

Metamorphosis

Discussion 2



NOT SO DEEP NOTES FROM SUNDAY'S SERMON

Please don't read this bit in your group! Start on the next page with introductions...

In Romans 12:2 is a word that sounds a bit like *sausagemachinis*. This word describes what the world can do as it forces you to fit in - it shapes, squeezes, and conditions you to conform! Sausagemachinis is manipulative. It may be clever or hard to see. It may be done with force or even violence. It may involve people taking control of you. It punishes you if you don't conform. It expects you to do what everyone else around does...

In the first century everyone in Rome *had* to say three words: "Caesar is Lord." It was their way. So they never thought much about it. Just like Aussies saying *g'day* they did it naturally. These three words were everywhere; even stamped on the money. Roman citizens were conditioned to give worship and honour to Caesar. And they loved the gifts he showered on them to pacify them - bread and circuses (*fast-food and sport shows*). After someone has said "Caesar is Lord" or "Heil Hitler" a thousand times, they may no longer even notice that it is wrong. To them it just is what it is.

Then a strange new movement came to Rome. These people noticed the cultural wallpaper of slavery and violence and rejected it. They believed not in violence and dominance, but in love and servanthood. Their leader did not dominate and kill. Their leader loved, forgave, and even died for his enemies. When no army could ever conquer Rome, this new belief in love finally caused that empire of evil to fall. And their creed was three words too: "Jesus is Lord!"

The discussion takes off from there! The sermon is available at www.ichurch.net.au

GROUP INTRO

You are walking together until Easter. Start with warmth, food, a cuppa or drink. Like last week, please do turn off your phones and give real attention. You can start with one or two of these questions:

- *What would people never guess about you?*
- *What fad or trend would you like to see come back?*
- *If you gave up something for Lent how is it going for you? What are you learning?*

MORPHED? FORMED?

An ancient Biblical word for change is *morph*. From it we get at least 194 modern English words - can you think of a few? To be *morphed* is to change shape. There are lots of things that shape us, but often we are not aware that shaping is occurring.

- *You know the old saying "a leopard never changes its spots." Is it true? Do people change? Is real and lasting change possible?*
- *Have you seen someone's character change?*
- *Name something that has changed you in the last few years.*

SUSCHEMATIDZO? (COULD BE A PHIL COLLINS SONG!)

This week we only focus on the first half of the Bible verse - the second half is next week!

Romans 12:2

***Do not conform to the pattern of this world,
but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.***

Just sit with it quietly for a bit - especially the first half.

- *What do you hear? What does this bring up for you?*
- *What do you hear God saying to us as a church in this?*

In the ancient language the words 'conform to the pattern' are only one word. It reads like "*don't-conform-to-the-pattern!*" This single word is *suschematidzo* but I like to call it *sausagemachinis* because it can mean:

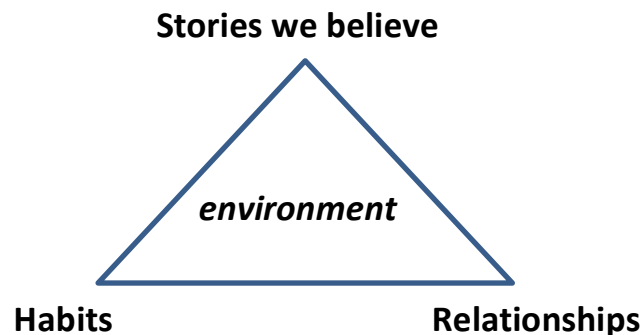
- To become squeezed or patterned according to a mold
- A blacksmith does this to metal as he forms it into a standard pattern
- To be stamped like a coin is stamped with the face of the emperor

All you have to do to be shaped is get up in the morning. We are all being shaped by the world we live in. We are forced, judged, tricked, manipulated, bruised, and peer-pressured to conform. So we must *resist* the world and the devil, but we *rest* in the grace of Jesus.

- *What things shape us without us even noticing?*
- *What are you resisting (in the name of Jesus)?*
- *What can you help each other resist?*

UNINTENTIONAL SPIRITUAL FORMATION

John-Mark Comer identifies three key things that shape us unintentionally - stories we believe, habits, relationships. These things shape us deeply over time. We may not have control over everything that shapes us but we can make choices about resisting and resting! This is Comer's picture of unintentional spiritual formation...



1. HABITS:

Much of our character is an accumulation of habits. Many of the deepest meanings about who we are can be found in meaningful habits that some people call *rituals*. The way we spend our time now says a lot about who we will become.

- *What are some habits that are considered 'normal' in our culture?*
- *List some habits that change the way we think.*
- *What habits are unintentionally forming you?*

2. RELATIONSHIPS:

Who you hang around with will shape who you become. The one who walks with the wise becomes wise. You are shaped by people you spend most time with. This doesn't mean you should avoid the world (that would be foolish) but choose wisely who to let influence you.

1 Corinthians 15:33-34. Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals." Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.

- How are your relationships shaping you at the moment?
- Who can you identify to deliberately walk with?

3. STORIES WE BELIEVE:

The stories we soak ourselves in (and entertain ourselves with) are full of ideas about the meaning of life. The biggest way that human beings communicate meaning is through stories. This is why the Bible is not a rule book but a story. If you believe the story that you are random junk then that story will affect who you become. We need better stories!

- What great stories are now shaping Australian culture?
- What stories have shaped who you are?

CLOSING REFLECTION & PRAYER

Start with a short quiet time with the following Bible verse in front of you.

Then after the quiet time, each person is invited to just read or speak their favourite words from below - nothing more, just those words you were drawn to.

Then after this the leaders can start the closing prayer time...

Colossians 3:1-11

Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honour at God's right hand. ² Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. ³ For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory. ⁵ So put to death the worldly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshipping the things of this world. ⁶ These sins arouse the anger of God. ⁷ You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world. ⁸ But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behaviour, slander, and dirty language. ⁹ Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. ¹⁰ Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. ¹¹ In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, ritually pure or not, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.