**Topic**: **Influence/d** – Influenced by the Word and the World! Influencing the World with the Word! You’re in School; you’re a teacher – God’s School. World’s School. (Define world)

**Expert**: exposing the tremendous influence of the world

**Testimony**: something toward the effect of seeing how great it is to be a student in God’s school influenced by His Word. Possibly comparing it to being a student/teacher in the World’s school.

**OT Reading**: Deuteronomy 6:4-13

4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.[[a](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=deut%206&version=NIV#fen-NIV-5091a)] 5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

10 When the Lord your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you—a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, 11 houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant—then when you eat and are satisfied, 12 be careful that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

13 Fear the Lord your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name. 14 Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you;

**NT Reading**: Romans 11:33-12:3 NIV

33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and[[i](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%2011&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28243i)] knowledge of God!
How unsearchable his judgments,
and his paths beyond tracing out!
34 “Who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been his counselor?”[[j](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%2011&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28244j)]
35 “Who has ever given to God,
that God should repay them?”[[k](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%2011&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28245k)]
36 For from him and through him and for him are all things.
To him be the glory forever! Amen.

12:1 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. 2 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.

3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.

**Gospel**: John 17:1a, 14-21

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: “Father….14 I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. 15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. 17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. 19 For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. 20 “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

Practically everyone who lives in the United States knows what it’s like to go to school. Most of us have gone to school from Kindergarten to High School. And many go to College, graduate school and as the saying goes… you never stop learning! Schools are designed to influence the mind, the worldview, the life of the student. The influence of a school brings new thoughts and ideas to the student and it also brings about change in actions, emotions, and will – from social skills, to leadership, to the ability to empathize, to embracing certain desires and wishes for one’s life and even opinions on the way the world should function and operate.

In many ways we can look at the whole of life and see that all of us are really lifelong students. And the reality is that two different competing and highly influential schools exist. Two Schools of Influence! Where are you enrolled? Actually you’re enrolled in both! From the day we became Christians we’ve been enrolled in God’s School and from the day we were born we’ve been enrolled in the World’s school. Both schools are competing for our attention; both schools are seeking to influence our minds, our hearts, our actions, our will! Both schools are giving us homework… both schools have their curriculums, their agendas, their teachers, their systems of rewards and punishment – all to influence the life of the student! You and me!

The apostle Paul reminds us how important it is for us as Christians to be wary of the World’s school and to live out our identity as students in God’s School! St. Paul says in Romans 12:2, “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.”

The apostle Paul’s words are packed with relevance to us today. “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed.” Paul’s concern is with form! The form of the pattern of this world versus the form of faith. Paul doesn’t say that we shouldn’t conform. To be human is to choose patterns, models, schools of thought and influence that provide meaning in life. The question is not whether you should conform, but rather *to what* should you conform. In Romans 8:29 Paul says that we should conform to the likeness of Jesus – Conformity must be patterned after Jesus Christ. – that’s what it means to be enrolled in God’s school!

The World’s School, however, bombards us with a collage of intense images through media, advertising, polls, style, social pressures, materialistic pressures, and ideologies. These teachings are often most effective when they are least recognized. They are sort of woven into the fabric of our society and culture and not so easily discerned. We are often unaware of the powerful influence they have over us… how much they really teach us.

**[expert insertion]**

The Christian life, as a student in God’s school, is an ongoing discipline of learning to be transformed by the School of Christ rather than being conformed to the subtle and explicit teachings of the world. When we as Christians, as the church, feel the pull to conform ourselves uncritically to the world we must resist, stop, think and see things for what they really are!

Paul gets at this when he says – “Be transformed” how are we to be transformed? He continues “be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” The renewed mind that Paul speaks of here must be understood as the opposite of the “depraved mind” that he talks about back in Romans 1:28. A depraved mind doesn’t regard itself as depraved… it can’t think about itself clearly. Kind of like when a hypochondriac is incapable of seeing their illness as imagined. What happens then is that, to the depraved mind, what seems right isn’t right at all in God’s eyes. That’s why when someone first becomes a Christian… the change can be discomforting. The Holy Spirit, that great teacher in God’s school, may call for changes that don’t *seem* “right.” to the depraved mind.

 Remember after Jesus’ resurrection, when Jesus told Peter that in the future “someone will lead you where you do not want to go.”? Jesus, the Great Teacher, would require something of His disciple Peter that Peter, in no way, could will on his own. The very word Disciple in the New Testament, **μαθητής**, means learner, or student. In Jesus day, this type of student would constantly be associated with his teacher, and not just any teacher, but a teacher with a pedagogical reputation and a particular worldview. Part of being this type of student, disciple, **μαθητής,** is that you must unlearn as well as learn. Remember when Peter tried to persuade Jesus from going to the cross (Mark 8:33)? A sharp rebuke from his teacher, Jesus, exposed the error of his thinking. What is it that the World’s school has taught you… are there any teachings so ingrained into your being that maybe you don’t even recognize them? What is it that you as a disciple, like Peter, must unlearn?

You see, our logic, the world’s logic, is not always in sync with God’s logic – He needs to teach us. Paul talks about this in Romans 11. To some people it would seem logical that if God’s chosen people would reject God… well then God would reject them completely. That’s the way the world works right? Someone rejects us… well then we reject them! Done! But In Romans 11:1-2 we see that Paul disagrees with that worldly logic, God did not reject his people! No way! God’s Will is different than the worlds!

Paul says in Romans 12:2, “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…” Only a spiritual “mind transplant” will produce an ability to “test and approve what God’s will is.” What exactly is this renewed mind that the apostle Paul is talking about? Is it a purely cerebral intellectual exercise? Is it a bunch of data that we pump into our minds and then regurgitate on a final exam?

The renewed mind is the gift of God’s grace to see ourselves and others from the perspective of the cross of Jesus Christ! That sort of perspective produces a disdain for our sins instead of delighting in them. It produces a love for sinful and broken people instead of a rejection of them. That sort of renewed mind lead the apostle Paul to confess with his whole being “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” (Rom 11:33).

The renewed mind, as St. Paul states, “approves what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. If Christian conduct were simply adhering to a legal code or moral principle, a bunch of rules, then there would be no need “to test and approve what God’s will is.” But Christian conduct grows only from discipleship, and discipleship from learning and following Christ. The renewed mind is really the discipled mind, and the discipled mind must be a discerning mind that approves what is “good, pleasing and perfect.” The will of God is good because it is morally right, The will of God is pleasing because it is acceptable and agreeable to his character, and The Will of God is perfect because it promotes his desire to bring salvation to all everyone.

Really the renewed mind starts there. At Salvation. Salvation for everyone – that includes you! How do we, as students in God’s school, wrap our minds around that? Despite all the brokenness in our lives, despite the things we’ve thought, said, done against God and the people in our lives – Despite the fact that we have rejected Him in so many ways… he still sent His son Jesus to forgive us, renew us, redeem us… to teach us, to make us his disciples… and really more than that… to adopt us and make us his own children!

Aren’t those the best the teachers? You know - the ones that view their students as more than students. They view them as children entrusted to their care. One of my teachers in elementary school was like that. Mr. Jones. I had a crush on some girl and gave her a secret admirer note with a dollar bill in it. haha! What was I thinking? Mr. Jones found out about it and told the class that whoever wrote the note should talk to him after class. I took my chances and avoided him. He was able to discern from the handwriting who wrote it and finally called me to the back of the class. He said, “Michael, I know you wrote this note.” Tears started to well in my eyes… this was it… I was in big trouble… for sure this would go on my permanent record and I would be branded a wayward child. He said, “Michael, when you care for someone… draw them a picture, make them something, tell them something nice…” He could tell I was obviously distressed. He said, “lets step outside.” Oh now I thought he’s gonna send me to the principal’s office… next would be juvenile hall and then prison… my permanent record… He said, “it’s gonna be ok Michael. Why don’t you go to the drinking fountain… get a drink of water, take your time and come back to class when you are ready.” What? I couldn’t believe it. No principal’s office? Nothing on my permanent record? Mr. Jones loved his students… loved his children. He graced me, mercied me, cared for me, He loved us enough to find the student with misguided thinking and teach him about what it means to care for someone. To love others. He modeled in his behavior and his words and that lesson has always stuck with me to this day.

Mr. Jones was a good teacher… but he wasn’t perfect. We are students in God’s school…with a perfect teacher - We’re God’s kids! In Romans 12:3 St. Paul says… “For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.” In God’s school, it all starts with God’s grace… and that grace informs our thinking. As St. Paul says… think with sober judgment… That sober thinking is reflected in Paul’s words of Romans 11:34, “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?” When we as students in God’s school begin to think about life from the perspective of the cross of Jesus Christ… and in humility realize that the mind of God is far superior… we are on the right track – and we start to function not just as students in his school… but we becomes teachers… Teachers like Mr. Jones – who teach the truth yet do it in a gracious way!

**[testimony]**

Where are you enrolled? Which school influences you the most? God’s School? the World’s School?

Whether you like it or not! You’re a student and a teacher… your actions, your words, your worldview teaches those God has put into your life and you are more influential than you could ever imagine!

The next five weeks we are going to look at what God’s School and the World’s School teaches about money, work, greatness, sex and the body, and faith! Let your mind be renewed by God’s grace and truth – let your mind be discipled – You may need to Unlearn some things, you may need to be humble in your thinking… Embrace the reality that you are influenced and an influencer, you are a student and a teacher! You can choose which school you will teach for – God’s or the World’s!