs worth having if they reduce stress? Not if they take away from my all-important relationships with God my Savior, and with my loved ones. And yes, they do take away, according to Romans 12:2; as I become more conformed "to the pattern of this world," and less "transformed by the renewing of (my) mind," "THEN" I am less "able to test and approve what God's will is." That's a scary thought!

I won't take much space here to describe my other "conformities"—worship attendance, frequency of personal devotions—and how they can negatively affect my recognition of God's will. I touch on those, assuming that for many of you readers who are 55 years or younger, like me, your worship attendance and daily devotions occur less often than your folk's. If you have adult children, is their worship attendance now less frequent than yours? How about for your grandchildren, if you have some?

Hey, all is good in God.....if we don't stay sucked into conforming, but we make a shift into being transformed. The apostle Paul relates to this in Romans 7 as he discussed a "waging war (within)," which ***(—>)***

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Fred Wilgenburg
Director & Pastor
225 E 11th St Suite 203
Sioux Falls, SD 57104
phone: (605) 376-6330
sfnewroots@gmail.com
www.sfnewroots.com

connect with us on facebook

Facebook.com/SFNewRoots

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made him "a prisoner of the law of sin at work within (him). Who will rescue me…? Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Indeed, Jesus rescues us as we consciously surrender to God's transforming of us.

Is this a challenge just for we Americans who were born and raised in this country? No, my immigrant and refugee friends tell me it is also a challenge for them and their churches. And, they acknowledge that the challenge gets stronger for their next generations. In some cases, it has been tougher for them as they have had to deal with so many changes, including cultural. For example, in many of their native countries, it was common to practice corporal (physical) punishment, even beyond spanking, in disciplining their children. In the US, some of them have sought to apply corporal punishment on their children, only to be threatened with being charged for child abuse. (Some have even been arrested.) Children have caught on to their parents' newfound confusion about how to discipline, at times holding it over their parents in various ways. Another example—some African refugees who dealt with terrible conditions before coming to the US as refugees, have fallen to substance abuse and addictions in dealing with bad memories. In some cases, this has led to a downward spiral of conforming to homelessness and street life that they had not traditionally found themselves in. Therefore, those who were once relatively healthy as Christians in Africa, now struggle with a lack of sensing God's will for their lives (Romans 12:2).

Sometimes we're asked, "what is New Roots Ministry? It's **"a springboard for immigrants & their churches."** That is done through **workplace chaplaincy**, **Timothy Leadership Training**, **special educational seminars**, **empowering immigrant pastors and other Christian leaders**, and through co-leading of **All Nations City Church**. *Stay-tuned next time as we explain how we're expanding workplace chaplaincy….*

These pictures are from All Nations City Church's recent annual picnic—celebrating diversity & unity in Jesus!!

Again, all is good in our gracious, sheltering, Rock of all Ages, who has designed every person in His very image and likeness—in part, able to recognize His "perfect will." God is good, isn't He!?

Join us at our seminar—"Policies, Statuses, and Lives of Immigrants & Refugees."

Learn from experts about immigration. Hear from refugees and immigrants.

- **Date: & time: Saturday, October 21; 10AM—2:15PM; Place: Sioux Falls Ministry Center (225 E. 11th St., Sioux Falls, SD) Features: Be inspired, enjoy an ethnic meal; NO COST, but free-will gifts can be given. RSVP (let us know) by October 16 if you plan to attend by texting or calling 605-376-6330.**