



## Lesson 16 ~ Body Language

Romans 12:1-8

### Discussion Starter

- As a teen, how did peer pressure affect the way you dressed and acted?

### Introduction

At the beginning of our study of **Romans**, we said that Paul addressed five main themes in his letter: *Sin, Salvation, Spiritual Growth, God's Sovereignty* and *Service to God and Others*. **Chapter 12** of **Romans** begins the discussion of the last theme, *Service to God and Others*. After spending a great deal of time explaining what we believe and why we believe it, Paul now tells us how we should **live out our beliefs**. When we study the Bible, we always need to make the connection between *belief* and *behavior, doctrine* and *duty, creed* and *conduct*.

Paul stresses that it is not enough to just know God's truth; we must also live God's truth. He does not leave us in the dark about how to live the new life we have in Christ. In **Romans 12-16**, he gives us some very "hands-on" ways to *practice what we preach*. Even though we have received a righteousness from God by faith as a free gift, that gift comes with an obligation to God and others. In **Romans 12:1-8**, we will learn about our obligation to God by making a *living sacrifice* of our bodies and our obligation to others by serving them with the gifts God has given each of us. God doesn't just want us to know about all the good things he has done for us. God also wants us to do good things!

### Preparation

1. Before you read **Romans 12:1-2**, ask God to open your eyes so that you may see wonderful truths in his Word (**Psalm 119:18**). You may want to make the following prayer your own:

**Triune God – Father, Son and Spirit,**

*I admit that I cannot understand the truth found in God's Word with only my mind.*

*I agree that spiritual truth has to be understood with my heart as well as my head.*

*So I ask You to give me spiritual understanding as I do this lesson.*

*I pray that You would enable me to see, hear and understand,  
with my spirit, all that You want to teach me.*

*I ask this in the powerful name of Father, Son and Spirit.*

*Amen*

2. Read **Romans 12:1-12** slowly and thoughtfully. As you read and reread, **underline or highlight** any verses, phrases or words that are meaningful to you. Put a **question mark** beside anything you don't understand. Put a ✓ beside anything you would like more information about.

**You may also want to read the Scripture in another translation.** The Scripture handouts for these lessons contain the *New International Version (NIV)* and the *New Living Translation (NLT)*. The questions are phrased to be answered from **either** of these versions. Other translations and paraphrases should only be used as supplementary texts to help your understanding.

3. Sum up the Scripture passage for this lesson in a short sentence, phrase or title.

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

Do we have a choice? Why or why not?

- ♥ If God has our heart, why does he also want or need our body? Is it possible to give God your heart and not your body? Why or why not?
  - ♥ If you give your body to God, what, exactly, would that include? What do you think God wants to do with your body once it has been offered or given to him?
  - ♥ **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?
  - ♥ 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**?
  - ♥ What are some reasons why you might *not* want to give your body to God?
  - ♥ 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?

<b>Roman 12:5</b>	
<b>1 Corinthians 6:15</b>	
<b>1 Corinthians 6:19-20</b>	
<b>Ephesians 4:25</b>	
<b>Romans 6:16</b>	

- ♥ 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?
  - ♥ 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**)?

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? What will we receive back that is of greater value (Romans 6:6-7, 16)?
- ♥ 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? 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)?

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*.)
- ♥ Why won't the patterns listed in 1 John 2:16 ever originate with God, but always with the world? 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)?
- ♥ How can changing the way you think result in being transformed into a new person (Romans 8:5-6)?
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)?

- ♥ 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** 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?

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

- 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	
12:4	
12:5	
12:6a	

- ♥ What relationship do you see between Paul's commands in **12:2** and **12:3**?
- ♥ 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**)? Why is it important to have a proper view of ourselves with neither an inflated or deflated ego?
- ♥ 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?

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

- ♥ 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? 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*?