

Following the King – study five
Whole Life Worship – Romans 12:1 - 2

The Bible is utterly against sacrificing humans. But in Romans 12:1 the Apostle Paul urges us to, “offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing [acceptable] to God.” The Old Testament lists numerous regulations regarding what once constituted an acceptable sacrifice to God¹. But the first example we have in the Bible of God accepting and rejecting sacrifices is located in the following account of Cain and Abel. Genesis 4:3 – 5 tells us, “Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. But Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor.” Later on Cain felt angry because his sacrifice was rejected by God. Therefore, God said to him, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?” (Genesis 4:6 – 7) God’s response to Cain reminds us that it wasn’t merely Cain’s sacrifice that was unacceptable to God. It was also the attitude that accompanied his offering. Perhaps Paul had this story in mind when he told us to present our bodies and minds as acceptable sacrifices to God². So how do we make our whole lives living sacrifices that please God? [An insightful article based on Romans 12:1 – 2 can be found at:] www.directionjournal.org/article/?926

1. Romans 12:1 begins, “Therefore, I urge you brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy...”³ What particular act of mercy is Paul talking about here? (Also see Romans 6:8 – 14.)
2. The word translated ‘spiritual’ act of worship can also mean a ‘reasonable’ act of worship. Explain why it is reasonable to offer ourselves as living sacrifices in view of Christ’s sacrifice for us?
3. What does it mean to offer your body as a living sacrifice that is holy and pleasing to God? (Romans 12:1) Give some practical examples.
4. In Romans 12:2 Paul moves from talking about our bodies to talking about our minds. How can we transform and renew our minds so that our thoughts and attitudes please God?
5. Explain the difference between a mind that has been conformed to the world and one that has been spiritually transformed?
6. Why can only a spiritually transformed mind understand God’s will and know how to please him?
7. What are some ways that you can transform your ordinary daily routine into an act of worship that pleases God?

¹ Animal sacrifices continued until Jesus Christ became the ‘once for all’ sacrifice for human sin (Hebrews 10: 1 – 18)

² 1 John 3:12 demonstrates how New Testament writers used Cain and Abel as ancient examples of unrighteous and righteous lives.

³ Romans 12:1 – 2 is a key ‘hinge passage’ in Paul’s letter. Chapters 1 – 11 explain what God has done for us through Christ. Chapters 12 – 16 tell us how we should live in view of God’s mercy to us.