

Three Crucial Relationships in Spiritual Growth

Romans 11:33—12:2

Intro: As Paul begins his practical section of Romans, he starts with a framework for foundational concepts of spiritual growth. Rather, than beginning with Rom. 12:1, we will begin with Paul's praise to God in 11:33-36. This sets the context for the commands Paul gives in vss. 1-2. Here are 3 crucial relationships in spiritual growth.

1. *1ST RELATIONSHIP: WITH GOD – To grow, I must capture a sense of the infinite goodness of God. Romans 11:33-36; Romans 12:1a*

- A. I feel something: I'm grateful for God's astounding provision of blessing. 11:33a (11:28-32.)
- B. I know something: I can intellectually grasp the attributes of God. *Paul cites three.* 11:33b-36a
 - 1. His infinite knowledge. 11:33b-34
 - 2. His infinite wealth. 11:35-36a
 - 3. His commitment to his glory. 11:36b
- C. I do something for the right reasons: Vision of God is the basis for all growth. "*Therefore!*" 12:1a
 - 1. The sense of urgency: "I plead with you."
 - 2. The sense of love: "By the mercies of God."
 - 3. The sense of community: "Brethren"

2. *2ND RELATIONSHIP: WITH THE WORLD – To grow, I must live intentionally in secular culture. Romans 12:2*

- A. The negative command – "Do not be conformed to the world."
 - 1. "World" refers to the system of beliefs & values popular at any given time in culture.
 - 2. The world in every age always has certain common characteristics.
 - 3. Conformity to the world will happen automatically.
 - 4. It makes no sense to give into the world because it's passing away. 1 John 1:17
- B. The positive command – "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind."
 - 1. Transformation is something that you are responsible to do.
 - 2. Transformation comes through the spiritual disciplines.
 - 3. Transformation will take you in a different direction than the world: God's will!
- C. Why this is so important – Secular culture is always powerful.
 - 1. Think about how our culture has changed.
 - 2. Think about where our culture is today.
 - 3. What happens if you don't apply Romans 12:2: *Nihilism.*

3. *3RD RELATIONSHIP: WITH MY BODY – To grow, I need to present my body as an expression of worship. Romans 12:1b,c,d*

- A. Context: There is an Old Testament context and a pagan context of this verse. 12:1b
 - 1. Paul's imagery is designed to remind his Jewish readers of the tabernacle sacrifices.
 - 2. Paul's imagery is designed to shock Paul's Greek readers to a proper view of the body.
 - 3. God calls us to view our body and mind as a stewardship from him.
- B. Command: The command is to present our bodies as a regular spiritual discipline. 12:1c
 - 1. The tense of the verb indicates this.
 - 2. The way we present our bodies is through prayer and within community (brethren).
- C. Consequence: The result of engaging in regular presentation is an experience of fellowship. 12:1d
 - 1. The concept of acceptable and worship indicates fellowship. ("Fragrant aroma" concept.)
 - 2. Essential Christianity is a daily experience of placing ourselves on God's altar.