

LEADERS NOTES
LIVING BEYOND THIS LIFE - WORSHIP PART X
“GETTING NEAR GOD”
JULY 26-27, 2008

Romans 12:1-2 – What does it mean to present your body as a living sacrifice? Why does Paul urge us to do this? Discuss some specific ways that you can live out Romans 12:1 this week.

In Romans 12:1-2, Paul exhorts us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God. Paul used the word for body that refers to the whole body or life – when we present ourselves to God, we need to give Him *all* of ourselves, not just the parts we are comfortable surrendering to Him. Surrendering our bodies is a reasonable service to God in response to Christ dying on our behalf. The least we can do is *live* for Him, since He died for us. Presenting our lives as a living sacrifice is an act of gratitude for Christ’s mercies in our lives (Believer’s Bible Commentary). Paul, himself, responded to God by presenting his life to God – in Galatians 2:20 he declares, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the {life} which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.” Paul was willing to give God all of himself in response to the overwhelming sacrifice that Christ made for him.

Notice that Paul describes our offering as a *living sacrifice*. In the Old Testament, people presented *dead* sacrifices to God to seek His forgiveness, to show gratitude, and to demonstrate honor and submission to Him (Deuteronomy 14:21). Now, under the new covenant (a promise of forgiveness through the grace and mercy of the finished work of Christ’s death on the cross), we are called to offer God a *living* sacrifice – not a sacrifice of an animal as in the Old Testament, but of our own lives (heart, mind, soul, and body).

We are also told to *present* our bodies as a living sacrifice – present means to yield. We need to yield our bodies/lives to God by giving over our rights and desires willingly to God and let Him give us His desires and yield to His will. According to the Believer’s Bible Commentary for Romans 12, we can know God by yielding our bodies, living for Christ, and having a transformed mind.

How can you be transformed as Romans 12:2 states? What areas are you tempted to conform to the world? How can conforming to the world impede your worship?

When we yield our will and surrender our lives to Christ, our minds are transformed. In Romans 12:2, Paul uses a word for transformation that is also used to describe Christ’s transfiguration (Matthew 17:2). Transformation, in both instances, was a miraculous process of *metamorphosis*. This transformation or metamorphosis can only take place through the Holy Spirit and in response to our submitting to God’s will. Transformation is what happens to us when we give our lives over to Christ completely. We cannot transform ourselves, however. We must trust God to change us.

God alone is able to completely transform our thinking and mindset. When we receive Christ, God begins this process of transformation. The more we yield our will and surrender our lives to God, the more we are transformed into Christ’s likeness. In the process of transformation, God gives us a new mind (the mind of Christ – 1 Corinthians 2:16), a new heart (from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh - Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26-27), and a new soul (we are a new creation – 2 Corinthians 5:17).

John 16:13-16 describes the process of how the Holy Spirit transforms our thinking and gives us the mind of Christ. God is willing to disclose His thoughts to us even though His thoughts are not our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8). Our thoughts are often influenced by the world and society. Romans 12:2 warns us not to let the world squeeze us into its mold (Phillip’s version of Romans 12:2). When we allow the world to influence our way of thinking, we are essentially allowing Satan to rule our thoughts because he is the ruler of this world (John 12:31). According to Ephesians 2:2, we used to be controlled by the world and the prince of the power of the air (Satan). However, we are no longer bound to this world since Christ has overcome Satan and his power over us (Galatians 1:4, 1 John 5:4-5). James 4:7 tells us that if we submit to God and resist the devil, the enemy will flee from us. If we continually reexamine ourselves and resubmit our lives to God, we can be in position to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

We are also transformed as God gives us a new heart. Ezekiel 11:19 and 36:26-27 describe the process of God giving us a new heart. He takes our hardened hearts (hardened by the world, sin, and the enemy), and gives us a new, softer heart that is moldable to His heart.

Finally, our souls are transformed when we submit our lives to Christ. In order to be transformed, we have to get rid of the old self and put on the new self (Ephesians 4:22-24). Our responsibility is to put off the old (surrender our old ways, our will) and put on the new self (Christ-like thinking and God's will). God's responsibility is to change us, guide us, and empower us to live out of the new self. As we do this, we are renewed and made to be more like Christ (Colossians 3:10).

The opposite of being transformed is being conformed to the world. We may live in the world, but we should not love the things of the world (1 John 2:15). The world tries to squeeze us into its mold – it tempts us to fulfill our selfish and natural desires at any cost (lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life - 1 John 2:16). When we are conforming to the world, our mind and hearts are focused on the world and ourselves and not on God. It is impossible to worship God in spirit and in truth when our minds and hearts are not focused on Him. Ephesians 4:14-16 reminds us that when we are living for Christ, we are no longer controlled by the world and molded by its various ways of thinking and behavior. Instead, we should keep seeking God's heart, thoughts, and will (Colossians 3:1-5) through the power of the Holy Spirit – He has given us everything we need to live victorious lives (2 Peter 1:3-8).

Read Ephesians 5:19-21, Hebrews 10:22-25, Psalm 28:2, Psalm 47:1, Psalm 95:6, 2 Samuel 6:16,21-22. What are some of the ways people worshiped God in these passages? What are some of the ways you have observed people worship God?

People worship God in many different ways – serving, kneeling, shouting, dancing, singing, etc. The most important thing is that we worship from a genuine heart and we worship as the Holy Spirit leads us. Allow God to stretch you in times of worship – if He moves you to kneel or raise your hands, obey and allow God to move in your spirit as you submit yourself to Him.

Ephesians 5:19-21

- Speaking words of life/ speaking Scripture
- Singing hymns and songs
- Playing an instrument
- Giving thanks
- Submitting to one another/ putting others before ourselves

Hebrews 10:22-25

- Drawing near to God with sincerity and faith
- Encouraging others to good works/ doing God's work and coming alongside others in their work
- Loving one another
- Meeting with other believers to encourage one another

Psalm 28:2

- Crying out to God
- Lifting hands to God

Psalm 47:1

- Clapping
- Shouting to God with joy

Psalm 95:6

- Bowing down/ kneeling before God

2 Samuel 6:16, 21-22

- Dancing and leaping for joy
- Celebrate before God