

Marks of Discipleship

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible Reading
Giving Time, Talents & Resources ■ Spiritual
Friendships ■ Service In & Beyond the Church

July 30, 2023

Day 1: Romans 12:1

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Paul presents us with an image of worship. We give to God our whole being to be used just by God and this is reasonable worship. In the ancient world worship involved sacrifice of a living thing or some incense that the deity would enjoy. The idea of sacrifice is to give to the deity something living but in the giving the sacrifice dies. We give up to God our whole being and we do this as we live. Our living wholly devoted to God is worship. Our physical life does not come to an end as we sacrifice to God but our old self has died and we live to God. Everything we do in Jesus' name is worship.

Question: How would you respond to the question - what is sacrifice?

Challenge: This week be aware of times you are spending some time (outside of reading this) in worship.

Scripture: Romans 12:1-21

Day 2: Romans 12:2

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

If we allow our whole being to be transformed our minds will be renewed so that we do not have to rely on a set of ethical commands but we are able to (in the Spirit) discern what is the will of God. If we rely on a set of ethical commands than we cannot respond to issues that are not covered by those commands. Each generation has issues that are particular to it. The example of the crucified one will guide us in each new situation if we become transformed.

Question: Why do you think Paul said "renew your minds" and not "renew your hearts?"

Challenge: Think of 3-4 examples where the church has conformed to this world. This can be either in history or our current times.

Scripture: Romans 14:1-23

Day 3: Psalm 128:1

Happy is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways.

To fear the Lord means to recognize God's sovereignty and to entrust our life and future to Him. Our happiness is ultimately the connecting of our life with the source of our being - God. When we are connected to God we orient our whole life around the giver of life. Our relationships to our work, family and our worship of God are the source of our real happiness. We walk in the way of God as we treat each person as a brother or sister for whom Christ died.

Question: Why do you think the word "fear" is used?

Challenge: Think about your week so far. Have you been walking in God's ways?

Scripture: Psalm 127

Day 4: Psalm 128:2

You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be happy, and it shall go well with you.

I believe that one of the things that bring us happiness is knowing that what we work for has meaning and gets results. Gardening is enjoyable because one can see the growth and is able to eat the fruit of the growth. God has not made us to work for pay but has given us work so that we might have meaning in life. When humanity left the Garden we needed an attitude to thrive in the world. The satisfaction of working and seeing the results of our work is that attitude. We could not live without pay but it is not money that brings us happiness.

Question: How much would you have to be paid before job satisfaction meant very little?

Challenge: When have you passed up more money for more satisfaction on the job?

Scripture: Psalm 126

Day 5: Psalm 128:5

The Lord blesses you from Zion. May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.

Zion is a term that is used to designate the city of Jerusalem, a section in the southeast of Jerusalem (City of David) and the throne that God sits upon. In this psalm the idea is that a blessing (a gift from God) will come directly from the Throne. If it comes from Zion it is not a secondary source but from God. It is God who takes a personal interest in the person. A king is too busy to bother with an individual. This blessing does not have to come with us standing at the foot of the Throne. We are blessed when we trust in God no matter where we are. God's power to bless goes around the whole world and into heaven.

Question: When you hear the word Zion what do you think of?

Challenge: Who could you bless this week?

Scripture: Psalm 129

Day 6: Psalm 128:6

May you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel!

To see ones grandchildren was considered a great blessing. It ranks way above "have a nice day." In order to see our children's children, peace will need to be in the land. In times of war things are so unsettled it becomes very hard to see beyond a few weeks or years. In a time of peace the economy grows, people plan for the future, countries develop the land for the future generations and we turn our energies toward bettering ourselves, not just survival.

Question: What would you consider a great blessing from God?

Challenge: See if you can discover where your great grandparents came from.

Scripture: Psalm 130