



Sacrifice

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

ROMANS 12:1-13

What's in it for me? It's a question we've all heard—and one we've probably asked ourselves. 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?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

ROMANS 12:1-21

Paul has been guiding his readers through a rich exploration of the theology of sin and salvation. He has shown that every person—no matter their background or ethnicity—stands guilty before God (Rom. 1–4). Yet the story is not without hope. God has made a way for us to be rescued from sin through the death and resurrection of Jesus (chap. 5). Those who choose to follow Christ can no longer live for themselves; they have died and been buried with Him (chap. 6). And by His power, God has raised them to live for His glory through the work of His Spirit (chaps. 7–8).

In chapters 9–11, Paul paused his main argument to address the history and future of the Jewish people. Since the Roman church was likely made up of both Jews and Gentiles, he wanted each group to understand that God had not abandoned His chosen nation. Although many Jews had rejected the Messiah, their rejection was not total. Some—Paul himself included—had embraced Christ, and many more would receive the gift of salvation.

Paul also explained that Israel’s rejection opened the way for Gentiles to hear and respond to the gospel. No matter one’s nationality or ethnicity, he emphasized that salvation comes through faith in Christ. This message may have been difficult for Jews who were deeply committed to the law, but faith—not works—had always been God’s means of drawing people to Himself.

With this theological foundation in place, Paul turned his attention in the final chapters of Romans—including chapter 12—to the practical implications of salvation. Having laid the theological groundwork, he now urged his readers to live out their faith in daily life. In doing so, they would display the gospel to the world around them.

 **Read Romans 12:1-13 in your Bible and underline each command. How would you summarize Paul’s main point in this section of his letter?**

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

LIVING SACRIFICE (ROM. 12:1-2)

¹ **Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship.** ² **Do not be conformed 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.**

VERSE 1

Paul began with *therefore*. This connects what he has been teaching to what he was about to teach. He shifted from theological explanation to practical application.

He addressed the Roman believers as *brothers and sisters*. This emphasized both his affection for them and their connection to one another. They were all part of God's family.

Paul's challenge to his readers was made *in view of the mercies of God*. In response to the mercy God had shown them in Christ, he admonished them to present their *bodies as a living sacrifice* to Him.

Gentiles and Jews alike who lived in Rome would have known about sacrifices. In the temple in Jerusalem as well as the pagan temples in Rome, worshipers sacrificed animals on altars. Unlike the animal sacrifice that had no choice in the matter, believers choose to become living sacrifices. This is our *true worship*. Worship is not an event that happens only on Sunday morning, nor is it a place to go on Sundays. Worship is the active and willing choice to live in submission to God.

VERSE 2

Choosing to live as living sacrifices is challenging. The world expects us to conform to the ways and values of *this age*. *Conform* means to fit into a particular mold. But instead of trying to fit into the world's way of living, God expects His people to be *transformed*. The Greek word used here is related to the English word *metamorphosis*, which refers to a transformation from one thing to another. Being transformed starts on the inside. It is a work of the Holy Spirit in us and will affect our attitudes, affections, and actions.

The transforming work of the Holy Spirit involves the *renewing* of our minds. He changes the way we think and how we see the world and our place in it. He gives us wisdom and discernment to recognize and fulfill His will for our lives. As we *discern* His *will* for us, we'll learn what is *good* and *pleasing* to Him.



What obstacles might prevent us from offering our lives to God as “living sacrifices”?

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

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, as God has distributed a measure of faith to each one. ⁴ Now as we have many parts in one body, 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: If prophecy, use it according to the proportion of one's faith; ⁷ if service, use it in service; if teaching, in teaching; ⁸ if exhorting, in exhortation; giving, with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness.

VERSES 3-5

The *•grace* God extended to Paul in the first century continues to benefit believers in the twenty-first. Through Paul's instruction, we receive God's wisdom, enabling us to serve Him collectively within the church. Central to his message is the necessity for every believer to cultivate humility as we labor together in service to the Lord. As spiritual brothers and sisters in Christ, we remain susceptible to pride—becoming conceited or arrogant when we perceive ourselves as more gifted than others. Such attitudes can foster the harmful habit of viewing ourselves as more significant than fellow members of the body.

Paul's emphasis on humility protects us from falling into selfish pride. Rather than yielding to arrogance, we exercise wisdom when we think with sober judgment. Such judgment is demonstrated when we put our faith into practice by employing the spiritual gifts God has entrusted to us. Paul illustrated the importance of each

gift by comparing the church to the human body. Just as a body is composed of many parts, each with its own distinct function, so too the church is made up of many members who contribute in unique ways.

This analogy helps us recognize the Lord's wisdom in granting diverse spiritual gifts to His people. The church comprises individuals who share a common testimony: each has received God's gift of salvation. Though we differ in our abilities and backgrounds, we belong to ***one body in Christ***. Because we are united, we work together in mutual dependence. When we faithfully use our spiritual gifts in cooperative service, the church matures and grows strong.

VERSES 6-8

It is important to remember that we possess spiritual gifts solely because of God's ***grace***. He has given us ***different gifts*** so we may serve Him together. As we devote ourselves to His purposes, we can rely on His guidance to use these gifts in ways that honor Him. Moreover, these gifts are employed toward a shared aim: the strengthening of the church. When used in this manner, they bring spiritual enrichment and fulfillment to the body of Christ.

The Lord has entrusted some members of the church with the gift of ***prophecy***. They exercise this gift faithfully when they put their trust in Him and speak His Word with clarity and conviction for the benefit of His people.

However, not all believers are called to speak prophetically. Some serve the Lord more through ***service*** than through speech. They demonstrate their faith by willingly embracing opportunities to assist and support others. The church also requires those whom God has given the gift of ***teaching***. These individuals employ their faith by instructing others in the truths of Scripture, thereby fostering spiritual growth within the congregation.

The practice of using spiritual gifts extends to other areas of ministry as well. Believers with the gift of ***exhortation*** are eager to encourage and uplift fellow Christians. Others express their faith through generous ***giving***, trusting the Lord's direction as they contribute to the ministries of the church. Still others reveal their faith by ***leading*** with ***diligence***, guiding their spiritual brothers and sisters with care and responsibility. Those who have been graced with the gift of ***mercy*** minister with ***cheerfulness*** rather than reluctance, compassionately attending to those who are suffering.



Why is it important for each believer to serve within the church? What results can we anticipate if believers fail to use their gifts in the church?



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?



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.)

IN RELATIONSHIPS (ROM. 12:9-13)

⁹ Let love 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; 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.

VERSE 9

As we exercise our faith through the use of our spiritual gifts, it is important to remember that we do not labor alone. We serve alongside fellow believers within the church. For this reason, Scripture provides us with a series of imperatives that guide our collaboration. These foundational directives, when taken seriously, strengthen our relationships as we serve Him together. The first

imperative directs our attention to **love**, which functions as the overarching principle. Genuine love rejects all forms of **hypocrisy**. We love sincerely when we cling to what is good and deliberately reject every expression of **evil**. Hypocrisy, however, allows space for merely pretending to value what is good rather than embracing it wholeheartedly.

VERSE 10

The command to **love one another** is directed toward a clearly defined community—our fellow believers within the church. This love reflects true spiritual maturity only when it rises above superficial sentiment. We are called to love one another **deeply**, exhibiting the kind of genuine affection characteristic of a healthy family united as **brothers and sisters** in Christ. As spiritual siblings, we possess the capacity to cultivate profound and enduring bonds of love. We demonstrate this familial affection by affirming and honoring one another. Rather than seeking recognition for ourselves, we intentionally celebrate the contributions of other believers. We willingly and wholeheartedly step forward to acknowledge and esteem our fellow members in the body of Christ.

VERSE 11

A disposition shaped by genuine love equips believers to fulfill the next imperative as well. Whereas the previous instruction directed our attention toward one another, this command is oriented toward **the Lord** Himself. As we mature in our relationship with Him, we cultivate an eagerness to serve Him with diligence. Increasing love for God produces a **zeal** aimed at pleasing Him. In this process, we come to understand that authentic zeal is rooted in a deliberate attentiveness to the guidance of the **Spirit**. Spiritual sensitivity forms and sustains our eagerness to follow His leading. Consequently, we do not approach our discipleship with reluctance or indifference; rather, we remain focused on our highest priority—rendering faithful service to the Lord.

VERSE 12

Our love for the Lord and for one another as spiritual siblings in Him equips us to withstand the difficulties we encounter as we work together. Even in circumstances that appear devoid of **hope**, we remain steadfast, refusing to lose sight of the confidence we possess in the Lord. His leadership sustains us, prompting us to rejoice in the assurance of His unfailing guidance through every

challenge we face. Consequently, we do not surrender to panic when difficulty arises. Instead, our hope in Him steadies our hearts, enabling us to persevere with patience amid *affliction*. In the trials, we persist in *prayer*, recognizing the immeasurable value of maintaining deep communion with the Lord.

VERSE 13

Love also compels us to look beyond our own concerns. As we work alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ, we remain attentive to their well-being. When we see that they’re struggling, we give assistance in whatever ways we can. Like us, they are *saints*—set apart for the Lord—and we share a common desire to serve Him faithfully. Accordingly, we care for one another without hesitation, generously providing whatever support is needed so that their *needs* might be met. A spirit of genuine *hospitality* moves us to open both our homes and our hearts to one another.

 **How can you be more diligent and intentional in your service to the Lord and His people?**



BIBLE SKILL: *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.

APPLY THE TEXT

- + 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.

 **Share with your Bible study group your approach to presenting yourself as a live sacrifice to God. Discuss the difference between worshiping God—which is true worship—and worshiping worship itself.**

 **How would you describe your love for the Lord today? 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?**

 **Memorize Romans 12:1-2.**

Prayer Needs
