

CHANGE IS GOOD: Building Excitement for Life Transformation

"CHANGE OF HEART" ROMANS 12:1-2

This Week's Core Competency

Worship – I worship God for who he is and what he has done for me. Psalm 95:1-7

- 1 Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD;
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.
- 2 Let us come before him with thanksgiving
and extol him with music and song.
- 3 For the LORD is the great God,
the great King above all gods.
- 4 In his hand are the depths of the earth,
and the mountain peaks belong to him.
- 5 The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hands formed the dry land.
- 6 Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;
- 7 for he is our God
and we are the people of his pasture,
the flock under his care.

When you hear the word "worship," what comes to mind? Does your mind's eye see a worship service? If so you're likely not alone. Many people probably think of formal worship, Sunday worship, first. However, Romans 12:1, 2 suggests that view of worship is far too narrow. True worship is not confined to one place or to one time but involves all places and all times. In

*The Christian finds out the will of
God not to contemplate it but to do it.*

-C. K. Barrett

verse 1 the apostle urges us to respond to God's great mercy to us by offering ourselves as sacrifices to him—living sacrifices, consecrated, and well-pleasing to him. Then in verse 2 he goes on to explain how we are to do that. "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world," he says. "But be transformed by the renewing of your mind." His exhortation in verse 1 implies a single settled decision something like "dedicate your life to God." The imperatives in verse 2 suggest that every day after making that decision we have to continually resist the temptations to conform *outwardly* to the ways of the world and continually let God transform us *inwardly* by the radical reprogramming of our thinking to mind his perfect will. Paul's view of true worship marries obedience and worship a la the prophet Samuel who told Saul, "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice and to heed is better than the fat of rams" (1Sa 15:22). In other words, God delights in obedience; it's better than worship.

One author captures this idea in the following words, "Christian worship does not consist of what is practiced at sacred sites, at sacred times, and with sacred acts. . . . It is the offering of bodily existence in the otherwise profane sphere.' Chrysostom comments: 'And how is the body, it may be said, to become a sacrifice? Let the eye look on no evil thing, and it hath become a

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a sacrifice; let thy tongue speak nothing filthy, and it hath become an offering; let thine hand do no lawless deed, and it hath become a whole burnt offering.' Regular meetings together of Christians for praise and mutual edification are appropriate and, indeed, commanded in Scripture. And what happens at these meeting is certainly 'worship.' But such special times of corporate worship are only one aspect of the continual worship that each of us is to offer the Lord in the sacrifice of our bodies day by day" (Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, 748).

A Situation for Discussion

Bill understood perfectly everything the pastor had to say in his sermon on Romans 12:1, 2. What's more he agreed with everything his pastor had to say, and like so many times in the past was ready to respond. This time he intended "to offer himself as a living sacrifice to God." Too bad, like so many times in the past, his good intentions turned out to be nothing more than that. He wasn't going to offer himself as a living sacrifice to God because he didn't know how to offer himself as a living sacrifice to God. He liked the ring of the pious sounding words but didn't know what they meant, practically speaking, and because he didn't, his good intentions were all but useless.

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Romans 12:1, 2

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. 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.

Cf. 6:11-14

11In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12Therefore do not let sin

reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. 13Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. 14For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Box "therefore" indicating *result* in v. 1.
- * Circle "urge" in v. 1.
- * Circle "mercy" in v. 1.
- * Underline the verbs "offer," "do not conform," and "be transformed" in vv. 1, 2.
- * Bracket "living sacrifices" in v. 1.
- * Bracket "spiritual act of worship" in v. 1.
- * Circle "world" in v. 2.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 2.
- * Bracket "renewing of your mind" in v. 2.
- * Bracket "test and approve" in v. 2.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. "Therefore" in verse 1 implies that the practice of the Christian life grows out of the theology of the Christian life—that ethics rests upon dogmatics. How so?
2. Explain what Paul means by "God's mercy" and what it has to do with what he is urging his readers to do.
3. Romans 6:13 clarifies the meaning of "bodies" in verse 1. How so?
4. Identify the glaring *irony* in verse 1.
5. Describe the sacrifice the Christian is to offer to God.
6. Put what "this is your spiritual act of worship" means in your own words.
7. Explain the *contrast* in verse 2.
8. Paul says, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world." What do you think he has in mind?
9. **Discussion:** Talk about what having a renewed mind has to do with testing and approving what God's will is?

On the place of Romans 12:1, 2 in the book, one author writes, "Romans 12:1-2 is one of the best-known passages in the NT. Its fame is justified: here Paul succinctly and with vivid imagery summarizes what the Christian response to God's grace in Christ should be. The verses have a pivotal role in Romans. On the one hand, they look back at the argument of chaps. 1-11. While Paul ultimately has in view all of these chapters, verbal and thematic links point to two texts as particularly significant. The first is Rom 1, whose downward spiral of false and foolish worship (cf. v. 25) and corrupted minds (cf. v. 28) now finds its reversal in the Christians' 'reasonable' worship and renewed mind. The second is Romans 6, whose brief mention of the need for Christians to 'present' themselves (vv. 13 and 19) as those 'alive from the dead' (v. 13) is here reiterated and expanded. At the same time, 12:1-2 stand as the heading for all that follows in 12:3-15:13)" (Moo, 748).

In verse 1 Paul urges us, his Christian brothers and sisters, to offer a sacrifice of worship to God. The word "therefore" implies that this practical exhortation flows inexorably out of the doctrinal instruction contained in chapters 1-11 in which he declared that God has showed us his great mercy by graciously justifying us. Through the gospel God unleashed his mighty power on our behalf and through faith he rescued us from the disastrous effects of sin and declared us righteous in his sight thus giving us a secure hope for salvation from his wrath in the last day. Consequently, we can do no less than show him our worship by presenting ourselves as sacrifices—living, set apart, well-pleasing to him. The irony of Paul's words is striking. We are to offer our bodies as "*living sacrifices*," and not our physical bodies only but our entire beings. This is made evident by comparing Paul's words here with similar ones in 6:13 where he says, "Do not offer *the parts of your body* to sin, as instruments of

wickedness, but rather offer *yourselves* to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness" (italics added). And while the exact sense of "this is your spiritual act of worship" is notoriously difficult, it is likely captured by TEV, which translates the clause, "This is the true worship you should offer." In offering ourselves to the God who redeemed us we offer the only "true" worship.

The relationship of verse 2 to verse 1 is somewhat vague. By not translating the Greek conjunction at the beginning of the verse, the NIV implies that verse 2 is coordinate to verse 1, which would mean that the two verses contain three apostolic pleas: "offer your bodies," "do not conform," and "be transformed." However, it's more likely subordinate to verse 1 indicating the *means* whereby Christians can carry out the apostle's one exhortation: "offer your bodies as living sacrifices." On one hand, we offer ourselves to God by not conforming to the ways of the world. Paul's choice of words may indicate that he had *outward* conformity in mind. On the other, we offer ourselves to God by being transformed or by letting let God transform us. His choice of words this time may indicate that he had *inward* transformation in mind. The passive verb indicates that God is the one behind our transformation. Ironically, Paul tells us to "be transformed" and in the same breath, informs us that we are not the agents of our own transformation. In other words, we don't cause our spiritual formation; God does. And yet, his words clearly indicate that what we do or don't do still matters. Evidently, our part is to resist being squeezed into the world's mold; God's part is to transform us by radically reprogramming our thinking. Over time the process of transformation yields the ability to discern and comply with God's perfect will.

The Message of the Passage

Live your life for God—don't conform outwardly to the ways of the world, instead let God transform you inwardly by completely reprogramming your thinking to mind his perfect will.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Give Yourself Some Good Advice Based on the Message of this Passage.**

- **Pick a verse or verses from the passage to memorize or think about this week.**

- **Relate the message of this passage to any of the following:**
 - o **Belonging**
 - o **Becoming**
 - o *going Beyond*

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage.**

- **Home Group Discussion** (for those involved in the deeper connections of a home group)
Talk about the Situation for Discussion on page 1.

“Change of Heart”
(Use the space below for Sunday’s message notes)

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 1 **therefore** Sometimes the Greek particle *oun* goes untranslated but here "'therefore' must be given its full weight: Paul wants to show that the exhortations of 12:1-15:13 are built firmly on the theology of chaps. 1-11" (Moo, 748). "'Therefore' establishes a connection with the entire foregoing presentation rather than with chapters 9 to 11 alone. The connection is particularly close with 6:13, 19, as a comparison of the terminology will show" (Everett F. Harrison, "Romans" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 10:127). This single word implies the vital relationship between ethics and dogmatics. "Paul's dogmatic teaching [Ro 1-11] is misunderstood if it is not seen to require ethical action, and his ethical teaching [chaps. 12-15] cannot be grasped if it is not recognized that it rests at every point upon the dogmatics" (C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, HNTC, 230).

v. 1 **urge** Cf., "Therefore I exhort you, brothers and sisters," (the NET Bible). "The English verb 'exhort' captures well the nuance of the Greek *parakaleo* in contexts such as this. Its semantic range lies somewhere between 'request' and 'command': an exhortation comes with authority, but the authority of a preacher who is the mediator of God's truth rather than the authority of a superior issuing a command" (Moo, 748, 49).

v. 1 **God's mercy** Lit., "the mercies of God" (cf., NASB, ESV, NRSV). "'Mercy' rather than the familiar 'mercies' of the KJV, is justified on the ground that the word used here (*oiktirmos*; cf. *eleos* in 11:30-32, also translated 'mercy'), though plural in form, reflects the Hebrew *rahamim*, which is a so-called intensive plural, meaning 'great mercy' or 'compassion' (Harrison, 127). "The TEV attempts to bring out the significance of the plural by using the adjective great" (Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 233; cf., "because of God's great mercy to us"). "Whatever gratitude the soul feels for pardon, purity, and the sure prospect of eternal life, is called forth to secure its consecration to that God who is the author of all these mercies" (Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 383).

v. 1 **offer** Or "present" (cf., NASB, ESV, NKJV, NRSV, the NET Bible). In extrabiblical Greek this word is a technical term for presenting a sacrifice. "The sacrificial context makes it likely that the verb 'present,' unlike its somewhat parallel occurrences in 6:13 and 19, means 'offer as a sacrifice'" (Moo, 751).

v. 1 **your bodies** "'Body' can, of course, refer to the physical body as such, and the metaphorical associations with sacrifice make it an appropriate choice here. But Paul probably intends to refer to the entire person, with special emphasis on that person's interaction with the world" (750, 51). Cf., "Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice" (TEV).

v. 1 **living, holy, pleasing** Paul uses three adjectives to modify "sacrifices." "By putting the first adjective, [*zosan*] ('living'), before the noun, many English translation (e.g., KJV, NIV, NASB, NRSV) give it a prominence that Paul does not" (Moo, 751). Their coordinate sense is conveyed better by the NET Bible's translation, "to present your bodies as a sacrifice—alive, holy, and pleasing to God."

v. 1 **spiritual** Or "reasonable" (NIV text note); Greek *logiken*. The sense of the Greek word is difficult. Moo gives four possible meanings: (1) 'spiritual,' in the sense of 'inner': a worship that involves the mind and the heart as opposed to a worship that simply 'goes through the motions'; (2) 'spiritual' or 'rational,' in the sense of 'appropriate for human beings as rational and spiritual creatures of God': a worship that honors God by giving him what he truly wants as opposed to the depraved worship offered by human beings under the power of sin (see Rom. 1:23-25); (3) 'rational,' in the sense of 'acceptable to human reason': a worship that 'makes sense,' as opposed to the 'irrational' worship of God though the offering of animals; (4) 'reasonable,' or 'logical,' in the sense of 'fitting the circumstances': a worship that is appropriate to those who have truly understood the truth revealed in Christ." Then Moo goes on to say while either of the first two is preferable, both miss an important part of the meaning, and so, he opts for the translation in TEV, "true worship" (753).

v. 2 **Do not** The Greek conjunction *kai*, usually translated "and" opens the sentence; cf., "and do not be conformed" (NKJV, NASB). While the two verses may be coordinate, verse 2 is more likely subordinate to verse 1 explaining the way [*means*] to do what is urged in it.

v. 2 **be transformed** "The TEV correctly takes the passive voice of the second of these two verbs [conform, transform] as a reference to God's action, let God transform you inwardly" (Newman and Nida, 235). The two verbs "do not conform" and "be transformed" are both present tense, which implies that we need to work continually at our transformation.

v. 2 **mind** "'Mind' translates a word that Paul uses especially to connote a person's 'practical reason,' or 'moral consciousness.' This 're-programming' of the mind does not take place overnight but is a lifelong process by which our way of thinking is to resemble more and more the way God wants us to think" (Moo, 757).

v. 2 **test and approve** One word in Greek *dokimazein*. Cf., "so that you may prove what the will of God is"; "that by testing you may discern what is the will of God" (ESV). "'Approving' the will of God means to understand and agree with what God wants of us with a view to putting it into practice" (Moo, 757).

Connect the **FAMILY**. During this series, Bible stories appropriate for children will be used that complement the adult teaching.

Experience it!

Experience scripture through the activity-based learning exercise. Dinner is a perfect time to engage the family.

At dinner this week place several school photos of your kids in front of their plates. Have everyone talk about how they have physically changed over the years. Read John 11:17-37. Martha grew and changed just from knowing Jesus. Ask your family to think of ways they have changed because of knowing Jesus better.



Pray it!

Pray God's will for your child by praying scriptures. Insert your child's name in the blanks as you pray.

Father, in view of your mercy, help _____ to not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of his mind so that he will be able to test and approve what Your will is—your good, pleasing, and perfect will. Ro 12:2

Post it!

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the memory verse throughout the house. Lead your children to interact with them as they memorize.

Worship – I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Memory verse – "He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end." Ecc 3:11

Discuss it!

Discover biblical truth by discussing the scripture. Reflective questions are great with older kids.

Read John 11:17-37

- * How many days had Lazarus been dead?
- * What did Jesus mean when he told Martha that her brother would rise again?
- * What was the difference in what Mary and Martha said to Jesus?
- * Why do you think Jesus wept with Mary and the mourners?

Live it!

Live out the Core Competency and build deeper relationships by doing this activity.

Worship God through the arts! Draw a picture, on 8 x 10 paper, showing who or what you would like to Become in Jesus as you grow up. Turn it into the Children's Ministry Department. Your drawings will be displayed in an Art Show at The Connection Open House on February 7.



Challenge

Kids preschool through sixth grade receive a prize for completing a Connect the Family activity.

My family completed at least one Connect the Family activity this week.

Child's name _____ Parent's signature _____

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.