

Victoria Fellowship Church
International & Interdenominational
Bible Study Worksheet – Date

Theme: Stewardship

Topic: Stewardship Through Self-Sacrifice

Main Text: ROMANS 12:1-8

Key verse: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."*
- Romans 12:1 NKJV

INTRODUCTION: In the first eleven chapters of Romans, Paul sets out the God's incredible plan of salvation in detail showing His grace, love and mercy. From chapter 12 he moves from the theological to the practical giving us guidelines to live as redeemed people in a fallen world in view of God's mercies to us. We are to give ourselves to Christ as living sacrifices, obey government, love our neighbours and take special care of those who are weak in the faith. To do so would mark Christ's followers as a people separated from the prevailing thinking of the world and consecrated unto God. To sustain such a change in behaviour would require not only an intentional decision to be different (not conform) from the world but a transformation of our will through a renewing of our mind. It would mean denying our natural desire to "fit in" with the society around us each, and every single day. But, to do anything else would be illogical in the light of all God has done for us. It is also what Jesus demands of anyone who would follow him.

1.(a) Paul deals with three issues in our main text: a call to personal consecration, humility in serving, and unity and diversity of gifts. What have these to do with self-sacrifice and stewardship? (b) What does it mean to be a "living" sacrifice? (c) We are given four commands in the passage: present bodies, do not conform, be transformed, think soberly, use gifts. How well are we, as individuals and corporately, obeying these commands? Support your answer.

Stewardship is a position of trust (see Luke 12:42) and is allied with discipleship. There is a cost to commitment to being Jesus' disciple. This is set out in Matthew 16:20-23, Mark 8:30-33, and Luke 9:21-26 and in the epistles (e.g. Phil 3:7-14). We often focus on the cost, and it is right that we count the cost as Jesus tells us (Luke 14:28). Yet the "way of the cross" is not a path to self-serving martyrdom. The writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus endured the cross and despised its shame because of the joy set forth before him (Hebrews 12:2). In describing the kingdom of God, Jesus likens it to treasure hidden in a field that a man finds and "for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field". A second illustration is that of a merchant seeking beautiful pearls who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it". If we understood the "joy set before us" in salvation (justification, sanctification, adoption and glorification) as set out in the gospels and explained in the first eleven chapters of Romans, we would conclude with Paul that presenting our whole beings to God as a daily living sacrifice, that is, taking up our cross daily to follow Jesus, is the only logical thing to do. The question is, have our minds been so conditioned by the prevailing culture of the world that we value the things of this world more than the promises of God? "The cross symbolizes our willingness to give up all else for the surpassing glory of following Jesus, or to die if need be" (John White, the cost of commitment).

2. Read Matt. 13:44-46 Luke 9:21-23, Heb. 12:2 (a) How do the stories of hidden treasure and pearl of great price affect your understanding of commitment? (b) When has commitment meant following Christ's sacrificial example for you personally? (c) Do you believe it is right to sacrifice in the expectation of reward? How does this differ from so-called prosperity teaching?

Before Paul speaks about spiritual gifts in our text, he first addresses humility. In some editions of the NKJV, Romans 12:3-8 is subtitled "serve God with Spiritual Gifts". This is helpful in reminding us that the gifts are given for the building up of the church, that, though differing, they are given to **everyone**, and they are to be used in humility, submission and love, not for self-promotion. Thus, we are to put aside our own interest even to the point of blessing those who persecute us or treat us badly (v14).

3. Read Romans 12:6-21 (a) How does this passage illustrate self-sacrifice? (b) Give an example of a time when someone used their gift to bless you deeply. (c) How will you use your gift(s)?

Prayer: *"Our Dear Father, help us to be self-sacrificial in rendering service to you. May our service be given voluntarily, freely and without holding back our own interests or indeed ourselves. In Jesus' Name we pray." Amen*