

Pre-Decide
One Word That Will Change Your Life
Clay Weed

TALK IT OVER

Key Scripture:

Romans 12:1 (NLT)

1 And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.

Romans 12:2 (NLT)

2 Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

1 John 2:15-16 (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.

Start **talking**. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- Give an example of a time you thought you made a good decision, only to regret it later.

Start **sharing**. These questions are to help get your group thinking and to create openness.

- **Read Romans 12:1.** Paul urges us to offer ourselves as a "living" sacrifice. What does this mean, and how should this look in your own life?
- Clay said, "Sacrifice comes with a cost, but it's always worth it!" What emotions come to your mind when you hear that statement?
- A sacrifice is "anything consecrated and offered to God" and should not be easy or convenient. What do you need to sacrifice in your life?
- Clay gave 3 things that a living sacrifice understands: Every interaction is an opportunity to add value. Every resource is an opportunity to multiply. Every prompting is an opportunity to obey God. Read **Luke 10:30-37** and explain how these 3 areas are reflected in the life of the Samaritan.
- **Read Romans 12:2.** What does Paul mean by "transform you into a new person"? How do you know God's will for you?
- **Read 1 John 2:15-16.** According to these verses, what is the pattern of this world? Of the three elements of the pattern, which one do you struggle with the most? Why do you think that is?
- "Obedience is my responsibility. The result is God's." Share with your group an area in which you need to be obedient this week and trust God with the result.

Start **doing**. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Identify one area of your life where you can be obedient and be a living sacrifice.

Start **praying**. Be bold and pray with power.

- Pray that God helps you to be transformed, and to learn to know His will for you. Pray that He strengthens you in order that you may become a living sacrifice, surrendering your will to His.

Question: "What is the "reasonable service" mentioned in Romans 12:1?"

Answer: Romans 12:1 is a challenging Bible verse to understand. The apostle Paul urges Christians to live out the truth they have received by offering their whole beings in service to God: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (NKJV).

Paul asserts that offering our entire bodies as a living and holy sacrifice—the kind God finds acceptable—is our "reasonable service." Bible translators are somewhat split about what Paul means by this richly complex expression. *Service* refers to divine service or worship. The Greek word translated as "reasonable" (KJV, NKJV) is *logikos*, which can mean "rational" or "proper" (NIV). Paul may have had in mind worship that reflects an accurate understanding of the gospel and a well-thought-out response to it. On the other hand, *logikos* can also mean "spiritual" (ESV, HCSB, NASB), indicating worship that springs from a person's heart and mind as opposed to physical sacrifices and ritual offerings. The word can also be rendered "true" (CSB, NIV), as in worship that does "not conform to the pattern of this world" but instead reveals a renewed and transformed mind, "able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 12:2).

The New Living Translation expresses Paul's appeal like so: "And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him" (Romans 12:1). No matter how we interpret *reasonable service*, we can conclude that God desires worshipers who offer Him authentic, heartfelt, and radically lived-out devotion based on a solid foundation of gospel truth.

Paul wants his readers to understand that New Testament worship is no longer a system of ceremonial offerings and sacrifices. Today our acts of worship flow from the inner self—the realms of the heart, mind, and spirit (John 4:23–24). Church age worship is both cognitive and spiritual. Our reasonable service is rational because it grasps the truth of what Christ has done for us and then responds to that knowledge with grateful, wholehearted devotion (Hebrews 12:28). Only when our minds are transformed and renewed, no longer fixated on worldly things but centered on God, can we worship Him in spirit and truth.

Today our reasonable service is expressed through the presentation of our whole bodies to God in gratitude, praise, and worship (1 Corinthians 6:19–20; Philippians 1:20–21). In the Old Testament, the Hebrew people offered sacrifices for sin as well as thanks and praise offerings. But when Jesus Christ laid down His life and died on the cross for our sins, "once for all," no more sacrifices for sin were needed (Hebrews 9:13–14; 26; 10:10, 12, 14).

The Bible says, "Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God" (Romans 6:13, NLT). Our reasonable service now is to be a living sacrifice. In the Old Testament, God's people "made" sacrifices. Today believers are to "be" sacrifices (1 Corinthians 15:58; Matthew 16:24; Philippians 3:8).

The Old Testament sacrifices were dead sacrifices, but we are now living sacrifices. Jesus is our example—the perfect model of a living sacrifice who lived and died in obedience to His Father's will. We are made alive in Christ and empowered by Him to live a righteous life (Romans 6:17–18; 8:11–13; Ephesians 4:20–24; Colossians 3:1–11; 1 Corinthians 1:30). Holy living is now our reasonable service (Ephesians 4:1–3; 2 Peter 3:11; 1 Peter 1:15). "For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life" (1 Thessalonians 4:7–8). We offer our bodies not as "slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness" but "as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness" (Romans 6:19). Every day that we live to please God and obey His will, we are performing our reasonable service of genuine, wholehearted worship of God.