

# GOD'S PATTERN FOR LIFE

## Romans 12:1-2

The minister of a metropolitan congregation shared how he was inspired by a phenomenal layman. The man was wealthy; in fact, without any fanfare, had paid for one of their buildings while continuing to give his tithe to the church budget. He was a conscientious and generous steward. But what pleased the pastor most was not the man's monetary gifts, magnificent as they were, but the giving of himself. Following every Sunday worship, this humble man would ask, "Pastor, what can I do for our church this week?" -- G. Curtis Jones,

Paul said, "(My earnest wishes and hopes . . . are) that I should never be in any way ashamed, but that . . . I should honor Christ with the utmost boldness by the way I live, whether that means I am to face death or to go on living." (Phil. 1:20, Phillips)

Oswald Chambers said, "We shall all feel very much ashamed if we do not yield to Jesus on the point He has asked us to yield to Him. To get there is a question of will, not of debate nor of reasoning, but a surrender of will . . ." (My Utmost For His Highest, p. 1). We Christians are...

### 1. Called to surrender.

Romans 12:1a (NIV) Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy...

The "therefore" is there for a reason. Paul is referring to everything he has taught in the first 11 chapters concerning God's mercy and goodness to us. Then he says, "I urge you, brothers." Circle "brothers."

If you are a Christian you are spiritual family with Paul. He's writing to you and me. He calls us alongside him to surrender to Christ and the reason to surrender: "In view of God's mercy. . ."

God's love and mercy are what Paul tells in the first 11 chapters about what God has given us through Jesus Christ...

(1) **His love in giving His Son to die for us.** (Jn. 3:16 (Jesus)).

(2) **His forgiveness of our sins** (Acts 10:43, All who believe receive forgiveness of their sins. (Peter to Cornelius))

(3) **Freedom from sin** (2 Cor. 3:17, ...where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (Paul to the Corinth church)).

(4) **His presence through the Holy Spirit** (Ps. 139:7, Where can I flee from Your presence? (A Psalm of David)).

(5) **His assurance of eternal life** (Jn. 3:16 (Jesus)).

(6) **His strength and guidance** (Eph. 3:16, ...out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with His power...; Jn. 16:13, ...He will guide you into all truth.)

Paul's point is that in view of all of these mercies that we Christians have received through Jesus Christ, we cannot help but to respond in surrender to God's love. So then...

## 2. Live a life of reciprocating love.

Romans 12:1b (NIV) ...to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

Circle living. Unfortunately some of us Christians are more like corpses than living, viable Christ followers. God wants our bodies as living sacrifices, not corpses. To be a living sacrifice we reciprocate God's love by saying "yes" to Him.

Saying yes to God means saying no to things that offend His holiness. What we are on the inside is always reflected by what we do, what we say, how we behave and respond.

Saying "yes" to God means we give all of ourselves to Him because we truly understand and appreciate His love; we can't help but reciprocate that love.

If you want to find true meaning in life, offer yourself to Him. Doing this will lead to the joy and peace we all desire in our lives.

John MacArthur tells about a young woman who came to him because she was spiritually miserable. "She said. "I'm frustrated. I don't have spiritual victory or a sense of accomplishment. Can you help me?"

MacArthur asked what she had done to try to solve the problem. She said she had been going from church to church looking for some extraordinary spiritual experiences so she could have victory in her life.

It wasn't working. She said, "I've tried to get everything from Him that I can, but I'm still not satisfied. I'm still miserable and want more."

MacArthur told her, "I think you have just put your finger on the problem. The key to spiritual victory and true happiness is not in trying to get all we can from God but in giving all that we are and have to Him." (The MacArthur New Testament Commentary—Romans 9-16, pp. 137-138)

Countless numbers of people today, including many genuine Christians, are trying to get all they can from God.

They go from church to church, attend Christian seminars, and conferences in search of personal benefits—emotional and spiritual—that they hope to receive.

But this is the exact opposite of what Paul says to do here. Don't focus on what more you can get from God; focus on giving all that you are and have to Him.

This is when you achieve spiritual victory. The key to a productive and satisfying Christian life is not in getting more, but in giving more, in giving your all.

Look closely at the words: "I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God."

To "offer" your body is a deliberate act of giving all of you to God. But know that it is a once-for-all act that carries ramifications throughout the rest of your life. It is giving your entire life to God, unreservedly and totally committed to Him.

The Rev. Robert Ard, past president of the Black Leadership Council, explained the difference between involvement and commitment: "When you look at a plate of ham and eggs, you know the chicken was involved. But the pig was committed."

How do we do this? The writer of Hebrews tells us that, "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise--the fruit of lips that confess his name" (Heb 13:15).

The passage continues with what the "sacrifice of praise" is, "And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased" (v. 16).

This is worshipping God with our lives. True worship is more than the obvious—prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. True worship includes serving God by serving others in Jesus' name.

True worship is offering God your body, and all that you do with it every day. I've seen signs in churches that say, "Enter to worship, depart to serve." As noble as that sounds it is wrong. True worship includes our daily service.

You say, "I'm going to church to worship God." You should also say, "I'm going to the office, the store, the school, the garage, the garden, to worship God."

Worship in our time has become a tourist attraction—who has the best music, the best programs—which church can best meet my needs?

For some it is a weekly jaunt to church. For others, occasional visits to special services. We make jokes that we only see some church members at Easter and Christmas. Well, it's no joke with God.

Some, with a bent for Christian entertainment plan their lives around special events like retreats, rallies and conferences.

They go to see a new personality, to hear a new truth, or to get a new experience. They'll try anything -- until something else comes along.

But the fact is, Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (Jn. 10:10b).

Many believers today think the key to abundant life is getting more and more from God. But you don't get more of God. You either have God or you don't. And the only way you have God is by trusting in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord.

When you do this, God promises to bless you with every spiritual blessing in Christ (Eph. 1:3). He promises that in Christ, we have "all treasures of wisdom and knowledge," so that in Him we "have been made complete" (Col. 2:3, 10).

In Christ, we have "everything pertaining to life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3). Not only that, but we also have the Holy Spirit Who "teaches [us] about all things" (1 John 2:27).

If you are miserable and unhappy in your Christianity, it's not God's fault, it's not this church's fault, or another church's fault; it's your fault.

You cannot have more of God or more from God than you already possess. He's already given all of Himself to you in Jesus. What you do with Jesus is your responsibility.

When we come to the end of life, the question will be, “How much have you given?” not “How much have you gotten?” So Paul then gives us a pattern to follow...

### 3. Establish a new frame of reference.

Romans 12:2(NIV) Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Our frame of reference is “the way we see the world.” It is a mental map that provides direction as we travel the road of life. The only way it can be changed is through the renewing of our minds in surrender to God.

When we surrender to Him we receive a fresh perspective and a new set of priorities to govern our life decisions because we now have a belief system that goes against the grain of popular culture.

The joy and the satisfaction for which many Christians are so uselessly striving for can only be found by changing their frame of reference through surrendering themselves to God.

Jesus said, Matthew 22:37-38(NIV) 37 “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” 38 This is the first and greatest commandment.”

Here’s the pattern: You offer yourself as a living sacrifice—serving and pleasing God. Do not be conformed to the prevailing culture, and let Jesus be in control by renewing your mind.

J.B. Phillip’s paraphrase says it this way, “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God remould your minds from within.”

When I was a young boy I liked to go to the circus. It’s been a long time since I’ve been to the circus so I don’t know if they still do this, but at the circus, I used to buy a chameleon—a little lizard whose skin would change color to match its surroundings.

A string was attached to one of its legs and the other end to a safety pin. The idea was to attach the pin to your shirt and the chameleon would change color to match your shirt.

Paul is talking about this kind of thing with Christians in v. 2. Don’t be like a chameleon which takes its color from its surroundings.

On Sunday you put on the color of a pious Christian. The rest of the week your color is whatever your surroundings are.

If this is you, you are living a lie, you are masquerading what you are not, and as long as you insist on doing this you are not going to have the full, abundant life God wants for you.

God's pattern is that we yield our lives in a once-for-all act maintained by a daily attitude of surrender to Him to the end of our days.

## Application:

As we identify ourselves with the resurrected Christ, it will involve death to self, and a transformation will take place in our characters. And wonder of wonders, you will find yourself happier, more content, more fruitful, and satisfied in your Christianity.