


Day 1


 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today's study.

Living Sacrifices

¹Therefore, 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.

Q1. Can you provide examples of “God’s mercy” or compassion?

Q2. What is a “living sacrifice”?

 The commentator Albert Barnes describes “living sacrifice” with words that express an almost unattainable relationship between us, who believe, and God:

“A sacrifice is an offering made to God as an atonement for sin; or any offering made to him and his service as an expression of thanksgiving or homage. It implies that he who offers it presents it entirely, releases all claim or right to it, and leaves it to be disposed of for the honor of God. In the case of an animal, it was slain, and the blood offered; in the case of any other offering, as the first-fruits, etc., it was set apart to the service of God; and he who offered it released all claim on it, and submitted it to God, to be disposed of at his will. This is the offering which the apostle entreats the Romans to make: to devote themselves to God, as if they had no longer any claim on themselves; to be disposed of by him; to suffer and bear all that he might appoint; and to promote his honor in any way which he might command. This is the nature of true religion.” [©1834, *Notes on the Bible* by Albert Barnes. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/romans/12-1.htm>]

Throughout this lesson, we will explore “living sacrifice” and ways that we can incrementally improve our standing with the Lord God Almighty.

Q3. How might we, who believe, become a “living sacrifice . . . to God”?


Q4. How can we “offer [our] bodies as living sacrifices . . . to God”? Can you think of any examples?

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Q5. God is Holy and pure and perfect... how can we sinners-in-this-world be “holy and pleasing to God”?

Q6. If it hasn't been answered already, what is “your spiritual act of worship”?

Day 2

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today's study.

²Do 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.

Q7. How can a person “test and approve what God's will is”?

Acts 17:11 [NIV-1984]

Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

John 16:13 [NIV-1984]

“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”

Q8. We live in this world, how can we NOT “conform... to the pattern of this world”?

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John 15:18-19 [NIV-1984]

¹⁸ "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. ¹⁹ If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

2 Corinthians 6:14-16 [NIV-1984]

¹⁴ Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? ¹⁵ What harmony is there between Christ and Belial [Satan]? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God.

Q9. How can a person “be transformed by the renewing of your mind”?

 Note: we have studied Romans 8. What did Paul teach about the “world” and how we are to live in it?

Romans 8:5-15 [NIV-1984]

⁵ Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶ The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; ⁷ the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

⁹ You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. ¹¹ And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

¹² Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation — but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, ¹⁴ because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

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³For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

Q10. Why do you think God through the Holy Spirit had Paul write, “For by the grace given me I say to every one of you”?

Q11. What does Paul warn us about in “Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought”?

James 3:13-18 [NIV-1984] [Despite his early disbelief in the divinity of his half-brother Jesus, James became a pillar, a leader, of the early church. The following passage is an excerpt from his letter.]

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. ¹⁶For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

¹⁷But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere. ¹⁸Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

Q12. Is it possible to increase “the measure of faith God has given you”? How?


Yes? }
No? } How?

James 1:2-8 [NIV-1984]

²Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. ⁴Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. ⁶But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

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 In the following passages, Paul will be making a point that just as the human body has many parts or members (e.g., ‘head, shoulders, knees, and toes; eyes, ears, mouth, and nose’), so does the Church (e.g., worshippers, preachers, teachers, out-reachers, musicians, administrators, janitors, ministers, helpers, praying-hands, helping-hands, comforters . . . and the list goes on-and-on).

⁴Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, who are many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Q13. Think back to Jesus’ twelve disciples, did each of them have identical jobs before they were called into Jesus’ ministry? Did each have identical revelations at the same time?

Yes? } Thoughts?
No? }

Yes? } Thoughts?
No? }

 The following three passages were chosen to provide the different revelations experienced by three disciples:

Matthew 16:16-17 [NIV-1984] [Simon Peter: an early revelation]

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.

John 13:26-30 [International Children’s Bible (ICB)] [Judas Iscariot: he had no apparent revelation, even though he had probably heard (either directly or indirectly) Simon Peter’s exclamation that “Jesus is the Christ!”]

²⁶ Jesus answered, “I will dip this bread into the dish. The man I give it to is the man who will turn against me.” So, Jesus took a piece of bread. He dipped it and gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. ²⁷ As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered him.

Jesus said to Judas, “The thing that you will do — do it quickly!” ²⁸ None of the men at the table understood why Jesus said this to Judas. ²⁹ He was the one who kept the money box. So, some of the followers thought that Jesus was telling Judas to buy what was needed for the feast. Or they thought that Jesus wanted Judas to give something to the poor.

³⁰ Judas accepted the bread Jesus gave him and immediately went out. It was night.

John 20:24-28 [NIV-1984] [“Doubting” Thomas: a revelation from an analytical personality – a person who needed absolute physical proof]

²⁴ Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.

²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"


But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"

²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

²⁸ Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

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 What were the vocations of Jesus' disciples before they were called to follow Jesus? [The descriptions immediately following (▼) are quoted from the Leaf Group Education: Copyright 2024 Leaf Group Ltd. / Leaf Group Education. <https://www.theclassroom.com/what-were-the-professions-of-the-twelve-apostles-12083577.html>]

Fishermen

Andrew, Peter, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, worked as fishermen. Matthew 4:18-22 relates that Andrew and Peter were fishing, plying their trade when called, and James and John were mending nets with their father.

Tax Collector

Matthew . . . worked as a tax collector for the Roman government. He would have acquired some education and reputation to achieve this job.


A Zealot

Simon was known as the Zealot, [which was] not strictly a profession, and as a Canaanite.

Zealots engaged in politics and anarchy, attempting to overthrow the Roman government. He may have been a politician, or a revolutionary. When he joined Jesus, he remained zealous, but with allegiance to Jesus rather than political revolution.

The Other Apostles

The Bible provides no information on the professions of Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Thaddaeus, or James, the son of Alphaeus.


 Just as the twelve disciples came from differing backgrounds, and each with unique experiences, vocations, and talents, the human body is comprised of many different parts that form the whole. So, too, your local church is comprised of many different people with many different personalities, vocations, experiences, and talents. And Christians throughout the world of our past, today, and tomorrow comprise The Church of Christ Jesus, the Son of God.

In the Bible (e.g., Revelation 21:2) this Church of Christ Jesus is referred to as the Bride of Christ; and this relationship between Christ, who is the bridegroom, and His Church is one of devout intimacy, in which spirits/souls are intertwined. It does not speak of an [eros love](#), of a physical love, but a love at a much deeper level, a “soulmate” kind of love, a relationship in which each partner truly wants only what is best for the other; there is no need for compromise – your needs and wants are my needs and wants.

While we can attempt to imagine the depth of love that Christ has for each of us, our words and imaginations fall so short of the mark. Our imaginations can only portray a pale, hazy reflection of the true, burning love He has for you and for me and what we will experience in Heaven, in Paradise as a member of His Church!

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Day 3

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⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. ⁷If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

Q14. Are these gifts (verses 6-8) personal – to help me? Or to help others?

Gifts to help me? Yes? No? Thoughts?

Gifts to help others? Yes? No? Thoughts?

Q15. How do we discern (identify) our gift(s)?

Q16. Are we to pray for additional gifts?

Yes? } Why?
No? }

Q17. It seems contradictory: we are not to be yoked with unbelievers, yet it seems that we are to be in the world. How do you reconcile the two?

Matthew 28:18-20 [The Great Commission]

¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the

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Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Q18. As recorded in the Gospels, what was Jesus' demeanor (His behavior, character) as He ministered to the typical men and women of His audiences (excluding the Jewish religious leaders)?


Q19. What should be our demeanor as we minister to our non-believing friends and acquaintances?

Q20. [Personal] Do you demonstrate mercy, compassion, and kindness? Or judgment?

Mercy, etc? Yes? No? Why?

Judgment? Yes? No? Why?

Day 4

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today's study.

Love

⁹Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

Q21. Apologetics: Since God is love, why are we to hate "evil"?

1 John 4:8 [English Standard Version (ESV)]

Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Psalms 97:10 [International Children's Bible (ICB)]

People who love the Lord should hate evil. The Lord watches over those who follow him. He frees

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them from the power of the wicked.

Proverbs 8:13 [NIV-1984]

To fear the Lord is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior, and perverse speech.

Amos 5:15 [NIV-1984]

Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. Perhaps the Lord God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph.

¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Q22. How is the word “love” used in “Be devoted to one another in brotherly *love*”? To what kind of “love” is Paul referring (see [Philia love](#))?

Q23. What does “Honor one another above yourselves” mean to you (see [agapé and pragma love](#))?

¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

Q24. Does God expect us to be zealous, keeping our fervor, and serving Him, 24-hours by 7-days-per-week? And is this done by our own strength?

God’s expectations on our time? Yes? No? Thoughts?

By our own strength? Yes? No? Thoughts?

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¹² Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Q25. These things are a real challenge to any one in our society. Hopelessness, worry, and lack of time all impact our ability to hope, to be patient, and to pray. Can we really follow verse 12?

Yes? } Why?
No? }

1 Timothy 6:17 [NIV-1984]

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

James 1:2-3 [NIV-1984]

² Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

1 Corinthians 10:13 [NIV-1984]

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

Ephesians 6:18 [NIV-1984]

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

¹³ Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Q26. Is it easy for us in our society to share our possessions and a meal with others?

Yes? } Thoughts?
No? }

Q27. Do we have an idea of what the early Christian church (as depicted in Acts 4 ↓) was like?


Acts 4:32-35 [The Message (MSG); a paraphrase]

³²⁻³³ The whole congregation of believers was united as one — one heart, one mind! They didn't even claim ownership of their own possessions. No one said, "That's mine; you can't have it." They shared everything. The apostles gave powerful witness to the resurrection of the Master Jesus, and grace was on all of them.

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³⁴⁻³⁵ And so it turned out that not a person among them was needy. Those who owned fields or houses sold them and brought the price of the sale to the apostles and made an offering of it. The apostles then distributed it according to each person's need.

Day 5

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today's study.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

Q28. Paul teaches that we are to “Bless those who persecute you”. How would you describe “bless” as used in this verse?


 The dictionary defines “bless”:

tr.v. blessed or blest (blĕst), bless·ing, bless·es

1. To make holy by religious rite; sanctify: *The clergy blessed the site for the new monastery.*
2. To invoke divine favor upon: *The bishop blessed the fishing fleet.*
3. To make the sign of the cross over: *She knelt and blessed herself.*
4. To honor as holy; glorify: *Bless the Lord.*
5. To confer well-being or prosperity on: *They were blessed with a baby girl.*
6. To endow, as with talent: *He was blessed with a photographic memory.*

[Source: © 2003-2023 Farlex, Inc. <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/bless>]

Q29. How would you describe “curse” as used in this verse?

 The dictionary defines “curse”:

1. the expression of a wish that misfortune, evil, doom, etc., befall someone.
2. a formula or charm intended to cause such misfortune to another.
3. the act of reciting such a formula.
4. a profane or obscene word, esp. as used in anger or for emphasis; swearword.
5. an evil or misfortune that has been invoked upon one.
6. the cause of evil, misfortune, or trouble.

[Source: © 2003-2023 Farlex, Inc. <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/curse>]

Q30. Is “revenge” an acceptable action for a Believer?

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Romans 12:19 [English Standard Version (ESV)] [We will be studying this verse 12:19 later in the lesson.]

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”

¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

Q31. If we share joy or sadness with another person, how might that show the light of Jesus?

Q32. How is a Believer to show sadness at another's loss? Or “mourn” with someone in mourning?


^{16a} Live in harmony with one another.

Q33. This is an important distinction as we study these verses: in verse 16^a is Paul referencing fellow Believers, non-believers, or both?

Believers? Yes? No? Thoughts?

Non-believers? Yes? No? Thoughts?

Q34. How are we to live in “harmony with one another”?

 Harmony: See Acts 4:32-35 (↑)

Q35. If we are to “live in harmony”, is Scripture advising us to tolerate sinful behavior?

Yes? }
No? } Why?

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Matthew 18:15-17 [J.B. Phillips New Testament (PHILLIPS); a paraphrase] [Jesus taught:]

“But if your brother wrongs you, go and have it out with him at once — just between the two of you. If he will listen to you, you have won him back as your brother [or sister]. But if he will not listen to you, take one or two others with you so that everything that is said may have the support of two or three witnesses. And if he [or she] still won’t pay any attention, tell the matter to the church. And if he [or she] won’t even listen to the church then he [or she] must be to you just like a pagan — or a tax-collector!

Q36. How are we to discern sinful behavior?

Acts 17:11 [International Children’s Bible (ICB)]

These [Berean] Jews were better than the Jews in Thessalonica. They were eager to hear the things Paul and Silas said. These Jews in Berea studied the Scriptures every day to find out if these things were true.


Q37. Does “[living] in harmony” extend to non-believers? To enemies of the Gospel?

Nonbelievers? Yes? No? Why?

Enemies? Yes? No? Why?

Add’l thoughts?

Day 6


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16b Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Q38. How do you define or describe “proud”?

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Q39. Who is a person in “low position”?

 Note: James the LORD’s half-brother wrote a letter that teaches us how to relate to the rich AND the poor:

James 2:1-4 [NIV-1984]

¹ My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. ² Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. ³ If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," ⁴ have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

Q40. As you read James 2:4 (↑): if we treat the poor differently from the wealthy or a celebrity, how does that place a person in a position of “judges with evil thoughts”? After all, doesn’t everyone give preferential treatment to the wealthy or a celebrity?

James 2:5-17 [NIV-1984] [James continues his teaching:]

⁵ Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? ⁶ But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? ⁷ Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?

⁸ If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. ⁹ But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. ¹¹ For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

¹² Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ¹³ because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?

¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

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¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," [Deuteronomy 32:35] says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. [Proverbs 25:21,22]" ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Q41. Verses 17-21 are really difficult teachings for behavior in this world. As Believers in Jesus how do we find the power or the encouragement or the inspiration for us to behave as these verses suggest?

Q42. Many of the points we have discussed in these verses define a preferred behavior. What is the name of the person we are to emulate?

Q43. [Personal] Are there any specific verses from Romans 12 that are really challenging to you?

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