CENTRAL PENINSULA CHURCH

...to make and mature followers of Christ

Becoming: People of Renewed Minds

Romans 12:1-2

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George Orwell's *1984* was published in 1949, just four years after the end of World War II. Europe uniquely, but the world more broadly, had just witnessed the heinous evil of Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union. The rise of totalitarianism was spreading under the basic premise of trying to bring virtually every sphere of life under state control. Orwell's vision in that book was a society where the state-controlled people through external pressure, through the means of surveillance, with fear and propaganda, and the manipulation of ideas and so-called truth.

Orwell's nightmare is a world where power reaches deeply into human life and attempts to control through restriction. Restriction of information, language, history, and ultimately thought itself. But what most forget is that alongside Orwell's dark vision was another slightly older, but slightly less known, and yet equally chilling vision.

It was Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. Huxley published this book in 1932. It was the period between the two wars. Hitler had not yet come to power, and Stalin's terror had not yet taken the form that it would in years to come. But Huxley had a different imagination for control. In Huxley's Brave New World, he imagines a society where people are less controlled by force and more by pleasure and conditioning, entertainment, and endless consumption.

Huxley's nightmare is a world where people surrender their freedom willingly by internalizing alternative ideas that were about comfort and immediate gratification. Orwell feared that people would be deprived of information, but Huxley feared that they would be given so much information that one would be reduced to passivity.

Orwell feared that truth would be hidden from us, but Huxley feared that truth would be drowned beneath an endless stream of things that simply don't matter. Orwell feared we would become a captive culture, but Huxley feared we would become a trivial culture, preoccupied with passions and gratifications. In short, Orwell's *1984* envisions control through inflicting pain, whereas Huxley's *Brave New World* envisions control through inflicting pleasure. Two books with two dystopian visions of the future.

Here's my point this morning. Notice that both of these dystopian visions of the future ultimately take seriously the power of the human mind. Orwell recognized the extraordinary power of ideas, so the regime attempts to control them, restrict information, rewrite the past, and control what people say. For Orwell, the mind is so powerful that tyranny must shut it down.

Huxley sees the same power of the mind and imagines an almost opposite strategy. Instead of restricting the mind, flood the mind. Give people endless stimulation, endless entertainment, endless consumption, and endless pleasure. Give them so many images, messages, desires, and distractions that they lose the capacity to distinguish between what matters most and what matters least. Years after its publication, Huxley looked back on his own vision in a little essay called "Brave New World Revisited," he wrote,

> **They [the propagandists] did not foresee what in fact has happened...the development of a vast mass communications industry, concerned in the main neither with the true nor the false, but with the unreal, the more or less totally irrelevant. In a word, they failed to take into account man's almost infinite appetite for distractions. Huxley**

To hammer the point, Orwell fears control through deprivation, but Huxley fears control through saturation. Two different visions presenting the same profound principle. What enters the mind matters a lot. Because ideas do not remain merely ideas, rather, ideas shape the way we see reality, which shapes what we love and desire. That then shapes how we live, and how we live, over time, shapes who we become. Therefore, what goes into the mind matters. I'm reminded of the teaching of Jesus just a few weeks ago when we preached from John 8, where Jesus said, *"They will know the truth, and the truth will set them free."*

We are in the middle of a six-week series returning to who we are as a community. Our mission at the very inception of this church, at its beginning, now, and will be, is to make and mature followers of Jesus. Everything we do around here, in some capacity, points back to that mission. And everything we do around here is aimed towards maturing us as followers of Jesus. So four years ago, we set out a vision to accomplish that mission by organizing our community around a shared rule of life.

If that's new language to you, that's okay. Think of it as a shared set of practices that guard our habits and guide our life. The four practices that we want to orient our life as a community around are: attentiveness, renewing the mind, hospitality, and vocation. In this series, we're just taking one week to talk about each one of those. We have so many resources on our website if you want to go back and deep dive into these. Today we are talking about renewing the mind. Here's how we word that.

> **We practice renewing the mind in contrast to a world of noise, competing narratives, and addiction, and we do so by cultivating the habits of fasting and scripture.**

What do we mean when we talk about the mind? One good definition I've heard is that it is more than just the brain. We have a tendency

to equate the two, but they're different. The best definition I know of the mind is that of directed attention. Renewing the mind immediately follows the practice of attentiveness. Attentiveness is about how we cultivate a life where we have room to just put our directed attention, our mind, towards the things of God. But often when we do that, when we come and direct our attention towards God, we find a mix of both truth and lies, of both reality and non-reality that is held in our mind.

So to renew the mind is to understand and think rightly about the world around us. The mind is not the brain. It's the immaterial part, the inner person that has the capacity to choose what to think about and what not to think about. When we direct our attention to it, it really matters because our thoughts and ideas are not the only thing that form us.

It's not just about information, but thinking rightly is a key practice of following Jesus. We have a large amount of freedom over what we direct our attention to. Willard, in his excellent book, *Renovation of the Heart*, has two chapters on renewing the mind, which is a large source for this sermon. He writes, "The ultimate freedom we have as human beings is the power to select what we will allow or require our minds to dwell upon" (Willard).

We have freedom over what our mind thinks on, what we hold before our inner person. And yet our minds often become the place not just of the greatest freedom, but also the greatest bondage if it's left uncultivated. Why is that? Because our mind is like a portal to our whole being. What we think about and give our attention to shapes the inner character of who we become. The mind and the ideas and the ideologies give shape to the overall person of who we become, which will either aim us towards human flourishing and wholeness or towards its opposite, sickness and demise.

The power and the potential of the mind is what makes the mind a focal point in our spiritual formation. We have to think clearly about this, because when we talk about the renewing of the mind, it's easy to assume that simply information brings about formation. But if that were the case, my sermons would be a whole lot shorter. I would just read the Sermon on the Mount, and we'd all go out and love our enemies. But we know intuitively that isn't how people are changed. It isn't just about information going in, there is far more that goes into the formation of an individual.

In John 8, Jesus was talking about how we find freedom, and he has this little line in front. *"If you hold to my teachings, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."* Jesus is getting at this deeper tension in the human experience. He's saying not just that we need to receive truth, but we need to hold to it, remain in his teaching, and then we will know the truth, and the truth will set us free.

This is important because when our ideas about reality are true, meaning they represent reality well, we show up to reality well. But when our ideas are false, meaning they don't correspond to reality, we don't show up to reality well. I've said before that the definition of truth, at least one of the definitions, is that which corresponds to reality. Reality is that which you run into when you are wrong.

The trite example I gave is if I believe with everything in me that I can run through walls, reality will hit me right about the exact moment I hit that drywall, and that is a truth then that does not correspond with reality. So if our ideas about truth align with reality, we show up well to the world. In the same way again, if they are lies, we do not show up well to the world.

Here's another silly example. When you get married, you quickly discover that some of the things you assumed about the way things are, were actually just the way that your family did things. Have you had that experience? When Lindsay and I first got married, I discovered that apparently, this was a brand-new reality to me, that there is a right way and a wrong way to fold towels. I had a mental map of what it meant to fold towels, and I quickly learned she had another, and guess what? Mine was definitely wrong. I had to relearn how to fold towels properly.

What Lindsay and I brought into that scenario is two mental maps of reality. This is the way things are, and so therefore it must correspond that way. That's a trite example, but there's much more than just towels that we have mental maps of reality about, things of how we make sense of the world. Every one of us hold ideas on how to navigate the world. Every single one of us have mental maps about money, sex, power, identity, and relationships, about food and pleasure, success, about God himself.

Our lives are shaped by thousands of ideas and assumptions about reality that eventually all coalesce into something we could call a worldview. The problem is that even though our worldview is sometimes accurate and corresponds with reality, often it does not. Our worldview, this collection of ideas, gives shape to how we navigate the world around us, and so it would behoove us to ensure that it matches up with reality.

It's both the wonder and the danger of the human mind that we can envision what isn't presently here. That's the gift of imagination. It's why you can be creative. It's why you can plan and dream and hope. Our mind has the capacity, the ability, to envision a future that doesn't currently exist. That is a wonder and a danger because you can also allow lies to get in there and shape your perspective of the world, which can wreak a havoc in your life.

Those lies can be embedded into our consciousness, and they begin to shape what we do with our bodies and ultimately deform the people we become. And tragically, when those lies get embedded into our body, into our whole self, they give way to a disease called sin, and the end result of sin is always pulling your life towards death. It goes back to the two paths, the broad one that leads to destruction that many find, and the narrow one that leads to life. Dallas Willard says this:

> **Now, Christian spiritual formation is inescapably a matter of recognizing, in ourselves, the idea system (or systems) or evil that governs the present age and the respective culture (or various cultures) that constitute life away from God. Willard**

So pause here before we read the rest. What he's saying is all of us have this worldview, and the fundamental process of spiritual formation is to begin to identify the beliefs and ideas that we hold within our head,

being able to name them as either true or false. He says some of those lead us to life away from God.

> **The needed transformation is very largely a matter of replacing in ourselves those idea systems of evil (and their corresponding cultures) with the idea system that Jesus Christ embodied and taught and with a culture of the kingdom of God. This is truly a passage from darkness to light. Willard**

Put simply, the role of discipleship is taking the mental maps that constitute Jesus' mind and getting them into our mind. It is to direct our attention, so that as we navigate the world, we begin to navigate it in the same way that Jesus would. Because what would Jesus do is a good question, but the problem is we don't have any records of Jesus walking around with an iPhone or driving down Highway 1 or working in your particular corporation.

What we need is the ability to improvise, to understand the mental maps of reality that Jesus understands about the world so we can then move about in our lives in a way that would look similar to Jesus. It would better be asked, what would Jesus do if he were you? What would Jesus do if he had your skillset, your life circumstances, your job and title and lived on your street with your constraints of responsibilities? That's an altogether different question, and requires nothing less than what Paul would say is the renewal of the mind.

So all of that preamble gets us to our teaching text in Romans 12. It is a simple text for this morning, a familiar one I'm certain. But here we come at an inflection point in the letter to the Romans, which is one of the most brilliant pieces of literature ever written. Paul is this just brilliant mind who's been unpacking these concepts and ideas for 11 chapters.

We get to Romans 12. Paul says, *"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" (v. 1).* Paul opens the second half of the letter with this beautiful phrase "in view of God's mercy."

So when we start talking about a worldview and understanding how we navigate the world, for the Christian, everything comes back to the view of God's mercy. God's mercy is this free gift of his love, forgiveness, and understanding that we don't get what we deserve in the sense of our brokenness, that he has intervened on our behalf.

So the whole of creation for the Christian is transformed in view of God's mercy. Then he says, *"Therefore offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true and proper worship."* The sacrifice that Paul mentions here would have immediately grabbed the attention of those first readers because it's a living sacrifice.

They lived in a world in which sacrifices resulted in death. But Paul says to offer our bodies, everything we are, as a living death, which just means we die to our old self, and arise new in a new understanding of the totality of life. That's the important part to understand. When we offer our bodies as living sacrifices, it means every corner of your existence is offered back to God.

The very ordinary things of your life, or what you would call ordinary, are not that. In fact, they are means in which God's mercy can flow into and through your life. We offer all of who we are back to God, saying, "God, can we partner in transforming every corner of my being?" Then Paul says that he aims that sacrifice to that which is holy and pleasing to God.

We are set apart as different. That's all that word holy means. We have a lot of ideas that swirl in our mind around purity culture, and some of that is good, but often some of it can be wrong and bad as well. The main idea of holiness is set apart, meaning distinct and different, that we both experience a living death, and also being set apart as utterly different than the world around us. We are not living for the self any longer, but rather in worship, true and proper worship of God. Death and difference, that's what the invitation is.

So how then do we get there? Well, that brings us to verse 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. v. 2**

Here's where the pathway emerges. There are two things that Paul is contrasting, this conformity to the way of the world, and then this transformation by the renewing of the mind. The word for conform in Greek is *suschemazo*. If you listen closely to it, you can hear the word schematic, because that's where we derive our English word. *Suschemazo* bridges off of this schematic idea, which is a pattern in which you build something out of a direct plan.

This idea of conformity reminds me of that old toy that we used with Play-Doh. You take a lump of Play-Doh and put it in what looked like a lemon juicer, and then you squeezed it down. All of a sudden, it pops out and you have a pumpkin or something. That's the idea of conformity. Paul says that you are placing your life in this mold, this schematic, and the world has a way of pressing you into a particular vision or image of what it wants you to be. Paul says, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world."

What you don't see in the English is that this is in the passive voice, which means this is just naturally happening to us. The conformity to the world, the pressing of the Play-Doh of your life is always just going on by you existing in the Bay Area. The Bay Area has a particular vision, a pattern, a mold, or a schematic of the type of consumer it wants you to be, the type of influence you need to have, the particular needs and desires that are fostered deep within you. By just existing, it's forming you into that.

Maybe we are even more formed through something like the algorithm in our devices that seemingly knows exactly what I want before I even realize I wanted it. It is forming me into that. Paul says, "Listen, do not conform to the pattern of this world." It's one of the reasons, if you caught when we read, the practice for this, that in each of these practices, we word them very particularly. It says, "We practice attentiveness or renewing the mind in contrast to," and then we name something we want to counter-form against, because we believe that all formation is

counter-formation. We don't come in with a clean slate. We come in formed by the world around us, and so therefore, we need to counter-form against that. The conformity of the pressing of the Play-Doh just happens to us.

So the counter-formation is where Paul goes next. It says, *"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" (v. 2).* This one's a little easier. That word transformed is metamorphoo. It's where you can hear *metamorphosis*, which is akin to a caterpillar turning into a butterfly. That's a good visual because that's what the word means, an utter transformation of the whole essence of a thing. That's what Paul says is our counter-formation.

He says, "Be transformed." And I love this because there's a nuance to this where it's this idea of being changed after being with. This idea of being in the presence of something different can actually transform you. One lexicon defines metamorphoo this way, "A profound visible change that proceeds from an inward reality and never a mere external disguise." It's about a transformation at the very core of who you are.

Notice that the verb is also in the passive voice, meaning the transformation is not solely our responsibility. We are not able to transform ourselves, but rather the task of the Christian is to constantly draw our attention back to the Holy Spirit and open up our lives to the transformative work of the Holy Spirit. In the same way that the world passively transforms us, so too the Holy Spirit enters our life and begins to do this deep inward transformation.

Don't lose in there our responsibility. It is like us setting the sails on a sailboat. The wind has to blow, but we are still responsible for setting the sails. You have a task in partnering with the Holy Spirit to bring about your transformation. Because the way we define the mind, which is how Paul says this happens, the transforming of your mind or the renewal of your mind is your directed attentiveness. Therefore, what you give your mind to, what you meditate on, what you fix in front of your eyes is the very means in which the Holy Spirit can enter and transform us.

Your directed attention will give shape and form you into a particular person. But if you direct your attention towards things other than the things of God, you will become like those things. You become what you give your attention to. So it's really important that we cultivate a life that keeps God before us. I've just been rolling this little phrase from Mary Oliver over in my head, "Attention is the beginning of devotion." She's here just echoing so many of the New Testament commands. Here's just a few on this relationship between your formation and the mind.

Think of Philippians 2:5, *"In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus."* Colossians 3:2, *"Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things."* Romans 8:6, *"The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace."* And then maybe the most clear verse, Philippians 4:8:

> **Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy- worthy, think about such things. Phil. 4:8**

I read that and I'm reminded that all formation is counter-formation, because as we go about our life, that seems to be quite the opposite of most of the things I experience or are transmitted through my glowing rectangles, whether it's the TV or the phone. It seems to be quite the opposite. Meditate on anything that is lovely and admirable. Think about such things. What you fill your mind with, you will become. The pathway to renewing the mind is little bit different. Paul layed out the framework, but we still haven't got down to the baseline practicalities. Like, how do we actually go about the renewal of the mind?

Well, for that turn to John 15. This is Jesus' most famous and longest teaching on formation. He uses this metaphor of the vine and the branches. He says, *"I am the vine and you are the branches."* This is in John 15:5. *"If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing."* The metaphor is pretty simple. In the same way that if you were pruning a fruit branch or a vine, and you cut off that particular branch, it can no longer bear the fruit that is flowing through the essence of the vine.

In the same way, Jesus says, "You are the branches and I am the vine." Notice that the life pulsing nutrients and everything is flowing, not through the branch, but through the vine and into the branch. So Jesus says, "If you want to bear fruit, all you do is just remain in the vine." Now, that word can also be translated as "abide." I like that translation. It has a more, longevity to it. To abide in something isn't a short-term thing. You don't just plug in and then unplug from the vine. It takes some time. How do we then go about this abiding in Jesus? Well, go down to verse 7 and 8.

> **If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. John 15:7-8**

Sounds a whole lot like what we read earlier in John 8. *"If you hold to my teaching, then you are my disciples."* The same thing here, he says, "You hold to the Word of God." To hold to the Word of God means you open up your life to make room for the Word to settle deeply into your soul. You allow the Word of God to make a home within you. You cultivate a life and organize your directed consciousness in such a way in which the Word of God is just always at the ready, at your fingertips, available, sinking deeper and deeper into the very core of who you are as a person.

The renewal of the mind that Paul talks about begins with this concept of holding and abiding, allowing Jesus to make a home within your being. It's a helpful metaphor that I want to extend because, it's an agricultural metaphor. I want you to think of your mind as a garden. A gardener has two fundamental tasks. There's more to it, but they tend to go back to these two things. They have to tend to the plants and keep out the weeds. It's the two basic things.

To tend the plants is to put the right things into the garden, good soil, nutrients, water, and sunlight. To keep out the weeds, it's the opposite. It's in the negative. You remove the weeds, the disease, the bugs, the predators, and the gophers, that seek to choke out the life of a garden. The same is true of our minds. Tending the plants in the positive sense is the active planting of the Word of God into our souls, while keeping out the weeds in the negative sense is taking out those things which deter us from holding to Jesus' teachings.

There's a lot of different ways to do this, but the two that we've talked about around here are the practices of fasting and scripture. Let's say a few words on each. First, keeping out the weeds. That's akin to this idea of fasting or maybe you could use the phrase abstinence. That is old language around sexuality, and it may or may not be intended for that purpose, but to abstain from that which is going into the garden, that would deter your mind or choke out the life of the Word. To practice abstinence or fasting is a good, healthy practice.

It may mean you abstain for a season with something like social media, TV, chocolate, or wine, because you're recognizing it may have a hold in your life, and it is a way of pulling the weeds out of your life. Now, part of the process of this isn't just abstaining from the negative, but also teaching your soul that you can, in fact, say no to that which is flooding towards you. That's really the heartbeat of the practice of fasting, in the traditional sense of abstaining from food for a set of time. It isn't so much that food is wrong, in fact, Jesus feasts all throughout the Gospels, but rather it's saying it's forming us through our stomachs.

That when you have an impulse as strong as something like hunger, that the practice of fasting is a way of saying no to the strongest desire to recognize there's a deeper desire that you actually want to attain to. It's similar to almost like working out, putting resistance in place so that in the moment of temptation or whatever it is, you have built up the ability to say, "Oh, I can actually say no to the impulses that flood me." Fasting or abstinence is this practice in which you are working to keep out the weeds of your mind.

What does that look like to what Paul says in 2 Corinthians. *"We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (v. 5).* Fasting is the ability to create margin, to pull back from the incessant flood of things in your life and inputs, and simply allow the thoughts to come to mind, but then take them captive, making them obedient to Christ.

You have lies and things that flood your mind. What would it look like for you to take those, hold them, and say, "This does not match reality. This does not match the teachings of Jesus, and so therefore I remove them. I make it obedient. I call it what it is, a lie," Then allow the truth to flood back in. This is done much easier in the context of community because often the problem is we can't differentiate between truth and lies because we hold everything in our minds as if it is true. That's why you live the way you do. It's the default setting of your mind.

So often we need community, loving people around us who we can say to, "Man, I've been wrestling with this thought. Is that truth or reality?" Then, collectively, you go to the Word of God, you go to the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament and begin to unpack it. Does it match reality? The problem is that's only half the battle. Keeping the weeds out is just part of it, but the problem with the renewal of the mind is that the mind is always thinking. Meaning you have to think about something. You can't just clean slate your brain. Even when you do that, you're thinking about how you're not thinking about anything, which is in fact the thing you're thinking about. So the mind can't not think.

The goal is actually not the elimination of lies or wrong thinking, it's the replacement of thought. That's the second task of tending the plants. This is where scripture becomes so paramount to our formation because we have to cultivate a way of replacing the lies with truth. If the goal is just to eliminate, you will fall short. It will flood right back in if you don't have something more beautiful to meditate on.

There are all sorts of ways to do that. You can tend to the plant, the garden of your mind, with the study of scripture. Think about all our midweek ministries that are launching this week, from Women's Bible Study to Men's Fraternity to our community groups. All those organized beautifully around the study of scripture, about allowing the scriptures to come alive.

I, for one, love the life of the mind. I love to read and study and think deeply about scripture. It's a beautiful gift of my job that I get paid to do that, to study the scriptures, find the ways to dig in and take a deeper step into that. You can also do this through the memorization of scripture. Committing scripture to memory, just holding it in your mind. Taking something like Psalm 23, Psalm 121, or Colossians 3 or all these different beautiful texts and commit them to memory. Ingrain them deep into your consciousness.

There's two benefits to that. One is just having scripture at the ready, so then when you're at a stop sign or a stoplight, stuck in traffic, the Lord can bring those to mind as opposed to just scrolling on social media for a moment.

Secondly, and this is one of the things that in our world we've forgotten, we don't memorize anything nowadays because we can just pull our phone out and look up anything we need. I barely know my wife's phone number, because I don't have a need to memorize it anymore. But the problem with that is that it is a very functional understanding of information. To memorize scripture is much more than just having the scripture at the ready. It's about the process the Holy Spirit does in forming you as you memorize scripture. It's doing something to roll it over in your mind.

So you can tend the garden of your mind through study, memorization, or something a little more simple by just meditating on scripture, sitting with a text, the story in the gospels open in your lap in the morning and reading it over and over. You place yourself in the story, and what would it look like if you were Peter watching this unfold. What would it look like if you were David? Where did this poem come from that he wrote in

the Psalms? What would it look like for Paul? What was he writing into as he was speaking this doctrine of truth?

You slowly meditate, looking at the same text from different angles. I believe this is what Paul says in the transformation by the renewing of the mind. It's keeping out the weeds that are choking out life in your mind, and then also tending the plants, putting in the beautiful things that you want to be in front of your mind.

Two clarifications to end. This is a slow process. It's an imperfect process, and it's difficult. If you've ever, later in life, tried to learn a new skill, you know how difficult it is to make your body correspond with what your head knows. This is a slow, imperfect, difficult process. We get so addicted to the immediate in our moment, and we struggle to conceive that formation is a decades-long process, if not a lifetime process. You will not renew your mind tomorrow. You won't do it next week or the next month. But this slow process is the cumulative effect of showing up faithfully week after week, day after day, month after month, opening your life to the Word and allowing it to reside so deeply in your soul that your mental maps of reality begin to transform and look a little bit more like Jesus.

Second, we are active participants. We often forget that. You have a role to play in your own formation. You have a role to play in what you put before your mind, and the Lord will use that to transform you because you are becoming what you give your attention to. The question before all of us is it what do we want to put before our minds?

If I could say it rather strongly, we would be foolish to assume that just a few moments with the scriptures could counter-form a life where we sit in front of screens and allow violence, lust, and obscenities to flow into our being and think just a few moments in scripture could counter-form that. Of course, when I look at us as a culture, we're in a place where we just despise one another, and anger seems so much at the ready. Look at what we absorb. Look what we absorb through our screens and algorithms.

If we don't counter-form that, we will become what we give our attention to. So what would it look like for us to be a community, a people of renewed minds who resist the incessant inflow of narratives and competing stories and addictions, and say there's a different way of being in this world?

Simone Weil, who's a French philosopher, wrote. "Prayer consists of attention. It is the orientation of all the attention of which the soul is capable toward God." I love that definition of prayer, because this is a long haul, and there are days I show up well to prayer time, and I give the Lord all the attention of my soul, but there are other days I'm capable of just giving a little bit. But church, bring whatever you can. Whatever attentiveness your soul is capable of, bring that to the Lord in prayer. Open up your life to what the Spirit may do in your life.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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