

August 28, 2022

## Set Free: (Week 2) Free To Change

Ever see a sign like this?



Lucky? Yes! In more than one way! The dog is lucky to be alive, yes, but more importantly, THIS MASTER LOVES THIS DOG and is willing to pay a reward to find this dog! I can totally identify with this dog. I've also got plenty of problems, but my master loves me and doesn't want me to be lost either! JUST CALL ME "LUCKY"!

Perhaps you also need to be reminded today how much God loves you, and how lucky you are!

In today's episode of "Set Free" the first thing we learn is this:

### I. A full VIEW of God's mercy will CHANGE you

We are zooming in on the first two verses of the practical application section of Paul's letter to the church in Rome. We will be focusing on a few powerful truths from Romans 12:1-2 today. Let me start with just part of that section. We will read the whole section in a few minutes.

*Romans 12:1-2 (NIV) Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in **view** of God's mercy . . . be **transformed** by the renewing of your mind.*

Paul wrote the first 11 chapters to help us keep God's Mercy in full view. Here is a very short summary of the first 11 chapters.

We have been completely ruined by sin.  
But God's perfect remedy is Jesus Christ.

Pastor Jay Kim, in his book *Analog Christian*, he writes:

*I was rebellious in my early teenage years. I'll spare you the details, but I caused my single mom much grief at the time. Once, after an especially bitter argument, I screamed profanities at her, hopped on my bike, and rode about four miles down an expressway to a friend's house. This was the early '90s, before cell phones and the Find My Friend app. For hours, my mother had no idea where I was. As a parent, I can imagine the fear and anxiety I must've caused her that day. Eventually, my friend's mother came home from work and asked me when I was being picked up. I told her I wasn't. She called my mom and about thirty minutes later, she came to get me. As we drove in silence, I sat with an internal dread at the fate awaiting me once we arrived home. As soon as we stepped in the door, I went to my room and braced myself for what was to come. My mom was furious, and I knew it. She still hadn't spoken a word. I heard noise coming from the kitchen followed by a familiar aroma. A short while later, my mom walked into my room and quietly asked me to join her at the dinner table. A meal was laid out. We sat down. Then, a simple invitation: "Eat." So, I did. The silence continued. I kept my head down and tried to ride out the tension, eating quickly and hoping I could get back to my room in one piece. My heart was pounding, and I was consumed by a sort of primal desperation for self-preservation. Then my mom spoke in Korean, her native tongue: "Jay. You are my son. No matter what you do, you will always have a seat at this table." There was a clarity in her eyes and a warm conviction in her tears. In an instant, my desperate longing for self-preservation vanished and I found myself transported to the deep and baseline core of my identity—that of a beloved son. Self-centric despair gave way to love. I stood up, tears in my eyes, and hugged my mom. At this point, I was already a little bit taller and a little bit bigger than her. Physically, anyway. And even as my arms stretched wide around her small frame, it was her love, wider than east is to west and deeper than north is to south, that covered me.*

Kim, Jay Y.. *Analog Christian* (pp. 29-31). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

I. A full VIEW of God's mercy will CHANGE you

II. You will **HOLD** nothing **BACK** from God

*Romans 12:1 (NIV) Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.*

You've heard the expression, "Learn moderation in all things." Well, I may need to learn moderation in many things, but I do not need moderation in all things. There is

nothing moderate about a living sacrifice. Offering ourselves a living sacrifice is a radical concept. But let's make sure we understand it.

- **In the Old Covenant**, worship before God was centered at the Temple, with a sacrifice of an animal. But that was a dead sacrifice. The meaning of that was that vicariously, by the mercy of God, this was accepted in lieu of judgment to us. The judgment was paid by the animal, instead of us. God did this as a prototype of what was to come. The sacrificed lamb of God took away our sin. The temple system was a picture of what was to come when Jesus came as the fulfillment. Jesus was the ultimate innocent lamb of God who took away our sin by his voluntary sacrifice.
- **In the NEW Covenant**, worship before God is through a NEW TEMPLE, as a result of the total sacrifice already made by Jesus on our behalf. In view of that mercy, we are to offer our own living bodies (the new Temple of God's presence) as not a DEAD sacrifice, but a joy filled LIVING sacrifice honoring God.
- We were slaves to sin, now, who have been set free. Now, we can offer our whole selves, bodily, and honor God extravagantly.

**The world says forget God and serve yourself.**

**Jesus says, forget yourself and serve God.**

**To love God wholeheartedly means to love God and people, and to serve God and people. .**

God held nothing back. God gave HIS son for you. Jesus, God's Son, held nothing back. He died for you. So the least you can do is live for him. Offer yourself to God.

When you trust God you know that when you live this way, your life is not lost but found.

I. A full VIEW of God's mercy will CHANGE you

II. You will HOLD nothing BACK from God

### III. **You will be set free from CONFORMITY**

*Romans 12:2 (NIV) **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.*

We often don't realize the power of this Conforming Pressure in our world. Too often, our current culture is squeezing and shaping us into a sinful pattern and we don't even realize it.

#### **One Example**

Screens have come a long way. First, screens were black and white, then screens were full color, then screens were *off-color*.

Screens kept getting bigger and bigger. But then they got smaller and now these off-color screens are available 24/7, on demand, and have become our enslaving *pocket sized idols*.

Don't become so tethered to a smart phone that you are no longer smart, and stop thinking for yourself.

We have been so habitually trained, we find ourselves reaching for the phone to unlock and look without even knowing why we are looking.

A few years ago, Apple revealed that the average iPhone user unlocks their phone eighty times a day. Why? Because much of life in the real world is uncomfortable, awkward, or boring, so we opt for digital escape.

–Pastor Jay Kim, *Analog Christian*

But the digital world is not the real world and the screen is not a neutral party simply showing you things as they are, asking you to participate as you are. The screen is a carefully curated, algorithmically precise, active participant in the ruse. And it demands that we play along.

–Pastor Jay Kim, *Analog Christian*

- **God taught** us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.
- **Science has recently caught up to what God knows about the way our minds are powerful in the life shaping process.**

In science the label for this mind renewing process is called **Neuroplasticity**. In theology, the name for this is **Discipleship**, or **spiritual disciplines**.

Both Science and Theology agree that **REPETITIONS in the mind shape us**.

**Neuroplasticity describes how repetition changes our thinking and the repetition process in Neuroplasticity can work for good or for bad.**

God described for us Spiritual disciplines that are the GOOD Repetitions that form believers to look more like the GOODNESS of Jesus' character.

Good repetitions shape us for the better. Bad repetitions are bad habits that make us worse.

Don't be confused by these labels or concepts. Let's put in terms we learned in KINDERGARTEN.

**PLAYDOUGH VISUAL ILLUSTRATION:** It isn't easy to be transformed into a well shaped human. It's easier to be shaped by mindless repetitions. The end result, we look more like the image of a serpent than the image of Jesus!

# Talk It Over

SET FREE  
(Week 2)  
Free To Change

## SMALL TALK

1. As a teen, how did peer pressure affect the way you dressed? Where you went? How you acted?

## VIEWPOINT

2. **READ Romans 12:1-2.** The word “Therefore” 12:1, begs us to ask “How does this section relate to what was before it?”
3. What does Romans 12:1 add to your understanding of true worship? (See also 6:13; and 8:13)?
4. What does it mean to “*offer your bodies as a living sacrifice?*”

## GETTING PERSONAL

5. How does the world squeeze you into its mold?
6. How can you offer your body as a living sacrifice every day? Where does motivation to live this way come from (12:1)?

## MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)

7. Of VVCC’s 5 core statements which “truth” do you need to “set you free”?
  1. Love God Wholeheartedly
  2. Do First Things First
  3. Don’t Do Life Alone
  4. Saved People Serve People
  5. Followers say, Follow Me!