

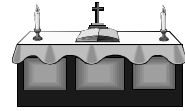
Living the Christian Life

Romans 12:1-8

True Worship

- ❑ One definition of “worship” is “reverence (*honor, devotion, veneration, awe*) offered a divine being or supernatural power; *also*: an act of expressing such reverence.”¹

1. When you hear the word “worship,” what do you think about?



- ❑ Paul begins Romans 12 with the word “therefore.” In response to everything Paul has said in Romans 1-11, what should his readers do? Read Romans 12:1-2.

2. What is “worship” according to these verses?² What does it mean?

“It is not only what we can give that God demands; He demands the giver” (Wilckens).

3. What does Paul mean by saying, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world” (12:2)?³

4. How are we “transformed?” How does this take place?⁴ What is the result?⁵



Doing Our Part

- ❑ Our worship of God involves “doing our part.” Read Romans 12:3-8. Paul says, “think of yourself with sober judgment” (12:3).⁶ Sober judgment involves *not* thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought. We need to think of ourselves in a humble and honest way.

¹ *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1998), p. 1365.

² “offer your bodies as living sacrifices” means to present (give, devote) your whole being to God for his purposes and will. This offering is “spiritual” (*logikēn*) as opposed to ceremonial. Some say *logikēn* should be translated “rational” or “reasonable.” In view of God’s mercy, this act of worship is *both* spiritual *and* reasonable!

³ The “pattern of this world” represents the ways of thinking and acting that are characteristic of “this world” (*tō aiōni toutō*, “this age”). This includes attitudes of self-sufficiency, self-centeredness, self-indulgence, selfishness, pride, materialism, and other attitudes and actions that are opposed to God.

⁴ We are transformed “by the renewing of our minds,” resulting in new ways of thinking in accordance with the new life we have in the Spirit. Renewal of the mind is a process. The Spirit renews our minds as we live the Christian life. This involves vital union with Christ (John 17:1-17), God’s word (the Bible), prayer, fellowship and service. Our worship involves all of these activities. Our whole life should be totally dedicated to God on a daily basis.

⁵ The result (or purpose) of the “renewing of our mind” is that we might be able to “test and approve” what God’s will is – that is, to understand and agree with God’s will, with the desire and intention of putting it into practice.

⁶ “Sober judgment” is sound, steady, clearheaded, and objective. “Measure of faith” has various interpretations. The phrase could refer to (a) differing amounts of faith given by God (Schreiner); (b) the standard of *the* faith by which we measure ourselves (*Moo, Stott*); or (c) differing portions of faith (not in a quantitative sense) that God has given for a specific role (*Fee, Bruce*). Bruce says “faith” in this context is “the spiritual power given to each Christian for the discharge of his special responsibility” (F.F. Bruce, *Romans, TNTC* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985], 215).

5. Paul uses the analogy of the human body to help us think of ourselves with sober judgment (12:4-5). How does this analogy help our thinking?⁷
6. Paul says Christians have different “gifts” (*charismata*)⁸ according to the “grace” (*charin*) given them.⁹ How should this affect our acceptance and appreciation of the gifts and abilities given to people, whether they are given to us, or to others?¹⁰



Thinking of Yourself

- ❑ One Bible scholar says the first command in Romans 12:3-8 is simply “Know yourself.”¹¹ He suggests that we gain self-knowledge by prayerfully asking the following questions.¹²
 - ? What are my gifts and abilities?
 - ? What is the deepest desire of my heart?
 - ? Where do I personally sense the needs of the world and feel the brokenness in God’s creation?
 - ? What is my unique personality and temperament?
- ❑ He also says it is important to realize that our self-knowledge happens in community. Thus others can help us gain self-knowledge. For example, other mature believers in the church can help us identify our gifts and abilities, and also help us develop them.
- ❑ Through the process of prayerful self-evaluation, we can better discern what God wants us to *be* and *do*. God has given us gifts and abilities for a reason. We are called to be faithful to exercise those gifts and abilities in accordance with God’s purposes.

Reflection/Application

- Who, or what, do *you* “worship?” To whom, or what, do you give your supreme devotion? (It may not be a supernatural being.) Is he/she or it truly worthy of worship? The Bible says that worship of God (the only One who is truly worthy of worship) starts with faith in Christ.
- As a Christian, how would you describe your worship? Is it in accordance with Romans 12:1-2? Commit to obey Romans 12:1-2 and make it your daily prayer. As a Christian, are you exercising the gifts and abilities God has given you? Are you doing your part? To be faithful in exercising your gifts, what do you need to do?

⁷ The different parts of our physical body have different functions, but they are still important to the operation of the entire body. The parts of the body are an example of “diversity in unity.” Likewise, Christians have different gifts and abilities, but each Christian is important to the function of the church. Christians are supposed to work together.

⁸ This list of gifts is not exhaustive. “Prophesying” refers to public proclamation of a “revelation” from God (inspired words or thoughts). While the gifts are special abilities, not having a particular gift does not necessarily mean we should avoid that activity (e.g., not having the “gift of serving” does not mean we should avoid serving!).

⁹ “in proportion (*analogian*) to [his] faith” (12:6), could refer to (a) the degree of faith received (Schreiner); (b) the “analogy” of faith – that is, concerning the prophecy’s agreement with the true faith (*Moo, Stott*); or (c) the distinct expression (or portion) of faith given to a particular person (*Fee*).

¹⁰ The key words are “gifts” and “grace.” God has freely given us abilities to accomplish his purposes, and “God has arranged the parts of the body, everyone of them, just as he wanted them to be” (1 Corinthians 12:18). Since God is good and all-knowing, we can trust that His arrangement of the parts is best. So we should accept and appreciate that arrangement, for ourselves and for others, avoiding either pride or envy. We *will* be fulfilled when we do *our* part.

¹¹ Gordon T. Smith, *Courage & Calling* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1999), p. 37.

¹² These questions should be asked after agreeing to the fundamental commitment in Romans 12:1-2. For example, our desires will lead us astray if they are not submitted to God. On the other hand, “Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart” (Psalm 37:4).