

Changing or Being Changed

Sunday, July 11, 2021

KEY TEXT:

Romans 12:2 (ESV)

2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...

Are we **CHANGING** (conforming more and more to the things of this world) or **are we BEING CHANGED** by the power of God?

God's word warns us not to conform to this world

Exodus 22:31; 23:2

31 “You are to be my holy people.

2 “Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong.

2 Corinthians 6:14-17

14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? **15** What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? **16** What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.” **17** Therefore “Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

Leviticus 11:45

45 I am the Lord, who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.

1 Peter 1:14-16

14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. **15** But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; **16** for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”

We said that rather than **CHANGING** (conforming) to be like the world, we want to **BE CHANGED** (transformed by the power of God).

1 Samuel 10:6

6 The Spirit of the Lord will come powerfully upon you...**and you will be changed into a different person.**

Last week we looked at 4 different people who were changed by the power of God

- **CHANGED LIFE - MARY MAGDALENE**
- **CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCES - A DEMON POSSESSED BOY AND HIS FATHER**
- **CHANGED FUTURE - THE DEMONIAK OF GADARA**
- **CHANGED DESTINY - LAZARUS**

We ended by asking... *"What changes does Jesus need to make in you today?"*

Today we will ask 4 questions to help us evaluate whether our lives are changing to conform to this world or being changed (transformed) by the power of God

Is Your DIRECTION Being Changed?

Scripture compares us to sheep and often refers to us by that name.

Sheep have a strong instinct to follow the sheep in front of them. When one sheep decides to go somewhere, the rest of the flock usually follows, even if it is not a good "decision." For example, sheep will follow each other to slaughter. If one sheep jumps over a cliff, the others are likely to follow. Even from birth, lambs are conditioned to follow the older members of the flock. This instinct is "hard-wired" into sheep. It's not something they "think" about. From <<http://www.sheep101.info/flocking.html>>

In 2006, a large combined flock in Turkey accidentally committed mass suicide. The 26 village families had brought all their sheep together to feed. When every ewe, ram and lamb was grazing contentedly on grass, the shepherds relaxed and began making breakfast.

Suddenly, one sheep went off a cliff.

To the shepherds' horror, every other sheep blindly followed, plunging off the cliff at the same spot. About 450 animals died and many more were injured. Many families lost most of their flock, the main source of their income. From <<https://www.thefaithfulwanderer.org/journeying-on-the-good-shepherd-and-the-straying-sheep>>

People are no different. So many times we blindly conform to the direction of the world regardless of where they may be going.

To illustrate, watch this old clip from Candid Camera

VIDEO: Blindly following

What direction are you going and why?

When I think about changing direction, the story of Jonah comes to mind

Jonah was asked by God to go to Nineveh. But Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh because he hated the people there and didn't want God to forgive them. He conformed to the direction of the world that says some people don't deserve to be forgiven.

The scriptures talk about his direction with the following terms

Jonah 1

1 The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: **2** “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.”

3 **But Jonah ran away from the Lord** and headed for Tarshish. **He went down to Joppa**, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord.

4 Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. **5** All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship.

But Jonah had gone (down) below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. **6** The captain went to him and said, “How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish.”

7 Then the sailors said to each other, “Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity.” They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. **8** So they asked him, “Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?”

9 He answered, “I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”

10 This terrified them and they asked, “What have you done?” (**They knew he was running away from the Lord, because he had already told them so.**)

Jonah's Prayer

17 Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Jonah was headed in the wrong direction... But then he cried out to God and confessed his sin and God miraculously changed his direction.

Jonah 2

2 **1**From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. **2** He said:

“In my distress I called to the Lord,

and he answered me.

From deep in the realm of the dead **I called for help,**

and you listened to my cry.

3 You hurled me into the depths,

into the very heart of the seas,

and the currents swirled about me;

all your waves and breakers

swept over me.

4 I said, ‘I have been banished

from your sight;

yet **I will look again**

toward your holy temple.’

5 The engulfing waters threatened me,

the deep surrounded me;

seaweed was wrapped around my head.

6 To the roots of the mountains I sank down;

the earth beneath barred me in forever.

But you, Lord my God,

brought my life up from the pit.

7 “When my life was ebbing away,

I remembered you, Lord,

and my prayer rose to you,

to your holy temple.

8 **“Those who cling to worthless idols**

turn away from God’s love for them.

9 But I, with shouts of grateful praise,

will sacrifice to you.

What I have vowed I will make good.

I will say, ‘Salvation comes from the Lord.’”

10 And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

My point is we can, like sheep, conform to the direction of the world or we can let God transform us and change the direction we are going. That's exactly what Paul told the believers at Corinth

1 Corinthians 6:9-20

9 Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men **10** nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. **11 And that is what some of you were.** (*You were going in the wrong direction*) But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Sexual Immorality

12 “I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but I will not be mastered by anything. **13** You say, “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.” The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. **14** By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, **and he will raise us also.** **15** Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! **16** Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” **17** But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. **19** Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; **20** you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

What direction are you going today?

Is Your WALK Being Changed?

God can miraculously change our direction, but if we are not careful, we will try to walk in that new direction in the old way. Not only does our direction need changed but also the way in which we walk.

Ephesians 4:17-24

17 So I tell you this, and **insist on it in the Lord**, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. **18** They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. **19** Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

20 That, however, is not the way of life you learned **21** when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. **22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new** in the attitude of your minds; **24 and to put on the new self**, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Of course, Jacob provides us a great example of our walk being changed

Genesis 32:24-32

24 So Jacob was left alone, and **a man wrestled** (*this new walk doesn't always come easy*) with him till daybreak. **25** When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip **so that his hip was wrenched** (*changed*) as he wrestled with the man. **26** Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."

But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

27 The man asked him, "What is your name?"

"Jacob," he answered.

28 Then the man said, "**Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel**, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome."

29 Jacob said, "Please tell me your name."

But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there.

30 So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

31 The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip. (*His walk was changed that day*) **32** Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the tendon attached to the socket of the hip, because the socket of Jacob's hip was touched near the tendon.

You can conform to this world and walk the way they walk, or you can be transformed by God. You will be different. It will be noticeable. How does your walk need to change?

Are Your VALUES Being Changed?

The depth of the changes that God wants to perform in us goes beyond our direction and our walk. Outward change is important but inward change is ultimately what keeps us going in the right direction and walking in the right way.

Our values (or our judgement of what is important in life) will either be shaped by the world or can be changed by God.

We need to begin to ask what does God value? Do my values conform more to the world, or have they been transformed by God?

When I think of What God values, the following verses come to mind

Micah 6:8

8 He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? **To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.**

Matthew 16:23

23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, **“Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”**

Romans 8:5

5 Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on **what the flesh desires**; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

Matthew 9:13

13 **But go and learn what this means:** ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Do your values need to be changed?

Are Your Priorities Being Changed?

Once our direction, walk and values have changed, we must allow God to redefine our priorities

Let me read a passage from the book of Luke...

Luke 9:23-24

23 Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. **24** For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.

Luke 9:57-62

57 As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.”

58 Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”

59 He said to another man, “Follow me.”

But he replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”

60 Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

61 Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.”

62 Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”

Jesus was saying that our priorities need to change. We can desire a change of direction, walk differently than the world, and even say we value the things God values; but do we without a change of priorities all this will make very little difference.

Listen to God's call for Changed Priorities in His declaration of the 1st two of the 10 Commandments...

Deuteronomy 5:6-10

6 “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

7 “You shall have **no other gods** before me.

8 “You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. **9** You **shall not bow down to them or worship them**; for I, the Lord your God, **am a jealous God**, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, **10** but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

God is saying... "Make me first... Don't let anything come before me"

Jesus emphasized this same priority when we said that the greatest commandment of all was to...

Mark 12:30

30 Love the Lord your God with **all** your heart and with **all** your soul and with **all** your mind and with **all** your strength.'

I love a quote I heard recently that speaks of the importance of priority in one area of our Christian life.

*When we get down to it, if you understand the importance of why we gather together each week—**church should become the “excuse” you use to miss everything else that conflicts with it—not the other way around.***

Are your priorities more in line with the world or with God's plan? Remember, setting priorities is not only about choosing between what is good and what is bad, but also what may be good and what may be BEST as defined by God.

How does your DIRECTION, WALK, VALUES or PRIORITIES need to be changed by God today?