

Small Group Study

A Living Sacrifice

From the sermon series, "Giving as Worship"



SCRIPTURE

Have a volunteer read the following scripture:

Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)

1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. 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.

QUESTIONS

1. In Romans 12:1, Paul says, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship." Paul's admonition to the believers in Rome was to sacrifice themselves to God, not as a sacrifice on the altar, as the Mosaic Law required the sacrifice of animals, but as a living sacrifice. The dictionary defines sacrifice as "anything consecrated and offered to God." As believers, how do we consecrate and offer ourselves to God as a living sacrifice? What would our lives look like if we truly lived this way?

2. Under the Old Covenant, God accepted the sacrifices of animals. But these were just a foreshadowing of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. Because of His ultimate, once-for-all-time sacrifice on the cross, the Old Testament sacrifices became obsolete and are no longer of any effect (Hebrews 9:11-12). For those who are in Christ by virtue of saving faith, the only acceptable worship is to offer ourselves completely to the Lord. Under God's control, the believer's yet-unredeemed body can and must be yielded to Him as an instrument of righteousness (Romans 6:12-13; 8:11-13). In view of the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus for us, this is only "reasonable." Read Luke 14:27. What does the phrase "carry your cross" have in common with being a "living sacrifice"?

Icebreakers

Use the questions below to help people open up and to focus your meeting. It is very helpful to go around in a circle with the leader going first. (Remember if you have new members or guests you should take time to introduce everyone.)

- 1.** What are some of the sacrifices others have made for you in your life?
- 2.** Tell us of a time when you decided not to conform any longer to the pattern of those around you.
- 3.** What is the hardest test or exam you've taken in your life?



3. What does a living sacrifice look like in the practical sense? Romans 12:2 helps us to understand. We are a living sacrifice for God by not being conformed to this world. The world is defined for us in 1 John 2:15-17 (NLT):

15 Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. 16 For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. 17 And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.

What are some of the patterns of this world? Of those patterns, which ones are you most tempted to conform to?

4. How can believers NOT be conformed to the world? By being “transformed by the renewing of our minds.” How do you think a Christian can renew his or her mind? How do you think God’s word can renew *your* mind?

5. We are “transformed by the renewing of our minds” primarily through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and through the power of God’s Word. We need to hear (Romans 10:17), read (Revelation 1:3), study (Acts 17:11), memorize (Psalm 119:9-11), and meditate on (Psalm 1:2-3) Scripture. The Word of God, ministered in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, is the only power on earth that can transform us from worldliness to true spirituality. We need it to be “thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16). The result is that we will be “able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2b). It is the will of God for every believer to be a living sacrifice for Jesus Christ.

Which is more difficult for you? Listening, Responding or Trusting the Holy Spirit? Hearing, Reading, Studying, Memorizing, or Meditating on scripture? Which is easiest?

6. What steps can you take this week to grow in this area?

God bless,

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