

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

Give Your Very Selves—Together
Romans 12:1-8

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a Unit of sessions needs to have access to the "Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study". That information is often provided at the beginning of that Unit of sessions. The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.
2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)
3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Very important note: If a family in your group has recently lost a baby or child, do not do the indicated Gathering Time activity. Instead, substitute a Gathering Time activity that avoids any emotional pain. Perhaps substitute the same idea but built around a family reunion, or a wedding ceremony, etc.

Several days prior to the worship service, ask a few members to bring photographs or mementoes representing the early months of their children's lives.

If possible, obtain a copy of a suggested script for a Baby Dedication.

Bible Study Leader:

Have a large sheet of newsprint, white paper or a white board to list the spiritual gifts.

Worship Time Leader:

Choose songs that are appropriate for today's theme.

Music Sources:

The Family of God; *The Worship Hymnal* #393; CCLI #17023

Take My Life and Let It Be; *The Worship Hymnal* #541 or 534; CCLI #1390 Public Domain

The Greatest Thing in All My Life; *The Worship Hymnal* #527; CCLI #11500

Grace Greater Than Our Sin; *The Worship Hymnal* #105; CCLI #5253122 & 3190603

Wonderful Grace of Jesus; *The Worship Hymnal* #163; CCLI #4242196

Grace Alone; *The Worship Hymnal* #112; CCLI #2335524

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Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

Give Your Very Selves—Together

Focal Text

Romans 12:1-8

Background Text

Romans 12:1-8

Main Idea

In light of God's great mercy, Christians individually and together are to give their very selves in service to God.

Question to Explore

How should people who have received God's mercy structure their lives?

Teaching Aim

To lead participants to decide on ways they will give themselves to God in response to God's great mercy.

Gathering together:

Begin the session by singing **The Family of God**.

Important note to the Gathering Time Leader: Please read the "Prior to the Session" suggestion for today. Be sensitive to any participants who may have recently lost a child in death. If the following might hurt someone, please substitute another idea in its place to introduce the theme and scripture for today.

Ask a child to thank God for families.

Request each of the parents who brought photos/mementos of their children to describe their hopes for the new baby who had joined the family.

Discuss the significance of a Baby Dedication if the parents had participated in such a service. If it is available, a portion of a service may be read such as that from "The Minister's Manual" or another similar source.

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Give Your Very Selves—Together – 04-13-10-en

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When parents bring their children before the church they are expressing a desire that the new life entrusted to their care will flourish to become a vital part of the community of faith. They are offering “their very selves” to serve God as caregivers to oversee the development of Christian character in the life of their son or daughter.

Usually, the service also places responsibility on the congregation to share in this endeavour through supporting the family unit spiritually and in practical ways. Just as a baby demands responsibilities and sacrificial dedication of the new parents, so the spiritual new birth challenges the individual to a transforming process that begins with offering one’s “very self”. Successful spiritual development involves the complete dedication of one’s self in the early stages of a relationship with Christ and in the context of a supportive group of fellow Christians— a church.

First thoughts:

Describe a very moving worship service you have attended. What stood out in your mind? What changed in your life because of that worship service? Our text today describes a worship service that each of us should experience. James Montgomery Boice describes Romans 12:1-2 as an act of worship. He writes, “In ...Paul’s day ...a sacrifice was an animal that was presented to a priest to be killed. So what Paul is saying by this striking metaphor is that the Christian life begins by our offering ourselves to God for death, but that in a paradoxical fashion (something done instead), it is in such an offering of ourselves that we are actually enabled to live for him and for others.”¹

(¹) James Montgomery Boice, *Mind Renewal in a Mindless Age: A Study of Romans 12:1-2*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1993, p. 24-25.)

Closing the Gathering Time:

Pray that we will learn about giving up our own ambitions and be willing to make sacrifices for the sake of Christ and his kingdom.

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won’t need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

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Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

Give Your Very Selves—Together

Focal Text

Romans 12:1-8

Background Text

Romans 12:1-8

Main Idea

In light of God’s great mercy, Christians individually and together are to give their very selves in service to God.

Question to Explore

How should people who have received God’s mercy structure their lives?

Teaching Aim

To lead participants to decide on ways they will give themselves to God in response to God’s great mercy.

Introduction to your personal study:

A preschool worker puts a hasp and padlock on a room designated for three year olds. The one holding the key determines the only time the room can be used. The needs of the three year olds, their parents, and the schedule of the church have no effect on when the room could be used. The use of the room is at the discretion of the one person. How many times has the body of Christ been hindered when individuals or small “cliques” of church members operate selfishly, uncaring and independent from other Christians?

Background:

Paul's letter to the Romans has two main sections. The first division is theological and takes up the first eleven chapters. In this doctrinal discourse Paul speaks first of the need for people to be made right with God—justification. Following this comes his teaching on salvation. This includes salvation as reconciliation, sanctification, liberation, and as sonship. This discussion about humanity's problem, God's solution, and the benefits of this solution in our lives—leads quickly to Paul's application. In the last part of this theological discourse, Paul answers the question, "What about the Jews as the children of God?"

The second main section of Romans is the practical application of the doctrinal and theological teachings. This discussion is called the "exhortation".

Focusing on the Meaning:

Living Sacrifices (Romans 12:1-2)

Romans 12:1 "Therefore" marks the transition in Romans from the doctrinal teaching to the exhortation and application. Paul never feels that faith in Christ can be separated from application to life. Some scholars feel that this section of Romans is exceeded only by the Sermon on the Mount as a general pattern for Christian living. This discussion begins with a plea based upon the fact that all Christians are brothers. It is a plea for Christians to give themselves to God and to live a changed life in the world. It is in the light of God's mercy that his appeal is made. It is in God's pity and compassion that Christians are asked to live consecrated lives. "Bodies" can be translated into "your very own selves." It can also have reference to the sacrifices of animals given in sacrifice as opposed to the giving of a living offering. It does speak to a new life of committed love as created by the Holy Spirit. Paul says that our spiritual act of worship was to serve and to render religious service. It involves the complete person and the whole of life as opposed to the superficialities of Israel's temple worship. Life is not to be lived in a withdrawal from the realities of living. It is to be lived in this world without being fashioned by the world.

Romans 12:2 The Christian is commanded to reject being shaped by the empty, changing, unstable and transitory. Don't let this world serve as an example. Spiritual worship was the living of a transformed life in the world. Christians were instructed to have a complete change, as led by God, in character and conduct. The enemy, or the world, is the present time as opposed to the coming age when Christ has dominion. Transformation of the mind by the Holy Spirit would make one more and more into the likeness of Christ. This renewing is new in the sense of quality and also new in the sense of a continuous process. The mind is more than rational. It also involves personality and all man's awareness of living. It could discern, try, and approve what was God's will. This perfect will was to reach its true goal. Love was reaching toward God as the ultimate target. Believers are to love as he loved. On the way to God man always encounters his neighbours.

The Life of Sacrifice in the Body (Romans 12:3-5)

Romans 12:3 Paul proceeds to say that this transformed life is lived with others and not in isolation. He seeks to help members of the family of God to think and relate to each other in love. If this is accomplished, then each will be able to use his/her individual and separate gifts along with the body. High mindedness was to be avoided. Members were not to have a feeling of superiority or self-importance. Self-conceit would subvert and wash away confidence and trust. Sober judgment makes it possible to see oneself in proper relation to others and to see himself as others see him. Faith is seen here, not as the saving faith we must have in Christ, but as a power to do certain things.

Romans 12:4 This verse speaks of the human body in the same way that I Corinthians 12:14-26 does. The various parts of the body function in a coordinated way. The health of the body depends on the proper operation of each individual part in relation to the other parts.

Romans 12:5 However v. 5 moves to the concept of body, not as a human body, but as the body of Christ. In the Corinthian passage Christians are seen as members of Christ and as members of the body of Christ. In v. 5 Christians are individually members of one another. It speaks of interdependence on each other. It means that a person cannot relate to Christ without relating to others. There are no solo Christians who exist apart from others.

The Sacrificial Life and the Gifts (Romans 12:6-8)

Romans 12:6 God bestows on individuals different gifts. These gifts come from God. They come because of his free giving. This shuts out human boasting. They were given by the Holy Spirit for the furtherance of his work, not to give honour, prestige or power to the individual. Paul then begins his list of seven gifts and an admonition on using each gift. This list is given as work and service. As Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome, he was speaking to the total church, not just to the leadership. This would indicate that the gifts are not only for leadership or clergy but also for individual members. In I Corinthians 12:28 several of these gifts are listed as offices or functions within the church. In Romans, I Corinthians, and Ephesians there are twenty different gifts listed. These gifts are not given for the matter of authority, rank, power or control. Those who have the gifts are to obey the instructions of the one who gives the gifts. Prophesying is the first of the gifts listed in this passage. Those who serve as prophets proclaim the word of God. They are to build up the church. Prophesying was not the telling of future events but expounding from the word of God on the message that God wanted the body to hear. It was to be delivered with confidence in the power of God and Christ.

Romans 12:7 Serving was the second gift mentioned. It was helping in whatever manner that the body needed assistance. A specialized form of serving became that of deacon. However, serving is not exclusively for those who hold that office. Serving was

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to be done unsparingly. This admonition applies to all of the gifts. Teaching of the Word was to contain the truths revealed therein. The subject matter of the teacher was to be doctrine (beliefs) contained in the Bible.

Romans 12:8 Four gifts are mentioned in this verse: encouraging, contributing, leading, and showing mercy. Encouraging or exhorting was calling people to a decision and is perhaps aimed more at the emotions than the mind. It was to foster a pursuit of some course of conduct. This type of encouragement was looking to the future rather than as comfort given for something that had already happened.

The one who contributed must give with a single mindedness, generously and sincerely. Some translators use the term, to give with “hilarity.”

The concept of leading speaks more to the giving of aid rather than that of ruling or bossing. It is to be accomplished with zeal, haste, and diligence.

Mercy, the outward form of pity, was to be accomplished with cheerfulness. The recipient should be able to see that the compassion expressed in action was done, not grudgingly or unwillingly, but from a heart wanting to assist.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

When we read this passage all the way from verse 1 through verse 8, we see that offering ourselves as “a living sacrifice” brings fulfillment and joy—the best of life. God-directed sacrifice always offers positive results; never negative ones. Doing so allows us to discern the very will of God for ourselves—to know what is good, acceptable, and perfect for ourselves. Paul then discusses how to accomplish this. He tells us to use the (spiritual) gifts that God has given us; and to use those for the good of those whom God has entrusted to our care. Doing that, life is wonderful in the Lord—regardless of circumstances. Share with your group the wonder and joy of being in the middle of God’s perfect will.

For Personal Reflection:

1. **What have I learned from this study?**

2. **What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?**

3. **What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?**

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

Give Your Very Selves—Together

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the *Focal Text* in their Bibles. Also, share with them the *Main Idea* to be learned from the Scriptures, and the *Questions to be Explored* by the group.

Focal Text

Romans 12:1-8

Background Text

Romans 12:1-8

Main Idea

In light of God's great mercy, Christians individually and together are to give their very selves in service to God.

Question to Explore

How should people who have received God's mercy structure their lives?

Teaching Aim

To lead participants to decide on ways they will give themselves to God in response to God's great mercy.

Connect with Life:

Give this illustration: A baseball team is in the field while the opposing team is batting. The pitcher decides he wants to play catch with the third baseman rather than pitch to the batter. Finally he does throw to the batter and the ball is hit toward center field. That fielder who is talking to someone in the bleachers doesn't pay attention to the hit ball but continues the conversation. The left fielder runs to the ball, picks it up and throws it to home plate as the runner leaves third base. The ball and the hitter arrive at the same time, but the catcher is not there. He has gone to the refreshment stand for a soft drink.

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Ask these questions and allow time for brief discussion:

What kind of team is this?

How do the players feel about the team and each other?

What is most important to the team members?

Tell the congregation: Today we are going to see how Christians are to relate to each other.

Guide the Study:

Share: Look in Romans 12:1-2 and see what Paul encourages Christians to do with their lives.

Have someone read the passage.

Call for an answer to this concern: What does he urge the brothers to do? (Offer bodies as a living sacrifice.)

Discuss briefly what a sacrifice is. Contrast the involvement of the complete person and the whole of life in an ongoing process as opposed to the routine superficialities of Israel's temple worship.

State: The sacrifice Paul speaks of is not an object or thing. He prompts us to live the existence we have as a living sacrifice and offering.

Encourage ideas for this: What are the qualities Paul ascribes to a living sacrifice? (Holy and pleasing to God).

Identify this concept to the group: Paul says that this is a spiritual act of worship. It was not a rote performance of an act but the Christian continually being and doing from a heart of gratitude.

Continue: Look at the contrast that Paul commands in v. 2. The life of the believer is to reach its true goal—living the life of Christ.

Add: Paul tells us in vv. 3-5 how the Christian is to think and relate to other members of the Christian body.

Invite someone to read vv. 3-5.

Urge an answer to this question: How does v. 3 say a Christian should think of himself. (Not to over evaluate our value and importance).

Confide to the congregation: Our personal self-conceit can subvert and erode others' confidence and trust in us. Sober judgment makes it possible to see ourselves properly related to others and to see ourselves as others see us. Verse 3 tells us how we should think and feel about ourselves. Now, let's see how we relate to each other.

Solicit opinions on the question: How is our relationship illustrated? (He compares the church to the body that each individual has. He reminds us that each of our body parts does not have the same purpose. In the same way the different body parts of the church have their own unique function.)

Now share this analogy: Think of your own body. The right hand is different from the left hand. We use one for some actions, the opposite hand for other actions. Paul in 1 Corinthians 12 speaks of the role of the foot, eye, ear, nose in the individual body and then compares that to the role of individual people in the life of the church body. He speaks of each individual not having the same function and purpose, yet belonging to all the others.

Encourage a person to read vv. 6-8. **(Perhaps a teen or a senior participant)**

Question the group: What are the various gifts Paul mentions? List these on a piece of newsprint, card stock, etc. as learners give them. (Prophecy, serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing, leadership, mercy).

Using the commentary briefly explain how each of these gifts function.

Ask different persons to read:

1 Corinthians 12:4-10, 28-30

Ephesians 4:11

1 Peter 4:10-11

Add these to the visual listing of spiritual gifts from Romans 13:6-8. Seek to match the various gifts into forming one list.

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to go away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Present this idea: We can look even in our group today and see individuals with different gifts. Each gift is important to our fellowship and ministry. Our use of that gift

should be motivated by God's mercy as given in verse 1. What Christ has done for us should motivate us to unselfish living on a continuous basis.

Pose this question: What would happen this week if all Christians gave themselves to God?

Now add: What are some specific things you could do?

Say: Choose one thing you will do this week.

Pray: God, help us this week to give our lives as a sacrifice through the things we have just chosen. (Pray for each learner by name, something like this: "God, bless James in his work as a mechanic, father, and husband this week.")

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

Give Your Very Selves—Together **Romans 12:1-8**

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Sacrifices!!!

Why do people make sacrifices? What motivates them to give up something they enjoy? What sacrifices do you as youth make? (Get up early for hockey practice, baby-sit a younger sibling, put some spending money in the offering plate.)

Review the list of spiritual gifts from Romans 12:6-8. Make a list of these gifts and discuss what “sacrifice” is involved when a person exercises each of these gifts. For example, teaching requires giving up time to study, prepare lessons, and discover the needs of the learner and how to relate to them.

We usually think of sacrifice as being negative and something we do reluctantly. What benefits come from giving up things that are of value to us? (Others are helped; we are investing in good relationships with others; God is pleased).

Ask: Which of these gifts is easy for you to do? A spiritual gift not only blesses other Christians, it brings blessing to the one who is willing to exercise his or her gift.

Applying the lesson:

You have the power to bring blessing into the lives of other people. How will you exercise that power this week?

Which spiritual gift will you take responsibility for using?

What sacrifice are you willing to make to reach this goal?

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Give Your Very Selves—Together***
Romans 12:1-8**Beginning the Service:**

Begin with a prayer of dedication. Allow several members of the group to express willingness to dedicate themselves, their gifts and abilities in the service of Christ. Remind the people that their home church members must also be dedicated to further God's kingdom.

Sing several songs that reflect a willingness to acknowledge that Christians are servants of Christ.

**Take My Life and Let It Be
The Greatest Thing in All My Life
Wonderful Grace of Jesus**

Offering:

Today we are learning about gifts God has given us for service and about our gift of ourselves to God. Our offerings are a concrete way in which we express our willingness to be "living sacrifices." How we use our money is an expression of what we value and what we love.

Praying for the World:

How many times have you received a gift that you eagerly accepted only to find it was an item you would probably never use? Dads get ties they don't wear; kids get clothes they don't like; mothers get gadgets for which they have little use. These gifts are set aside and forgotten.

However the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not to be ignored. They are given for the sake of God's Kingdom purposes. It is his desire that we use our spiritual gifts often and with growing skill. He has invested in us. Let's honour the Lord by serving him and his church.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

Society's Misfits **Romans 12:1-8**

Introduction:

Have you ever felt like a misfit? A misfit is one that fits badly or fails to fit at all. If you saw seventy-five parallel lines, with lines equidistant apart, and one line that was not parallel and turned a different direction, that single line would be a misfit. A spot on a beautiful carpet is a misfit. If hundreds of people are going one direction and one person is trying to go the opposite direction through them, he becomes a misfit because he does not fit in with what others are doing. Paul tells us that Christians are to be society's misfits. We are not to fit in with what all of society does. Paul gives us several reasons to be society's misfits.

I. We as Christians are to be society's misfits because of the quality of our lives.

In verse 1, Paul writes about ***"a spiritual act of worship."*** The King James translates it, ***"reasonable service."*** What is that service? Paul says, ***"...to offer yourselves as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God."*** It is a personal act. We present ourselves to God. We offer ourselves as a gift to God. That sets us apart from the world. We belong to God. When we live in relationship to God, we are given a new life—a life of real quality.

Paul tells us in verse 2 that we must not ***"conform any longer to the pattern of this world."*** Most people turn to the world to find the "good life." They frantically seek excitement and fulfillment. Their lives end in disappointment. Since we belong to God, we should live a life that conforms to his will. The quality of our lives no longer depends on the world, but on God.

Paul reminds us in verse 5 that we belong to God and become part of his body. We have been given gifts to use in our participation with the family. That family is a fellowship of believers joined together to be his church.

We are society's misfits because our lives have a special quality. We give ourselves to God, reject the influence of the world, and join others who have made the same

choices. We find the real “good life.” Our lives find excitement and fulfillment. God never disappoints us.

II. We as Christians are to be society’s misfits because of the source of our life.

Our new life is based on being “transformed by the renewing of your mind.” We are not just saved from an eternal judgement, but our minds are renewed. We seek the things above. We know the new life has its source in Christ, not in ourselves. God loved us and sent his Son to die for our sins. Paul writes, **“if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”** (II Corinthians 5:17). Our parents gave us physical life as God designed. God alone gives us new spiritual life in Christ Jesus.

III. We as Christians are to be society’s misfits because of the strength of our lives.

Paul writes, **“Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will”** (v.2b). The early Christians faced a very hostile world. They lived to please Christ no matter the cost. Their strength inspires us as we read of their faithfulness. How could they be so strong? God gave them special strength as they did his will. God always empowers us to accomplish his will. Paul reminds us that God’s will is always good, acceptable, and perfect. How do we know this is true? We are the proof. We prove God’s Will is acceptable (well pleasing) by our new birth experience into his kingdom. Our daily walk reveals that God’s Will is good. Our faith reflects the perfect Will of God.

Call to Commitment:

We are society’s misfits because of the quality, source, and strength of our lives. Notice how the Amplified Bible translates Romans 12:1-2. **“I appeal to you therefore, brethren, and beg of you in view of [all] the mercies of God, to make a decisive dedication of your bodies [presenting all your members and faculties] as a living sacrifice, holy (devoted, concentrated) and well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable (rational, intelligent) service and spiritual worship.”**²

(²) The Amplified Bible, 1987, The Lockman Foundation.

There are many people who go through life as misfits because they choose to be different. These non-conformists like the attention they get. As Christians who refuse to conform to the world, our behaviour should arouse curiosity about our faith and focus attention on our saviour. The depth of our joy and the commitment we have to serve others should attract others to Christ.

Concluding the Service:

Prayer: “Dear Father in Heaven, you have chosen us to be yours in Christ Jesus. May we live as members of your family so that people will want to know the saviour who has

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transformed us by his sacrifice. May we be willing to give up anything that is a barrier to faith and obedience. Amen.”