

Sacrifice

THE LIFE OF A BELIEVER IS ONE OF SACRIFICE AND COMMUNITY.

Romans 12:1-13

1 Therefore, **brothers and sisters**, **A** in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as **a living sacrifice**, **B** holy and pleasing to God; this is your **true worship**. **C** **2** Do not be **conformed** **D** to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God. **3** For by the grace given to me, I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he should think. Instead, **think sensibly**, **E** as God has distributed a measure of faith to each one. **4** Now as we have **many parts in one body**, **F** and all the parts do not have the same function, **5** in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. **6** According to the grace given to us, we have **different gifts**: **G** If **prophecy**, **H** use it according to the proportion of one's faith; **7** if service, use it in service; if teaching, in teaching; **8** if **exhorting**, **I** in exhortation; giving, with **generosity**; **J** leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness. **9** Let **love** **K** be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good. **10** Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Take the lead in honoring one another. **11** Do not lack diligence in zeal; **be fervent in the Spirit**; **L** serve the Lord. **12** Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer. **13** Share with the saints in their needs; pursue hospitality.

Exploring Key Words

- A** Despite Paul's words for both Jews and Gentiles, he affirmed their relationship through Jesus.
- B** Under the law, sacrifices were slaughtered and burned. In Christ, sacrifices are living and active in service to God. See "Dig Deeper" on page 52.
- C** "Reasonable service" (KJV). Worship through personal sacrifice is a logical response to the mercy God demonstrates in salvation.
- D** Taking on the shape or pattern of something. The alternative to being shaped by the world is to be transformed by the inner working of God.
- E** "Think soberly" (KJV); "think with sober judgment" (ESV). Focusing on God promotes humility and proper perspective in the church.
- F** Paul used the human body to illustrate the church. Believers are individuals, yet they are unified under Jesus, their Head (see Col. 1:18).
- G** Every believer has at least one spiritual gift, but no one has every gift. So, believers need each other to build the church into what God desires.
- H** A Spirit-inspired proclamation. It can relate to future events (prediction), but it often deals with practical application of truth (preaching).
- I** "Encourage" (NIV). Depending on context, the Greek word can mean to comfort or to challenge. It is translated "urge" in verse 1.
- J** "Simplicity" (KJV). The Greek term suggests sincerity. Generous people give freely to honor God and help others without an agenda or ulterior motive.
- K** Paul taught the Corinthians that spiritual gifts are worthless without love (1 Cor. 13:1-3).
- L** Central to his list of practical ways to display faith, Paul challenged the Romans to lean into the Holy Spirit and to let Him fuel their efforts.



Living Sacrifice (Rom. 12:1-2)

- Paul urged his readers to become “living sacrifices.” Offering their lives to God served as an appropriate and fitting act of worship.
- He also warned them to avoid being shaped by worldly influences. Instead, they should renew their minds. This would allow them to grow in godliness and to better understand and act on God’s will.

In the Church (Rom. 12:3-8)

- Each believer is a part of the body of Christ and has a purpose within His body.
- Though given different gifts by the Holy Spirit, each Christ follower is called to exercise his or her gift faithfully.
- In this way, the whole body is equipped to serve and make a difference in the world.

In Relationship (Rom. 12:9-13)

- Next, Paul challenged the believers in Rome to love one another sacrificially. They were to love deeply and show honor, giving themselves to kingdom work.
- The Romans were urged to demonstrate hope and perseverance, along with persistent prayer. Believers were to be generous and hospitable.
- By living out their faith in practical ways, the Romans would give evidence of the grace God had given them.

Summary Statements

The life of a believer is one of sacrifice and community.

- As believers, our lives are to be shaped by God, not by worldly influences.
- Believers are to serve alongside each other, exercising their God-given gifts.
- As believers practice sacrificial love in their relationships, their lives give evidence of God’s grace.

Memory Verse

Romans 12:1-2

Key Doctrine

The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. (See Acts 2:41-47; 1 Corinthians 12:7.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at goExploreTheBible.com.

ENGAGE

Bonus: *What are some skills you would share for free just to help someone else? Why?*

- What's in it for me? It's a question we've all heard—and probably asked.
- When we give our time, money, or abilities, we feel entitled to know what benefit we'll receive in return. But when we shift from being consumers to being participants, a different question emerges: *What can I do to help?*

Which question—“What's in it for me?” or “How can I help?”—tends to shape your thinking most, and why? (PSG, p. 91)

EXPLORE

LIVING SACRIFICE (ROM. 12:1-2)

Bonus: *How do you feel about “sacrifice”? Why?*

- “Therefore” connects Paul's previous theological teaching with the practical application he was about to explain. He also addressed the Romans as “brothers and sisters.” This emphasized both his affection for them and their connection to one another in God's family.
- Believers should present themselves as “living sacrifices” to God in light of His grace. For both Jews and Gentiles, sacrifices were slaughtered and burned. But true worship of God involves complete surrender and service to Him.
- Paul distinguished between being conformed to the world and being transformed by Christ. Rather than letting the culture shape us, we should renew our minds, aligning our thoughts with God's thoughts. By doing this, we can identify and obey God's will better.

What obstacles might prevent us from offering our lives to God as “living sacrifices”? (PSG, p. 94)

IN THE CHURCH (ROM. 12:3-8)

Bonus: *What are your strongest talents and abilities? How do they compare to your spiritual gift(s) as a believer?*

- Paul emphasized humility as we labor together. Humility protects us from falling into selfish pride. Rather than yielding to arrogance, we exercise wisdom when we think and act with sober judgment.
- The church is made up of individuals who share a common testimony of salvation through faith in Jesus. Yet, we differ in our abilities and backgrounds. We are “one body,” united and depending on one another. But we are given different gifts by God so we may serve Him together.
- The Lord has entrusted some with the gift of prophecy, speaking His Word with clarity and conviction. Others are gifted more for service than speech. Christians also

may exercise gifts like teaching, exhorting (encouraging), leading, giving, and showing mercy.

- Every believer has at least one spiritual gift, and no believer has every gift. So, we need each other to fill in the gaps. When we faithfully use our spiritual gifts in cooperative service, the church matures and grows strong.

How does your exercise of spiritual gifts contribute to the overall spiritual maturity of the church? What steps can you take this week to intentionally build up another believer through your gifting? (PSG, p. 96)

IN RELATIONSHIP (ROM. 12:9-13)

Bonus: *How do you want people to treat you in the church? How should that affect the way you treat others?*

- As we exercise our spiritual gifts, it's important to remember that we serve alongside fellow believers in the church. For this reason, Scripture provides us with a series of imperatives that guide our collaboration. The first imperative is to do all things in genuine love.
- Part of showing love is avoiding what is evil. It also involves showing honor and respect for others. We serve diligently, trust the Spirit's guidance, nurture hope, endure persecution, and demonstrate hospitality.

How can you be more diligent and intentional in your service to the Lord and His people? (PSG, p. 98)

CHALLENGE

As a group, encourage adults to share their approach to presenting themselves as a living sacrifice to God.

Discuss the difference between worshipping God—which is true worship—and worshipping worship itself. (PSG, p. 99)

Spend some intentional time this week reflecting on your love for the Lord.

In what ways do you reflect your love for Him in your love for others in the church? What changes do you need to make so you can demonstrate your love for them? (PSG, p. 99)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 98)

Memorize a verse and apply it to a real-life situation.

Memorize Romans 12:1-2 in your preferred translation. Paraphrase the verse to meditate on the meaning. Evaluate ways that you are offering yourself as a living sacrifice to the Lord. Also evaluate ways the world is trying to conform you to its image. List ways your mind can be renewed to the will of God.

Divide the group into teams of two or three and direct them to create their own paraphrase of Romans 12:1-2 as mentioned in the Bible Skill activity on page 98 of the PSG. After a few minutes, allow a volunteer from each team to share their paraphrase. Lead a brief discussion on ways believers can pursue God's will by avoiding the temptation to conform and to nurture transformation through a renewed mind. Close the activity in prayer, asking God to make Himself known to each adult in a special way.

OBJECT LESSON: TOOLBOX

Gather a toolbox and several everyday tools such as a hammer, screwdriver, and wrench. Show adults the tools and encourage a few volunteers to share their funniest home repair stories. Share how you feel about your own repair skills and why.

Explain how Romans 12:3-8 reveals the need for all types of tools (gifts) to build up the church. Say: *Each tool in the box is needed for a specific application, just as each God-given spiritual gift supports the body.* Emphasize that God is an expert builder, and He will equip us to use the tools He provides.

Note that all the gifts are needed at different times and in different situations. Discuss why it is important to have all the tools in the box to be prepared for any circumstance. Remind adults that God has spread out the gifts across the church so that believers have to depend on one another. Urge them to avoid the temptation to work on their own when they can find others who will supplement their weaknesses.

TRUE WORSHIP

Paul's words in Romans 12:1 go to the heart of what worship truly entails. It is not a moment in a church service or a song performed on Sunday morning. Worship is the daily offering of yourself to God. It is presenting your whole being, body, mind, and spirit to the Lord in gratitude for His mercy.

When Paul called the Romans to become a "living sacrifice," he was picturing a life continually given over to God. In the Old Testament, sacrifices were offered once and consumed on the altar. They were here one minute and gone a few moments later. For the follower of Christ, though, sacrifice is ongoing. Every choice, every action, and every attitude becomes part of the offering, an expression of "true worship."

This worship is both deeply personal and profoundly practical. It begins with the heart's response to what God has done in Christ. We remember His mercy, His forgiveness, and His love. That remembrance should move us toward surrender. Worship flows from gratitude, not from obligation.

Paul also connected worship to spiritual transformation. Refusing to be shaped by the world's values requires renewed thinking. As our minds are reshaped by God's truth, our lives begin to reflect His character. Worship is not only what we say, but it also involves what we choose to do with our lives.

From verse 3 onward, Paul demonstrated that worship naturally overflows into the way we treat others. We serve in the body of Christ using the gifts God has given. We love sincerely, honor others above ourselves, meet needs, and show hospitality. These are not random acts of kindness or pious displays of legalistic obligation. Rather they are central to what it means to worship God.

In the end, worship is not confined to sacred spaces or special times. It is the stuff of life for believers, those who are surrendered to God, transformed by His truth, and committed to loving Him and others well.