

Westland Free Methodist Church
“Mastering Your Life Series: Gifts and Abilities”
Romans 12:1-8
January 13, 2008

Read Romans 12:1-8

Have you ever done something for someone else and it had nothing to do with you?

We begin this morning at verse 1, where it confronts us to be a “living sacrifice”. You might wonder what does that mean? Let’s make it simple.

- You are a living sacrifice when you do something for someone else that makes a difference in their life.
- You do something, or give something to someone that meets a need in their life.
- You love someone, give to someone, or bless someone with words, not expecting anything in return.

Now, it is always difficult to give something of yourself away, without receiving something in return, like a thank you, or a returning compliment, or even a tangible gift in return. Maybe not from the same source, but you receive blessings from others in the context of your service or your gift. That’s a living sacrifice.

Now, there’s something else happening here. Paul says again in verse 1 that your living sacrifice is “a spiritual act of worship”. This is one of our core values, one of the 5 purposes of our church. Paul ties our serving one another into the very act of worship. We have 5 purposes in our church. They are 1)worshipping God, 2)connecting with each other, 3)Growing in Christ, 4)Serving with purpose, and 5)Reaching out to one another. We believe this how we “Change lives in Christ.”

Notice that in our 5 purposes we have these arrows around our church name to illustrate how we should grow in our relationship to God and one another. (Show slide of 4 arrows coming into the middle word “Worship”) The first 4 purposes, connecting, growing, serving, and reaching, flow into the middle “W” That W represents our worship of God. In other words, all we do in our 4 purposes has to do with our worship of God. It all flows into worship of God. So serving is about worshipping God and this passage more than ever supports such a flow of our lives in Christ.

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Now for our Wednesday night Midweek Oasis crowd, let me say one more thing before we move on to the next section of this passage. Wednesday night it was my turn to teach the lesson, and we looked at several grammatical laws that work within passages of scripture. They are pretty simple. Like the law of 1)repetition, 2)comparison, 3)contrast. Then I shared one that shows up here. It’s substantiation. It’s really pretty simple. Substantiation says what it needs to say like Paul does in verse 1. Then he spells out all the reasons why this statement in verse 1 is true.

Verse 2 speaks of our relationship with God being renewed in a regular fashion as live our life as a sacrifice. Then the passage speaks of living in the body of Christ as each one of us do our part to give as we are gifted in verses 3-5. Then in verse 6 and following Paul describes the various gifts and how we are recognize those gifts as we serve each other sacrificially. This is all in the context of our “spiritual worship” as described in verse 1.

Now that we see what we should be doing, sit back and take a survey of your life. Do you find joy in serving God in your life? Do you serve others as if serving God? I want to give you an extreme example of a woman who struggled to find her place of service in her relationship with God. Her name is Dorothy Day. I really have 3 clips I want you see from the movie “Entertaining Angels” . It’s a movie from 1996, about 12 years ago. Did not get a huge acclaim, but it describes Dorothy Day’s life, as she became a Catholic worker. She was born in Ny City, grew up in Chicago, and then found herself as a newspaper writer in NY city once again. She had this holy discontent some of you have felt. The more Dorothy wrote in her column, the more she saw the plight of the poor. Finding herself drawn to this severe need in NY city, she began to figure out her calling in life. But like any calling it put a stress on her, as the needs around her became so huge so fast. She found herself wanting to give up, becoming

even angry with God. As you watch this first clip, know that Dorothy has been fully engaged with the neediest of the needy. But she's about to give up. Maybe you find yourself where she is at. Her conversation is with God. It begins and ends with "I need you".

Play first clip from Entertaining Angels. Counter - 13324-13510

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Dorothy did not give up. She went back to finding her place once again.

Do ever feel like giving up? Let me help you. Sooner or later, we all do. But never think for a moment that just because you feel this way, you should give up.

At that moment, Dorothy had a choice. She had been given some money from her former boyfriend and mother of her child, and thought about going back to him and letting all this ministry nonsense go, but she knew that she had seen the benefits of serving all to often and to clear to let it all go. The benefits I am speaking of are right in Romans 12.

The Benefits of Serving

The first is in Romans 12:6 "We all have.....gifts."

1. When you become a Christian you receive one or more gifts from God.

If you are a Christian you have a gift to give. From the moment you become a Christian you have a gift to give.

In Romans 12:6 we see a 2nd benefit: "We all have different gifts"

2. There are many people with different gifts and abilities.

God did not create us the way he did to expect us to exchange every so often with others and their gifts and abilities.

Illus. Affirm gifts in people in congregation, and then joke about them switching gifts and abilities.

Outside of this passage are many benefits to using our gifts and abilities.

3. There are many benefits to using your gifts and abilities for others.

When you give your spiritual gift away,

1) you get to keep the gift.

Paul saying to Timothy, "I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands."

Is there any other kind of gift in your life that when you give it away, you get to keep it?

2) your gift or ability becomes even better.

Hebrews 10:24 – "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."

3) the world around you becomes safer.

Psalms 37:3 – Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the lasn and enjoy safe pasture.

4) You fill up with more joy.

Luke 10:17 - "The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord even the demons submit to us in your name."

5) Heaven becomes fuller

I Peter 1:8-9 - "Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

6) Life grows fuller

Acts 11:23 – "When he(Barnabas) arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts."

