



September 22, 2013

Deuteronomy 10-18

*“Be Transformed, but not Conformed”*

Pastor Gary Hamrick

Pastor Gary reminded us that the book of Deuteronomy was written like a handbook that could have been titled: *What You Need to Know Before You Go!* In last week’s message, we learned that Moses basically told the people, “When you go into the Promised Land and are living the good life, don’t forget God.” Hardships in life tend to move us toward God, but when we are comfortable living the good life, we tend to forget God. What is incredible about God is that rather than withhold his goodness from us with the intent of driving us toward him, he instead gives us his blessings and is good to us like a father, and simply says, “When you are living the good life, don’t forget me.”

In this study, Pastor Gary adds to the list of “What you need to know before you go.” We learn that God told the people they were not to worship the way they worshiped, not to practice their lifestyle, and not to live like they lived. And, like the Israelites, we are also called to “be transformed, but not conformed.”

### Historical Background

1. Pagan people who worshiped false gods and engaged in evil practices occupied the land the Israelites entered, and though God went before them to dispossess these pagan people, the Israelites were expected to do their part to drive them out of the land.
2. Unfortunately, they never really rid the land of these pagan influences, so they always had to contend with the ungodly influence of the pagan people who surrounded them.

3. Moses warned the people, and told them:
  - a. Do not worship what they worship.
  - b. Do not practice what they practice.
  - c. Do not live like they live.
  
4. The Israelites found that people who were evil and wicked occupied the land.
  - a. The pagans in the land practiced demonic things like witchcraft and sorcery.
  - b. They practiced bizarre things like the ritual hacking of their flesh and hair as an act of mourning the dead.
  - c. They worshiped false gods and did unthinkable things like offering their children as a sacrifice to these gods.
  
5. Through Moses, God told the Israelites, that even though these pagan people would surround them, they were not to imitate them!
  
6. They were to be transformed people who knew God.
  
7. **Romans 12:2** - *“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.”*

### Do Not Worship Like They Worship!

#### Their Way Was The Worship Of Creation Rather Than The Creator

8. **Deuteronomy 12:2-3** - *“Destroy completely all the places on the high mountains and on the hills and under every spreading tree where the nations you are dispossessing worship their gods. Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and burn their Asherah poles in the fire; cut down the idols of their gods and wipe out their names from those places.”*
  
9. It’s not hard to see that God wanted a 100% removal of pagan worship, especially when you look at his instructions, which included words like destroy, break down, smash, and burn!
  
10. God told them they were to worship him at a designated place (the Tabernacle, and later the Temple, synagogues, and churches), unlike the pagans who just set up altars under spreading trees and on high hills, for the purpose of worshipping nature and created things.

11. Fast-forward 1500 years to the time of Paul and we find that the Greeks and Romans were devout pantheists who also worshiped created things.
  - a. [Romans 1:22-23, 25](#) - *“Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator - who is forever praised. Amen.”*
12. Fast-forward another 2000 years to our time and we find that we also live in a society that embraces a modified pantheistic religion, which has emerged from the environmental and ecological movements.
  - a. Christians should be good stewards of God’s creation, but when society is more interested in saving whales, rain forests, and spotted owls, than they are in saving unborn children, then that society has moved from stewardship into worship; the worship of created things.
13. “Be transformed by God; don’t be conformed to the world!”

### Do Not Worship Like They Worship!

#### Their Way Of Worship Included Open Fertility Rituals With Outdoor Altars For Sex

14. The Canaanites believed that the sexual worship of the fertility gods, Baal and his female counterpart, Asherah, brought fertility to the land.
15. In [Deuteronomy 12:3](#), *“Asherah poles,”* refers to carved statues of the male organ which dotted the landscape.
16. Essentially, this was the pornography of their day.
17. When you consider some of the historical accounts of the sexual practices of the ancient Canaanites in their worship of Baal and Asherah, there’s not much difference in the way our culture has exploited sex, perverted and degraded it, and sold it for profit.
18. It’s important to remember that God created sex as something pure and honorable, to be enjoyed by a husband and a wife.
19. “Be transformed by God; don’t be conformed to the world!”

## Do Not Worship Like They Worship!

### Their Way Of Worship Included The Sacrifice Of Children

20. It's a horrible thought to consider that mothers and fathers would lay their children in the arms of the statue/idol Molech,<sup>1</sup> for the purpose of sacrificing them in the fire.
21. This practice may seem barbaric and primitive, but our society practices a similar thing, it's just that today the sacrifice of babies happens in sterile clinics and hospitals, and the name, Molech, has been changed to a god called Choice.
22. No matter how many politicians or "social engineers" who come on TV programs to talk about "reproductive rights" and the like, we cannot and must not be conformed to the pattern of this world.
  - a. We need to recognize abortion as sin.
  - b. We need to fight for the unborn.
  - c. We need to reach out to women, and men, with love and compassion, so they can know the healing grace of Jesus Christ.
23. The world attempts us to squeeze us into its mold every day, and we have the 3-M's of media, movies, and music, which glamorize and mainstream sex in our culture.
  - a. Music
    - i. *The New York Times* printed a report by The Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, which indicated that teenagers listen to an average of nearly 2.5 hours of music every day.
      1. One-third of popular songs contain explicit references to drug or alcohol abuse, which means that kids receive an average of 84 glamorized references to substance abuse every day through music.<sup>2</sup>
  - b. Violence
    - i. By the time the average child is 18 years old, they will have witnessed approximately 200,000 acts of violence and 16,000 murders through visual media.<sup>3</sup>
  - c. Advertising
    - i. Total advertising expenditures for 2012, which influence what we eat, what we wear, and what we believe, was approximately \$140 billion dollars!<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Statues of Molech were created life-size, and had the body of a man and the head of a bull. Many of

<sup>2</sup> [http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/02/05/under-the-influence-of-music/?\\_r=1](http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/02/05/under-the-influence-of-music/?_r=1)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.mediaed.org/Handouts/ChildrenMedia.pdf>

d. Media Effects On Children

- i. The United States National Institutes of Health, Yale University, and the California Pacific Medical Center conducted a recent study on this subject.<sup>5</sup>
  1. They looked at 173 previous studies that were conducted since 1980, and found that 80% of the studies concurred that heavy exposure to the media raises the risk of harmful behavior and conditions in children, including attention problems, drug and alcohol abuse, obesity, poor grades in school, smoking, and sexual activity.
  2. With regard to sex, 93% of those studies found that children with more exposure to the media have sex at a younger age.
- ii. Children spend, on average, about 45 hours each week with media sources such as cell phones, the Internet, magazines, movies, music, TV, and video games, which is almost as much as the average combined time they spend each week with their parents (17 hours) and in school (30 hours)!

24. **Philippians 2:5** - *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus...”*  
(KJV)

25. **Ephesians 4:22-23** - *“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; to be made new in the attitude of your minds...”*

26. “Be transformed by God; don’t be conformed to the world!”

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read Deuteronomy **12:1-5, 29-32; 14:1-2; 18:9-13** to provide an overview for this study.
3. Read and discuss **Romans 12:2**.
4. What are some of the ways you’ve tried to “Go Amish” in order to avoid the negative influences of our culture?

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<sup>4</sup> <http://kantarmediana.com/intelligence/press/us-advertising-expenditures-increased-3-percent-2012>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.naturalnews.com/025285\\_health\\_natural\\_child.html](http://www.naturalnews.com/025285_health_natural_child.html)

5. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary comments regarding the philosophy of separation that is practiced by the Amish and other religious groups, and how different it is compared to what the Bible teaches; that we are called to live transformed lives by the power of God, remaining true to him in a world that often runs contrary to God's ways and a world that aggressively seeks to recruit us into its ranks, for the purpose of molding us into its patterns, practices, ways, and ideologies.
6. Read and discuss [Deuteronomy 12:2-3](#).
  - a. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences regarding things they've removed from their life.
  - b. Read and discuss [Romans 1:22-23, 25](#).
7. Spend time talking about the importance of being actively involved in the worship of the Lord in the local church.
  - a. Do you currently or have you ever agreed with the philosophy of those who say they don't need to attend church services because they worship God when they hike in the woods or watch the sun set on the beach?
  - b. Read and discuss [Hebrews 10:25](#).
8. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's statement about the fact that in our culture the sacrifice of babies happens in sterile clinics and hospitals, and the name, Molech, has been changed to a god called Choice. (See #21 and #22 above)
9. Provide a brief summary of the statistics Pastor Gary shared regarding the effects that media, movies, and music have on children. (See #23 above)
  - a. How can you as a parent protect and nurture your children in the face of the onslaught of the 3-M's?
  - b. Allow the people in your group to share some of their "success" stories.
10. Read and discuss [Philippians 2:5](#) and [Ephesians 4:22-23](#).
11. How has the Holy Spirit transformed you and given you a mind that thinks what God thinks, loves what God loves, grieves over what God grieves, and rejoices over what God rejoices?
12. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: rely on the Lord to help them remove everything in their life that isn't Christ-like; (have someone ready to read [Romans 12:2](#) and [Philippians 2:5](#)) pray the Scriptures so that each person would have the mind of Christ, that thinks the way he thinks, loves the way he loves, etc.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).