

The Whole Self

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Worship; Sacrifice; New Creation / Romans 12:1–2

Sign Up

Ernest Shackleton set out on a voyage with the intention to cross the Antarctic continent from one coast to the other by way of the South Pole. He put an ad in the paper that read:

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“Men wanted for hazardous journey. Low wages, bitter cold, long hours of complete darkness. Safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in event of success.”

Can you imagine trying to recruit for that? Well, a 27 person crew rose to the occasion. Their ship, *The Endurance*, set sail and after a six week period traveled a thousand miles forging its way through pack ice. They were one hundred miles or one days sail away from their destination when on the 18th of January in 1915 the ice closed in around them. The storekeeper on the ship later wrote, the ship “was like an almond in a piece of toffee.”

Everyone knew it could go one of two ways, either the pack ice would unpack in the spring or their ship would be crushed. They’d drifted for at least 1200 miles and 24 months and 22 days later many of the crew was rescued. Now let’s go back:

“Men wanted for hazardous journey. Low wages, bitter cold, long hours of complete darkness. Safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in event of success.”

There’s something innate in us to discover who we are and God shows us it can only be found with the blueprint he provides. The Apostle Paul writes this:

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Romans 12:1 NIV

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

God’s Blueprint

Similar to the advertisement we're invited to take a journey greater than our own—It's a journey of sacrifice. If it were an advertisement it would read—offer your bodies as a living sacrifice. So I need a volunteer to perform this next act.

When I think of sacrifice I think of a parent working the second shift to put food on the table, I think of the friend who gives up their Saturday to move a heavy piece of furniture, I think of our military and first responders running to the scene, I think of the community that comes together when someone experience a hardship.

For the Jewish people in the first or second century to offer your body meant to offer your whole self. Sacrifice carried a powerful meaning for the Jews, the people of God. In their day, God's presence could be found in a temple—the temple in which they'd bring their sacrifice whether bird or beast—and that set them apart as the people of God. It's what made them distinct as the people of God. In other words, their sacrifice revealed their identity.

Paul is saying it's a new era in which the people of God are not only Jew but also Gentile. It's a new day in which the true mark of the people of God isn't a sacrifice found in the temple because God's presence is no longer found in a physical location but in his people. In essence, we're the temple of God. That's why Paul writes:

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1 Corinthians 3:16–17 ESV

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

God's presence lives in his people and our whole self commitment to him is what sets us apart as his people. It's our distinctive. It's why we gather together on a Sunday morning. It's not about the place it's about the people of God coming together to worship the one true God.

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Our worship of God reveals our identity as the people of God. We make up the church, not by it's physical structures, but by the people of God gathering in the presence of God to worship the one true God.

We're all on this journey together and our whole person commitment to God is a signature on the list of people who are taking the journey together. You may say well I'm not on that list. I haven't signed up for this whole God thing. Well there were thousands who didn't sign up for the voyage either but they were still in it together. We're all in this together.

Listen—when you put a bunch of people together it's going to get messy because most of the time when you put something really good together—it gets messy. Grilled cheese, anyone? We're people. It happens!

Don't forget our purpose in coming together. It's our worship of God that reveals our identity as the people of God. It doesn't matter what church you go to but stay leaned in because we're all apart of this thing.

God gives us the responsibility to serve as captain of only one ship—ourselves. I know for some in here it feels like your the captain of an entire fleet. We can only make the decision for ourselves and God dares us to take the courageous journey of self-sacrifice. What area is God asking you to offer your whole self in full commitment to him? In what area of your life is God asking you to reflect his image?

God's Mercy

Paul gives a compelling reason to offer our whole-self—God's mercy.

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Romans 12:1 NIV

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

God's mercy came all the way to meet us in our rebellion. The ancient Jews, including Paul, believed world history could be divided up into the present age and the new age. The present age is characterized by chaos and evil and the new age when God became king in and through the Messiah Jesus Christ giving fresh life to the world.

We live at this point of overlap. The new age is breaking into the present in this world and the invitation is there for us every day to allow it to invade our lives. This is God's great act of mercy. This is the reason we're to offer our whole self as a living sacrifice to God.

This is what Paul says to keep in view as we consider the choice between living God's story or our own. It's the foundation of our worship because it tells us who God is.

God's mercy is the catalyst to our worship. It's the reason we gather. It's the reason we commit. It's the reason we sign our name on the dotted line. It's why we take the journey.

I don't know where you're at in your faith journey. You may not even know where you're at in your faith journey. This could be new to you or maybe it's not. I can tell you one thing—God designed you for this very purpose and he wants you to discover your purpose by enlisting for the journey. Once you sign up he wants to see you do it to the best of your ability.

God's Design

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Romans 12:1 NIV

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

The Creator God designed his creation to function in a certain way. He designed humankind to function in a certain way. That's what Paul means when he says this is your true and proper worship.

It's like listening to the orders of the captain on the ship. It doesn't matter what happens around us. We know that if we follow his order and march to the beat of his drum, we can handle anything that comes our way. When those sailors were stuck in the ice—guess what? They functioned. They followed the orders.

God wants the same thing for you and I. He wants us to discover our design.

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We discover our design when we align our lives in true, whole person worship. It's totally countercultural. We're to take a journey away from the self in order to discover the self. Signing up for that voyage is taking a journey away from the self.

It's a daunting task. I know it is for me at least. If we dare take the journey we actually discover who we are and our lives sort of take on a natural rhythm. When we choose true, whole person worship we function as God designed us to function and it doesn't matter what life throws at us because we're going to listen to God's orders.

God wants us to align with him through true, whole person worship. It's not easy. That's why Jesus:

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Matthew 7:13–14 NIV

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

Think about those 27 people who signed up for the voyage. Talk about a narrow gate, but when we choose the narrow gate in every area of our lives we discover our design and function in the way God intended.

God isn't hiding anything from you—he wants you to discover who you are designed to be and it happens one moment at a time for me.

It's not an easy journey, but the cross is the way to life, even though it doesn't make sense, and that's the case whether someone is following Jesus for a week or a lifetime. When we dare to take the journey every day and in every situation—it's there we discover our design—and when we discover our design it delights God.

God's Delight

Yes, I said it—when we give ourselves to God he's delighted—*it is pleasing to God.*

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Romans 12:1 NIV

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

God isn't some narcissist who we can't ever please. God in his mercy gives us a ticket to take the voyage. Once we're on the journey with him he isn't difficult to please. He loves you and he delights in you through your ups and downs. That's why the scriptures say:

(slide 11)

Psalm 149:4 NIV

For the LORD takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with victory.

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Colossians 1:10 NIV

so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,

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Proverbs 11:20 NIV

The LORD detests those whose hearts are perverse, but he delights in those whose ways are blameless.

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God delights in seeing his people function in the way creation intended.

It's like the parent who wants to see their kid succeed. It's like the doctor who wants to see their patient get healthy or the coach who wants to see their team do well.

I don't know your background. I don't know what you've done. I don't know where you're at on your journey. What I do know is it delights God when we offer true, whole person worship. You make God happy.

True happiness is found when we walk in step with God, but this doesn't always happen does it. It's because the world gives us all kinds of faulty blueprint to live our lives.

The World's Counterfeit

Paul knows this and gives a profound command when he says:

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Romans 12:2 NIV

Do not conform 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.

Shipwrecked

The pattern of this world is completely out of line with God's created order. That's because we think we know better than God. We live in a world that promises everything but delivers nothing. We think we can build a world without God. We live in a culture that encourages us to do things our way. I don't know about you, but if I do things my way I'll get shipwrecked.

Yet, we live in a world that says to discover your purpose—follow your heart. The words of the prophet Jeremiah come to mind when he says:

Jeremiah 17:9 NIV

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

The heart although physically sits here the impulse to follow the heart is right in between our ears. The world plays on that impulse by bombarding us with fads, diets, surgeries, you name it.

Building with our hands

We live in a world that follows their heart and thinks they can build it all better than God. We see it in Genesis when the people tried to do it all themselves by building the Tower of Babel:

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Genesis 11:4 NIV

Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth."

The world we live in is no different. It's all about making a name for yourself. So easily it can become about us, right? It can become all about our wants, our desires, our dreams, our comfort, our preferences, our agenda, our perspective, our beliefs.

It happens in conversations or in an argument where in the moment we can try and make a name for ourselves. It's in the way we use our money when it's about making a name for ourselves. It happens in the way we react to a situation out of our control.

God knows that our world is completely out of line with his created order and therefore he's looking for someone to take the journey. In this case, he found Abraham to walk in step with him to give fresh life to a dying world.

God is inviting you to take the journey. He's inviting you to sign your name to take the voyage. He's inviting you to live out his story in every area of your life. Yes—it's a dangerous journey because it's not the pattern of this world—but it's where you discover your design.

New Creation in Action:

The transformational journey that God invites us to take starts right between our ears. That's why Paul writes next:

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Romans 12:2 NIV

Do not conform 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.

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Whole self commitment to God is an ongoing process in which we choose to align with the image of our creator.

It's an ongoing process and a decision we choose to make in every situation presented to us.

You won't always get it right, but that's where the renewal comes in. The next time the choice of God's way or your way pops up is an opportunity to align with the image of the creator.

In my own life I've realized God so often takes me in a circle and my mind says I know this territory well. You may feel like you're in a place that you know all too well. It may be a place in which you've chosen your story too many times.

It's never too late to choose God's story. It's never too late to commit to the daring journey. It's never too late as the scripture says *"to put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator."*

When we take the journey of whole self commitment to the Lord, we reflect his renewed humanity to a world who desperately needs the life found through the Lord Jesus Christ. It's our true and proper worship and our identity as the people of God.