

Keener Romans Session12 Podcast

All right, are you ready to really dig into this idea of renewing your mind? I am. Let's do it. We've got all these notes and excerpts from Dr. Craig Keener's lecture on Romans, specifically chapters 10.33 through 12.13. Yeah, a lot to unpack there.

Definitely. And, you know, just for our listeners, Keener is considered a leading New Testament scholar. Absolutely.

And this lecture is actually part of his larger series on the book of Romans. Right. And this section on renewing your mind, it gets really fascinating.

Oh, it does. We're going to see how this concept, it's not just some abstract theological idea. It actually connects to understanding God's role in, well, pretty much everything.

It touches everything. Yeah. And even things like making daily decisions.

Or even like how we approach something like a calculus test. Right. Like, how does that even work? Well, one thing that makes Keener's approach so powerful is that he starts this whole section by looking at a doxology.

So for those of us who might not be familiar with that term. It's basically a passage that praises God's sovereignty. Oh, OK.

So it's like setting the stage. Right. Exactly.

He dives right into Romans 11.36, where Paul says, for from him and through him and to him are all things. Wow. That's a powerful verse.

Yeah. And it really lays the foundation for everything Keener talks about in terms of our minds changing. So it's like before we even talk about renewing our thinking, we need to understand just how much God is involved in the world, in our lives.

It's even more than involvement, though. It's this incredible interconnectedness. Like what do you mean? It's like God is the author, the director and the producer of this grand play of life.

And we, well, we're just actors on the stage. But he's involved in every aspect of the story. I love that analogy.

It makes this concept of God's sovereignty less abstract and more personal. Exactly. And that's really key to understanding how this connects to renewing our minds.

So if God is the author of the story, then aligning our minds with his is essential, right? Absolutely. And that brings us to Romans 12.2, probably one of the most well-known verses in the Bible. Oh, yeah.

Do not conform to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. That's it. And this is where Keener really starts to break things down.

He points out this huge contrast between conforming to, you know, the present world with all its flaws. Yeah. The world we live in every day.

Right. And then he talks about being transformed for what he calls the new age, the future redeemed reality. Okay.

So you're saying that renewing our minds means shifting our focus, taking our eyes off the temporary things of this world and fixing them on the eternal values of God's kingdom. You got it. It's a total change in perspective.

Wow. Makes you think, huh, what will really matter a million years from now? Right. What's truly important.

What lasts. Okay. So we're talking about aligning our minds with God's, shifting our perspective.

But how does this connect back to actually knowing God's mind? Like Paul talks about in Romans 11.34, you know, where he says, who has known the mind of the Lord? That's where Keener makes this brilliant connection. He suggests that as our minds are renewed, they become more in tune with God's mind. Like we start to see things from his viewpoint.

Exactly. But then the question becomes, how do we actually do that? Yeah. That's what I was thinking.

Okay. Is it just about reading the Bible more? Praying harder? What's the secret formula? It's more than just religious practices. It's this deep, ongoing transformation of our thinking.

Okay. But how does that translate to real life? You know, I mean, we all have to make decisions every single day about our work, our relationships, even what we eat for breakfast. You're right.

It's about daily choices. And to illustrate this, Keener actually shares an example from his own life. Oh, you mean the story about the job offer with the massive raise? Yep.

The \$30,000 dream. I remember that. He was offered this amazing opportunity, but he said something just didn't feel right about it.

Exactly. That's the key. He sensed this lack of peace.

And that's where the renewed mind comes in. It helps us to discern what God's will is, even when the world is screaming at us to do something else. So it's not always about waiting for some kind of, you know, lightning bolt from heaven.

It's about developing this sensitivity to what God is saying through our transformed minds. That's it. And it's a process.

It's not a one-time event. Makes sense. He even ties this back to Romans 12.2, where Paul talks about figuring out what is good, pleasing, and perfect.

It's like, yeah, use your brain, but use it in a way that aligns with God's will. Now you're getting it. Yeah.

And from there, he makes this really interesting connection between the renewed mind and this idea of being a living sacrifice, which Paul talks about in Romans 12.1. Wait, a living sacrifice? That sounds a bit intense, doesn't it? It does sound a bit intense, yeah. But it's actually a profound concept. Keener explains that it's not about some morbid ritual.

Okay, good. Because that was what was coming to mind. It's about recognizing that our bodies, guided by our renewed thinking, become instruments for serving God.

So it's less about, like, you know, dying on an altar and more about living a life that's completely surrendered to God. Exactly. And it's this beautiful paradox.

We're alive, you know, filled with God's spirit, yet our lives are meant to be completely offered up in service to something bigger than ourselves. Wow. So we've got all these pieces fitting together, understanding God's sovereignty, renewing our minds, and offering ourselves as living sacrifices.

They all point to living a life that's truly aligned with God's purpose. But how does this all play out in the day-to-day in terms of serving in the church, being part of the body of Christ? That's a great question. And it's exactly where Keener takes us next.

He goes on to explore Romans 12.3-8, where Paul talks about the many different gifts within the church. And this is where the idea of a renewed mind becomes really critical. Okay, I'm all ears.

Tell me more. Well, first, Keener points out how important it is to avoid comparison when you have a renewed mind. You mean, like, comparing ourselves to others and their gifts? Exactly.

That trap of thinking, oh, I wish I had their gift. Oh, I know that trap all too well. Yeah.

So easy to fall into. But Keener reminds us that God gives each person a specific measure of faith that matches their unique gifts. And all those gifts, they're meant to work together.

So it's like each of us has a special piece of the puzzle. That's a great way to put it. We're all essential to the bigger picture.

And when we understand that, it helps us to figure out where our own gifts can best be used to serve the body. So it's not about trying to get the most impressive gifts or those that make us stand out, but it's about recognizing and using what God has given us, even if it seems small or insignificant to us. Exactly.

And Keener even shares about his own struggles with this. Really? Yeah. Remember when he talks about sensing a stuff leading to write certain books based on the needs he saw in the church? He's not bragging.

He's simply showing that it's about seeking God for the gifts we need to serve effectively. I love that. And it's such a good reminder that this isn't about us getting personal recognition or anything like that.

It's about building up the body of Christ, using what we've been given to strengthen and encourage one another. That's the heart of it. And I think that's a good place to pause and reflect on what we've covered so far.

Absolutely. We've covered a lot of ground in a short amount of time. We've gone from this big, almost overwhelming concept of God's sovereignty to understanding how a renewed mind can impact even the smallest, most mundane choices we make every day.

And then we connected it to our role in the body of Christ. It really is amazing how all these seemingly disparate concepts are connected. And what's even more exciting is seeing how this renewed way of thinking translates into practical ways of living, which is what we're going to dive into next time.

Can't wait for that. This is where the rubber really meets the road. Absolutely.

So stay tuned, everyone, because next time on our deep dive, we're going to be exploring how this renewed mind can shape our relationships and impact our interactions with the world around us. This is going to be good. So we've been unpacking this whole idea of renewing your mind from Romans and how it connects to God's sovereignty and even this concept of being a living sacrifice.

And now I'm really curious to see how this plays out in real life. You know, like how does having a renewed mind actually change the way we interact with people? Well, this is where things get really practical. OK, good.

Because Keener doesn't just leave us hanging with these abstract ideas. Right. He actually gets pretty specific.

Remember, he breaks down this whole section of Romans 12.9-21 into two parts. How we relate to other Christians and then how we interact with those who aren't believers. Right.

So starting with those inside the church, I remember Keener talking about this beautiful concept of Philadelphia. Yes. That brotherly love that's to define how we treat each other in the church.

Right. Right. But it's more than just being nice to each other.

Right. It is. In fact, that Greek word literally means love for siblings.

Oh, wow. It's about having that same deep affection and loyalty you have for your family. Oh, I get it.

Even when they drive you crazy, which, let's be honest, happens sometimes. Yeah, for sure. Even in the church.

But it makes total sense when you consider how Paul describes the church as the body of Christ. Exactly. You know, we're not just a bunch of people who happen to believe the same things.

We're actually interconnected, like different parts of the same body. Right. And for the body to function properly, we have to have that Philadelphia kind of love.

Absolutely. And Keener also talked about how this whole idea of honor and respect was a huge deal in ancient Mediterranean culture. It was.

And how it plays into this. Wasn't it all about status and recognition back then? It was. It was all about who had the most power and prestige.

Right. But Paul totally turns that on its head. He tells us to honor one another above yourselves.

Wow. Just think about that for a second. What would it look like if everyone in a community was actually trying to lift each other up instead of competing for attention? That would be pretty amazing, wouldn't it? It would.

And I love how Keener uses the example of genuinely rejoicing in the accomplishments of other believers, even if it's in an area where he might feel kind of inadequate. Right. Finding joy in their success instead of feeling jealous or envious.

Exactly. And that's a powerful example of how a renewed mind changes our attitudes and responses. It totally is.

So instead of getting caught up in that comparison game and that feeling of competition, we can actually celebrate each other's gifts and contributions. I mean, that would revolutionize so many churches, don't you think? It would. And Keener points out that this Philadelphia love isn't just about celebrating during good times.

Right. He also talks about how crucial it is to weep with those who weep, to actually share in each other's burdens and sorrows. Yeah.

He even used that illustration of the rabbis in ancient Jewish culture, how they would stop their teaching if a wedding or a funeral procession went by. Right. They would actually interrupt their lecture to join in the shared joy or grief.

And that's such a beautiful picture of empathy and solidarity. It is. It reminds us that being part of the body of Christ means being there for each other through the good times and the bad.

Absolutely. And, you know, that also includes being willing to spend time with people who might be marginalized or kind of overlooked both inside and outside of the church. Yeah, totally.

And Keener uses the example of those shepherds. The ones who were the first to hear about Jesus's birth. Right, right.

You know, back then shepherds were seen as pretty low class and they were kind of ostracized. Right. But God chose them to be the first to receive this amazing revelation.

Yeah. It's like God's reminding us that he's often found in unexpected places. Exactly.

And it challenges us to check our own biases. Yeah. You know, are we really seeking God's presence, even if it means stepping outside our comfort zone and embracing those who are different from us? Okay.

So this next part is where I tend to get a little stuck because Keener shifts gears and starts talking about how we should interact with those who don't believe, specifically our enemies. And he doesn't make it sound easy. No, he doesn't.

Like he talks about blessing those who persecute us, not retaliating when someone does something bad to us, even turning our enemies into friends. It just seems impossible. It does go against our natural instincts, doesn't it? Totally.

It's easy to talk about loving people who are easy to love. Right. But what about those who have hurt us? Yeah.

Those who might even be hostile toward our faith. That's where it gets really tough. Yeah.

It sounds like turning the other cheek to the extreme. And honestly, sometimes my gut reaction is like, no way. They don't deserve that.

I think that's a very human response. Right. But Jesus modeled something completely different.

He did. Remember what he said? Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Yeah.

Yeah. That's a tough one. It is.

But okay, let's say I want to do that. Where do I even begin? Like how do I get the strength and the motivation to overcome all that anger and resentment I might be feeling? Well, Keener would say it starts with changing the way we see our enemies. Instead of viewing them as obstacles or threats, we need to see them as people who were created in God's image.

Right. People who need his love and grace just as much as we do. So it's about choosing to see the possibility for redemption, even in the most broken relationships.

Exactly. And that doesn't mean we have to be naive or that we ignore injustice. Yeah.

Obviously, we still need wisdom and healthy boundaries in those situations. Of course. But when our minds are renewed, we can approach these situations with hearts that are looking for peace.

Okay. And ultimately hoping for our enemies to be transformed by God's love. I'm starting to see the difference.

So it's not about just letting people walk all over us or condoning bad behavior. It's about responding in a way that reflects the character of Christ. Responding with compassion, forgiveness, and this unwavering pursuit of good, even when we're facing opposition.

You got it. And that leads right into Keener's final point in this section. Okay.

He reminds us that we're not supposed to be overcome by evil. Instead we're called to overcome evil with good. And this is where the power of a renewed mind really comes into play.

It is. Because it's not just about changing our own thinking for our own benefit. It's about letting that transformation impact our relationships and change the world around us.

That's pretty powerful stuff. So it's not ignoring the problems or pretending that everything is okay. It's about actively choosing to respond in a way that breaks that cycle of negativity and actually brings light into the darkness.

You said it. That's amazing. So I guess this is just the beginning, huh? It is.

Because in the next part of our deep dive, we're going to look at some even more specific ways that this renewed mind plays out in everyday life. Okay. Sounds good.

Stay tuned, everyone, because we're about to get even more practical. All right. So we've come a long way with this renewing your mind thing.

Yeah, we have. You know, we started with this big, grand idea of God's sovereignty and then looked at those everyday struggles, like loving those difficult people in our lives. Now I'm ready for those practical takeaways you mentioned.

Yeah. You know, like how do we actually live this out on a daily basis? Well, Keener really brings everything together in this last part. Okay.

And gives us some clear direction. He points to Romans 13.8, where Paul writes, let no debt remain outstanding except the continuing debt to love one another. For whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.

I see. So it's like, after all this talk about, you know, theology and relationships and all that, Paul's saying, okay, here's the bottom line. Love is what really matters.

It's really the most important thing. Yeah. And Keener points out that Paul's not saying to just throw out all the rules and just, you know, do whatever feels good.

Right. Right. It's not about that.

Yeah. He's showing how love actually is the fulfillment of the law. So are you saying that if we truly love our neighbors, we'll just naturally want to do what's best for them? Yeah.

And that lines up with, like, the principles of the law anyway? Exactly. It's more about having the right heart attitude than just rigidly following a bunch of rules. Okay.

But love gets messy sometimes, you know? Oh, for sure. How do you love someone who's constantly hurting you or taking advantage of you? That's a tough one. And Keener gets that.

Yeah. It's where the challenge and the beauty of this whole teaching really come together. Right.

You know, he reminds us that Paul actually gives us some very specific instructions about what this love looks like in action. Oh, yeah. I remember him going through that list of commands in verses 9 to 10.

No adultery. No murder. No stealing.

No coveting. All those things. Right.

But then he kind of sums it all up. Yeah. In that one core principle.

Yeah. Love your neighbor as yourself. Wow.

It's like a condensed version of the Ten Commandments, but with love as the foundation? That's exactly it. Makes it seem both simpler and way harder at the same time, huh? It does. And Keener makes it clear that this love isn't just for certain people.

Right. It's for everyone. Even those who are different from us.

Yeah. Those who've wronged us or even those we consider enemies. I mean, that's a tall order.

It is. Thinking about all the times I've been hurt or betrayed. Yeah.

It's hard to even imagine loving those people. It's not easy. No.

But Keener brings in this really interesting point. Okay. He points out that loving your neighbor wasn't just a Christian idea.

It was central to Judaism as well. Oh, really? I didn't know that. It was.

And there's this famous story in the Jewish Talmud. Okay. Where this rabbi is asked to sum up the entire Torah.

Wow. The whole Torah. While standing on one foot.

My pressure. I know, right? So the rabbi says, what is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. That is the whole Torah.

The rest is the explanation. Go and learn. Wow.

It's pretty powerful. It is. It really shows how central this concept was in both Judaism and Christianity.

Yeah. And Keener uses that to emphasize that Jesus didn't come to abolish the law. He came to fulfill it.

Right. To show us its true purpose, which is love. So it's not about blindly following a set of rules.

It's about embodying this all-encompassing love. That goes beyond boundaries and challenges our own limited understanding of who deserves compassion. Exactly.

And when we make the choice to love our neighbor as ourselves, we're actually joining in something much bigger than ourselves. Oh, I like that. We're aligning ourselves with God's own heart for humanity.

That's beautiful. His desire to see healing, restoration, and flourishing communities. You know, this has been an incredible deep dive.

It has. We've seen how renewing our minds touches every aspect of our lives. So many things.

From our relationship with God, to our relationships with each other, and now even to this call to love radically. Yeah, it's all connected. It really is.

So what would you say is the most important takeaway for our listeners to remember as they're processing all of this? I think the most important thing to remember is that renewing our minds isn't a one-time event. Right. It's an ongoing journey.

Okay. It's about constantly surrendering to God's spirit. Yeah.

And letting him transform the way we think. It's about being empowered to live out his love in real practical ways every day. And it's an active journey too, right? It is.

It's not something that just happens automatically. No, we have to be intentional about it. We have to spend time in God's word, seek his guidance, and find people who will support us and challenge us along the way.

You got it. So as we wrap up this deep dive, here's a question for everyone listening. Thinking about what we've learned about renewing your mind, what's one area of your life where you sense God calling you to think differently? That's a good one.

How could changing your perspective actually impact what you do today, right now? It's a great question to ponder. And remember, this is just the beginning. There's so much more to explore as you continue this journey of renewing your mind.

So true. Keep searching, keep learning, and keep letting God's spirit lead you on this amazing adventure of faith and transformation. Until next time, stay curious and stay open to all the amazing things God has in store for you.