

Upstream Actions

Lessons for This Series

1. Jesus calls us to a lifestyle that is drastically different than the lifestyle of those who don't believe.
"You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world." - Matthew 5:13,14
2. A follower of Christ whose lifestyle appears no different than a non-believer's must ask himself why this is so.
"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." - Romans 12:2
3. Living differently than the world is a choice that is empowered by the Holy Spirit — but it is still difficult.
 - Deuteronomy 30:11-14
"Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach."

Living Differently Than Those Who Don't Believe

"Do not conform any longer 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 12:1,2

"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; ²³to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." - Ephesians 4:22-24

- This lifestyle is a choice and is not automatic.

Last Week We Learned About Three Attitudes

1. An attitude of awe and worship.
2. An attitude of humility.
3. An attitude of obedience.

Three Ways to "Live Upstream" in our Downstream World

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." - James 1:22

1. Take action and renew your mind.

"Do not conform any longer 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 12:1,2

What is the context of this challenge to us?

Romans 12:1

- A careful and honest personal inventory of what God's mercy means to me provides the proper motive to act on Romans 12:2.
- The Holy Spirit provides the necessary power to follow through on our desire to act on Romans 12:2.

Romans 12:3+

- Gives us a picture of the life of a Christian with a renewed mind.

What does Romans 12:2 challenge us to do?

- Do not conform... (the problem/danger)...
 - Be aware of the pattern to avoid. *"...the pattern of this world..."*
 - Be aware that you are never standing still.
- But be transformed... Expect a dramatic and noticeable change. The change should also be deep. (the solution)
- Then... The goal is to more clearly test and approve God's will and to conform your life to it. (the result)
- A key to renewing the mind is considering how you learn best.

2. Take action and pray continually.

"Pray continually."

- 1 Thessalonians 5:17

"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer."

- Romans 12:12

"Devote yourself to prayer, being watchful and thankful."

- 1 Peter 5:5

- This prayer is like breathing.
- This prayer is like talking on your phone but never hanging up.
- You still need to set aside specific time to pray!
 - Pray daily just to spend time with your Lord.
 - Pray daily for yourself and for others.

3. Take action and love unconditionally.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

- John 13:34,35

"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. ³³And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that."

- Luke 6:32,33

- How do we love?
 - Start small.
 - Test the waters.
 - Explore the opportunities.
 - Make a significant investment.
- The Key... is placing yourself in situations where you have no choice but to show unconditional love.

Consider:

1. Which of these actions is the easiest for you to live out? Which is the hardest?
2. What steps can you take to start the new year off with a renewed focus on at least one of these actions?

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