

Facilitator Notes for *Set Free!* – A Study in Romans
Lesson 16 ~ Body Language Romans 12:1-8

**PLEASE DON'T READ THESE NOTES UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LESSON.
HEARING GOD FOR YOURSELF IS WAY BETTER THAN MY COMMENTS!**

Questions

Read Romans 12:1-2.

1. Romans 12:1 begins with the words *Therefore . . .* or *And so . . .* What logical connection do you see between 11:36 and 12:1?

Romans 11:36 tells us that everything is from God and is for God and exists for God's glory. If this is the case, it makes logical sense that we would offer our bodies to him as a living sacrifice. After all, he made our bodies and we exist because he created us and we are dependent on him for life itself. Offering him our bodies for him to use as he wishes is an appropriate act of thanksgiving and praise.

2. What does Paul plead or urge us to do in 12:1?

Give our bodies to God and let them be a living and holy sacrifice

Do we have a choice? Why or why not?

It seems we have a choice. If not, Paul would not be instructing us to do it. God respects our choices and it is not his way to force us to do something because love cannot be forced, even by God. Our willing giving our bodies to God for his use makes the sacrifice even more valuable to God – just as when someone sacrifices in order to give you a special or costly gift.

- ♥ If God has our heart, why does he also want or need our body? The body represents the whole person – our physical selves as well as our emotions, minds, desires and plans. When we give our bodies, we are giving all of ourselves to God. Is it possible to give God your heart and not your body? Why or why not? Jesus said that a person cannot serve two masters – either he will love the one and hate the other or be devoted to one and despise the other (Mt. 6:24). Our giving of ourselves to God may be progressive as our love relationship develops, but it is not really possible to divide our heart from our body. God desires all of us.
 - ♥ If you give your body to God, what, exactly, would that include? It is really the giving of oneself; our body and all its functions; our time, gifts, possessions, desires, plans – our very life. What do you think God wants to do with your body once it has been offered or given to him? He will use it and us for his service and glory; he will use us to do his will and work in the world; he will use us to love and serve others; he will use us to tell others about God and his love for them. Ironically, to give ourselves to God is to experience joy and freedom because this is what we were created for. To keep ownership and control of ourselves and our lives is to experience bondage.
 - ♥ **How** do we give our bodies to God? What might be some different ways to do this? Share with your group some meaningful and creative ways you could offer or give your bodies to God.
3. What is our motivation to offer our bodies to God (12:1 NIV)? Is this a meaningful enough reason for you? Why or why not?

In view or because of **God's mercy to us**, we offer our bodies, our whole selves to God.

- ♥ Generally speaking, *grace* is God giving us good things we *don't* deserve and *mercy* is God *not* giving us dreadful things that we *do* deserve. What motivates you more, God's **grace** or his **mercy**? Why? Do you think there was a reason Paul appeals to us on the basis of God's **mercy** instead of his **grace**?

We are not motivated to give our bodies because God will punish us if we don't; that is motivation out of fear and resentment and certainly is not rooted in love. We are not motivated to give our bodies in hopes of receiving something from God (grace); that would be manipulative and self-centered. Rather, our motivation is **gratitude** for God's mercy and we give out of thanksgiving.

- ♥ What are some reasons why you might *not* want to give your body to God? Answers will vary, but generally speaking we probably don't want to give up control – or we may not know God well enough to really trust him with our whole lives, really believing that he has our best interests at heart and that he will take care of us.
 - ♥ How would *you* answer Paul's question at the end of 12:1 in the NLT?
4. According to the verses below, why are our bodies and what we do with them, so important?

Roman 12:5	our bodies compose the many parts of Christ's body here on earth; all Christ-followers belong to each other and are affected by each other
1 Corinthians 6:15	our bodies are member or parts of Jesus himself; what we do with our bodies we are doing to Jesus or involving him in
1 Corinthians 6:19-20	our bodies are the temple or home of the Holy Spirit who lives in us ; we do not belong to ourselves – God has paid our ransom and we belong to him
Ephesians 4:25	we are members of one body; we belong to each other
Romans 6:16	Whoever we choose to obey with our bodies, becomes our master; either God will be our master or we will be ruled by our sinful nature

- ♥ If God wants our bodies, what does that say about their value? How do you feel about your body? How important is it to your identity? How do you treat it? How do you think God views your body? (Ephesians 2:10)
- ♥ Why are making an idol of your body or having contempt for your body similar sins?
- ♥ **How** might you be tempted to give some of your body and its functions to God, but not all? Why might this be a temptation? Is it possible to give God some of your body, but not all? Why or why not?

5. What are some reasons why this act is called a *living* sacrifice (Romans 6:8-13)?

Living sacrifice is an **oxymoron** (a figure of speech that combines two normally contradictory terms). God doesn't want us dead (like the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament); he wants us alive and living! We have been given new life in Christ and being a living sacrifice means that we will live for him – for his purposes and his glory. Living sacrifice means the total devotion of ourselves and our lives to God. Laying aside our desire to live life our way, we put all our energies, resources, abilities, and desires at his disposal, trusting him to love us, lead us and use us in his Kingdom. **A living sacrifice is a sacrifice of obedience.**

6. The Biblical meaning of *sacrifice* is to give up something of great value, to gain something of greater value. What are we sacrificing that has great value? Our very lives, our whole person and our living for self. What will we receive back that is of greater value (Romans 6:6-7, 16)? We are freed from our bondage from sin and come under God's control.

- ♥ Can you think of some other things you might receive back that are also of greater value?
- ♥ Think of the different parts of your body and what they do. With your small group, brainstorm the different ways God could use, for his purposes, the different parts your body and their functions.
- ♥ Like salvation, is giving our bodies to God something we only do once? Jesus said, "If anyone wants to be my follower, you must put aside your selfish ambition, shoulder your cross **daily**, and follow me." (Luke 9:23). Laying down our own desires and submitting to God is a moment by moment, day by day process. Whenever we see that we have taken back control or discover an area in our lives where we have never given control to God, we will again offer our bodies as living sacrifices. Why or why not?
- ♥ How can taking proper care of your body be a way of making a *living sacrifice*? How can abusing your body be an *act of disobedience*?

7. Besides our body, what two other essentials does our *living sacrifice* include (12:2)?

Don't conform to the pattern of this world – Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world Be transformed by the renewing of your mind – let God change you into a new person by changing the way you think.

In the Bible, the word *world* can mean *people* (**John 3:16**), the created *universe* (**John 17:24**) or *people and systems of thought and actions that are warped by sin and opposed to God's plans and purposes* (**Ephesians 2:1-2; 1 John 2:16**).

Conforming to the pattern of this world and copying its behavior and customs does not mean that we don't live in the world or love the people of the world. It does not mean that we "do" certain things and "don't do" other things. Rather, **conforming to the pattern of this world** means that we unthinkingly adopt the perspectives, values, and attitudes of our culture **without bringing them under the light and judgment of God's Word**. It means that we live most of our lives as if being a follower of Jesus makes little difference in how we **think** and **behave**. It means we are *spiritual chameleons* that blend in with the people around us so that an observer would have a hard time detecting whether or not we know and follow Jesus. A Christ-follower is called to be fundamentally different from the world.

8. Read **1 John 2:15-17** in the *NIV* and *NLT*. How do these verses define "worldliness?" (In our culture, *lust* is often associated with sexual desire. However, *lust* simply means *any strong or passionate desire*.) Worldliness is loving and living for pleasure, for the present, for wanting, desiring and accumulating things and pride in all we are and have. Basically, it is living for self and using things and people to get what you want. The world's motto is: I see it, I want it, I'll have it.

The Message paraphrases these verse this way: **1 John 2:15** Don't love the world's ways. Don't love the world's goods. Love of the world squeezes out love for the Father. **16** Practically everything that goes on in the world—wanting your own way, wanting everything for yourself, wanting to appear important—has nothing to do with the Father. It just isolates you from him. **17** The world and all its wanting, wanting, wanting is on the way out—but whoever does what God wants is set for eternity.

God gives us all things for our enjoyment (1 Tim. 6:17) and Christ-followers are to enjoy the good things of this life and world (God's creation). Worldliness is when our attitudes and motivations towards these things make them more important than God himself. God is not trying to keep us from having a good time for he is the Creator of joy and pleasure. But when we begin to live for the things of this world, trying to get our satisfaction and identity from them, we begin to live independently from God and we are unable to fulfill the very purpose for which we were created – to know and love God. It is impossible to love the world and God too.

The problem with the world's pleasures is that their attractions are deceptive. The world's pleasures do not satisfy and they fuel our desire for more and more until we are enslaved (addictions) to the very thing we were looking to for happiness and fulfillment. The world's attractions are deceptive and they do not satisfy. We desire freedom to do what we want but we end up enslaved.

- ♥ Why won't the patterns listed in **1 John 2:16** ever originate with God, but always with the world? The world's way is always self-centered. God's way is to love God and love others. The world's way will never lead to joy and peace; rather it enslaves us. Living God's way sets us free. What are some specific patterns, customs and behaviors of our culture that should be avoided?
- ♥ Why do the patterns of the world have such a pull on us? In what ways do you tend to copy or conform to the world's behavior and customs? Do you know why you do this? Who is behind the customs, behaviors and patterns of the world (**Ephesians 6:11-12; 1 John 5:19**)?
- ♥ What, in your life, do you think would change if you could see, with your physical eyes, Jesus beside you 24/7, smiling at you and lovingly looking at you? Is Jesus always with you in this way? If so, what difference will it make?

9. What is the best, most effective way to battle the pressures of the world and to know God's will (**12:2**)? **renewing of our minds or letting God change the way we think.**

- ♥ How can changing the way you think result in being transformed into a new person (**Romans 8:5-6**)? Christ-followers are to be transformed from the inside out and the change must begin in the mind because our thoughts, attitudes and motives will ALWAYS determine our actions.

10. What two components, working in us, are necessary in order to change the way we think so that we can know and do God's will (1 Corinthians 2:11-12; Titus 3:5-6; Ephesians 6:17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13)? **The Holy Spirit and the Word of God.** The Holy Spirit brings new life to every part of our soul and body as we give him more and more control. He gives us the power to do what is revealed in God's Word (obedience). The Word of God transforms our thinking and reveals what God's will is. **We need both the Spirit and the Word working in us in order to know and do God's will.**

♥ What are you actively doing to encourage the working of these two components in your life? What more could you do? How important is this to you and how much of a priority do you give it?

The stages of Christian moral (having to do with right and wrong) **transformation** that Paul lays out in **Romans 12:2** are really quite simple. First, our mind is renewed by the **Word of God** and the **Spirit of God**; then we are able to discern and desire the **will of God**; and then we are increasingly **transformed (to be like Jesus)** as we obey and do God's will.

♥ In what ways do we often *get the cart before the horse* in this process? What stage do we often leave out? **One way is that instead of letting the Word and the Spirit change the way we think and change us from the inside-out, we try to obey or follow the rules in our own strength which never leads to transformation.**

Read **Romans 12:3-8**.

11. Paul was writing to the church in Rome where there seemed to be some division and conflict between the Jewish and Gentile Christians who, of course, had very different backgrounds. With this in mind, paraphrase the main truth found in each verse listed below.

12:3	be honest about yourself and don't be proud; rather see yourself through God's eyes ("Measuring your faith by how much God has given you" refers to the spiritual capacity and power given to each person to carry out his or her function in the body of Christ. It is knowing the balance between realizing we are not indispensable, nor are we useless.)
12:4	our physical bodies have many parts and each part has its special function
12:5	each one of us are all parts of the body of Christ and we all belong to each other; we each have something to do
12:6a	God has given each of us the ability to use some gift for the benefit of the others in the Body

♥ What relationship do you see between Paul's commands in **12:2** and **12:3**?

Our renewed mind (thinking God's way) will enable us to think correctly of ourselves, our identity, our gifts and our place in the body of Christ.

♥ What determines our worth and value in the body of Christ (**12:3**)? Why can't anyone be proud of or boast about their spiritual gift (**12:6**)? **It is God who gives us our gifts; we can't take any credit for them.** Why is it important to have a proper view of ourselves with neither an inflated or deflated ego? **If we are proud, we cannot exercise our faith and gifts to benefit others. And if we consider ourselves worthless, we also withhold what God intended to deliver to others through us. Each one must do their part in order to be healthy and whole Body.**

♥ What will happen in the body of Christ if we evaluate ourselves and others by the world's standards of success and achievement instead of God's standards? When have you seen this happen and what was the result?

12. Sum up the meaning of **12:6-8** in one concise (clever!) sentence.

Whatever God has given you to do, do it with all your heart. (Okay, this one isn't so clever!)

♥ Consider the gifts Paul names in **12:6-8**. Which ones are intended for the betterment of the person who has them, and which are given for the good of others? **Our gifts are ALWAYS given to serve others – and never for our own benefit. We don't have to serve and take care of ourselves. As we serve others, they will serve us.**

What do you learn from this? Does each and every member of the body of Christ have a gift to be used for the good of the Body? Why or why not?

- ♥ How clear is your sense of the gifts God has given you? Are you inclined to *think of yourself more highly than you ought (12:3)* or put yourself down? Why? What are some things that can hold us back from using our gifts more fully? If one member of the Body is doing more or less than what God intends, what impact will this have on the rest of the Body?
- ♥ What gifts from God do you see in others in your small group? Encourage each other by telling each other what you see.

Response

One of the reasons we need to offer our bodies to God as a *living sacrifice* is because Jesus actually needs to use our bodies in order to attend to the needs of others and to demonstrate his love for them. We truly are the hands and feet of Jesus in our world, and giving our bodies to God as a *living sacrifice* does not need to be complicated or deeply spiritual!

Try this simple exercise: Choose a day and make a **To Do List** of everything you need or plan to do that day, including "mundane chores". Imagine Jesus saying to you, "*This is now My To Do List for today and I need your body in order to accomplish these tasks. Would you do them for me?*" As you go through your day, do everything as if Jesus asked you to do it **for** him because he needs you! See Jesus working and speaking *through* you. When you do things for yourself like eating, exercising or leisure activities, see yourself doing these things in the presence and company of Jesus and view them as His gifts to you!

- ♥ How does this change your attitude about giving your body to God as a *living sacrifice*?
- ♥ What, of greater value than your time and effort, might you receive in return for your *living sacrifice*?

BELOW IS THE SUPPLEMENTARY SCRIPTURE FOR THIS LESSON THAT CAN BE PRINTED OUT FOR SMALL GROUP TIME.
(REFERENCES FROM VARIOUS CHAPTERS IN ROMANS ARE NOT INCLUDED.)

NIV

1Corinthians 6:15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never!

1Corinthians 6:19-20 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; **20** you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Ephesians 4:25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

Romans 6:16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

1John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. **17** The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

Ephesians 6:11-12 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. **12** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

1John 5:19 We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

1Corinthians 2:11-12 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. **12** We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.

Titus 3:5-6 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, **6** whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior,

Ephesians 6:17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

1Thessalonians 2:13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

NLT

1Corinthians 6:15 Don't you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? Should a man take his body, which belongs to Christ, and join it to a prostitute? Never!

1Corinthians 6:19-20 Or don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, **20** for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.

Ephesians 4:25 So put away all falsehood and "tell your neighbor the truth" because we belong to each other.

Romans 6:16 Don't you realize that whatever you choose to obey becomes your master? You can choose sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God and receive his approval.

1John 2:15-17 Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you, for when you love the world, you show that you do not have the love of the Father in you. **16** For the world offers only the lust for physical pleasure, the lust for everything we see, and pride in our possessions. These are not from the Father. They are from this evil world. **17** And this world is fading away, along with everything it craves. But if you do the will of God, you will live forever.

Ephesians 6:11-12 Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil. **12** For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms.

1John 5:19 We know that we are children of God and that the world around us is under the power and control of the evil one.

1Corinthians 2:11-12 No one can know what anyone else is really thinking except that person alone, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. **12** And God has actually given us his Spirit (not the world's spirit) so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us.

Titus 3:5-6 He saved us, not because of the good things we did, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins and gave us a new life through the Holy Spirit. **6** He generously poured out the Spirit upon us because of what Jesus Christ our Savior did.

Ephesians 6:17 Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

1Thessalonians 2:13 And we will never stop thanking God that when we preached his message to you, you didn't think of the words we spoke as being just our own. You accepted what we said as the very word of God—which, of course, it was. And this word continues to work in you who believe.