

Weekly Message Study Guide

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Date _____ Speaker _____

DO NOT BE CONFORMED | 12:21 | Week 1 | Oct 18

Romans 12:1-2; Matt 5:16-18; 2 Cor 4:1-17; Heb 12:1-2

These study guides are designed for individual or group study but highly encouraged to be experienced in community with a small group or other friends on the journey with Jesus.

CONTEXT | Beginning this series we imagine the Church of Romans 12 Paul was addressing. It was a large metropolitan center of the most powerful nation on earth and the church must have reflected many constituencies—rich and poor, young and old, powerful and perhaps enslaved and also conservative and progressive.

- How do you identify with any of these descriptions? Which ones would you say apply to you?
- How does that shape your role in the church? How does it shape your role in the world?
- Is there a difference in the way you see yourself in the world and in the church? Talk about it.

Read Romans 12:2 | In danger of losing their Christian mind Paul pleads with the Church, “Do not lose sight of the Kingdom we are representing, establishing and pursuing.”

- How would you describe “being conformed?” How do you know if it’s happening to you?
- How would you describe transformation? What does it look like? How do you know if it’s happening to you? Can you give an example from your life?
- What is the biggest struggle you face in this battle?

False Gospels | Read through the comparative chart on the next page and talk through the following questions.

- Which Empire storylines do you feel influenced by? Why and how?
- Is it realistic to overlay the Kingdom storyline of the Gospel over Empire storylines? How do you see that it applies?
- Talk about your response to these contrasting storylines. What resonates with you?
- What’s a new way of approaching it for you?
- With what do you disagree?
- Which one are you most susceptible to?

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Gospel of ...	Empire of the World	Kingdom of Christ
Prosperity	If you work hard enough, long enough, you will be rewarded.	As followers of Jesus, we cast a vision that declares God’s concern for the flourishing for all people. We picture a world in which everyone does their best and love stretches out to cover where we fall short.
Patriotism	We are a Christian country and we are the world’s savior.	As followers of Jesus we follow Christ the King beyond any earthly empire. We are Christ’s ambassadors first and foremost and as such subscribe to God’s intention for the flourishing of all people.
Security	We must protect ourselves against all the threats. Keep them away from me.	Followers of Jesus are people who are realistic about life, but not primarily driven by fear.
Supremacy	Our Northern European culture is the superior one.	As followers of Jesus we follow one who was not white or European. Jesus reminds us that it is about the Kingdom of God and not any particular culture that is supreme.
Individualism	We are free to follow our own choices and tastes. It’s American freedom.	Followers of Jesus remember Genesis 3 and our need to follow God’s way of life which leads to flourishing and ultimate freedom.

PRACTICE OF THE WEEK | Do the [Prayer of Examine](#) each evening before bed and reflect on the seduction of “conforming to the pattern of the world.” As you review your day through the examen, note how much time you give to watching news, current events, reading news feeds on your screen—in effect the “Empire storyline.” Then note how much time you are reading scripture, listening to the Spirit through aimed content (music, podcasts, sermons) or reading spiritual books—the Kingdom storyline. What storyline gets the most of your time? Pray about how God may be leading you in that balance and then follow up with your small group and share ideas in the coming weeks of this series.

