



LIFE GROUPS STUDY GUIDE

WEEK 1: "A CHURCH OF SACRIFICES"

ROMANS 12:1-2

Scripture:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform 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.

(Romans 12:1-2)

Sermon Outline from Pastor Sam:

The very first thing that the church is called to do in response to God's mercies (outlined in chapters 1-11 in Romans) is to die daily as a *living sacrifice*.

The problem is, as John MacArthur points out: "a living sacrifice keeps crawling off the altar". We must deny the comfortable and secure, and give our whole selves over to God as a fragrant offering *daily*.

Our *bodies* must be put on the altar as a living sacrifice. This means our literal *body*. Our tongue, hands, feet, sexual organs, posture. We must reject the religious culture that **splits souls from bodies**, and instead acknowledge the sacredness of our body in God's eyes. Our bodies can be trained, through the Spirit and our own discipline, to be in a **constant state of readiness to do the will of God. Our body can be our ally, not our enemy.**

Paul says earlier in Romans 6: ¹³ Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness,^a but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.

Practically, Dallas Willard in his book *Renovation of the Heart* outlines 4 ways we can definitively do this in practice:

1. Release your body to God – through a prayerful action...saying to God "use my hands, feet etc for your glory and purposes, not my own."
2. No longer idolise your body – Reject our culture of body obsession and body shaming others based on looks.
3. Do not misuse your body – as a source of sexual gratification, or to dominate or control others, manipulating others through looking "sexy", or giving damning looks. Reject using your tongue for gossip or mockery.
4. Properly honour and care for your body – Commit to keep a rhythm of sabbath, secrecy and silence.

Paul also calls us to put our *mind on the altar* to glorify God.

Not conforming to the pattern of this world, means not being formed by the ideas of this temporary age (Greek: aeon). Instead Paul calls the church to be transformed to think as those who will one day think and feel in eternity (the new heavens and new earth). So, you don't wait until heaven to stop thinking of sin, or fearing tomorrow... the process is happening now. You are learning, through

the work of the Spirit, to become the **future you**. **Example of the transformation our thinking goes through:**

THINKING & FEELING IN THIS AGE	THINKING & FEELING IN ETERNITY
Thoughts radically focused on “me”	Thoughts radically focused on God & people
Many “dark” emotions (shame, fear)	All our emotions redeemed
Pride in my own “knowledge”	Gratefully share in <i>God’s</i> infinite knowledge
Pull to find meaning in temporal things	Fully find meaning in God’s story

A renewing of the mind is like a renovation of your mind:

1. Gut whatever keeps your mind focused on this age:

-images (idolising the body), unhelpful ideas that create dark emotions.

2. Build in Whatever FORMS you

-Scripture memorisation.

-Learning to look God in the face (worship – looking at *the greatness, the supreme worth of God*...knowing Him & then in turn, knowing what he thinks of you)<<getting us ready for an eternity of this!

Committing to being a living sacrifice means you will *know that this is God’s true will for your life*. We will also become **a church** on the altar, whom the Spirit will ignite as a collective living offering to God.

Sermon Questions:

1. In verse 1, Paul refers to *the mercies of God*. Name some of the mercies already outlined in Romans 1-11. Take a moment to sit in the wonder of each of them.
2. What would you need to change in your life right now to adopt a lifestyle that looked like “a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God”? (i.e. how you view your body, rhythms of life that help your body become an *ally in godliness* and not an *enemy* you’re always fighting to overcome.)
3. Do you think it is possible to truly have your mind renewed? Has this happened to you in a significant way? What unhelpful thinking habits, unhelpful viewing habits will you need to remove in order to begin to think like a citizen of eternity? What habits will you need to include?
4. How might the effectiveness of our church be increased, if we take this call from Paul seriously and all adopt a life of living on the altar? What are we missing out on by choosing to withhold sections of our life from being surrendered to Jesus?