

Read: Romans 12:1-8

You are a living sacrifice

Romans 12:1

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

About three years ago, a woman named Ashley was diagnosed with a rare type of bone cancer. The doctors said she had a good chance to beat it if she started immediate treatment. But Ashley chose not to. Why? Because at the time, Ashley was 10 weeks pregnant, and the doctors told her that in order for the treatment to be effective, the pregnancy would have to be terminated. "There's no way I could kill my child because I'm sick," she said. And so she didn't.

Time went by. When Ashley was eight months pregnant, doctors told her the cancer was terminal, and they had to deliver the baby. So they did. Her baby girl was born completely healthy. Unfortunately, by that time, Ashley's cancer had spread too far for treatment, and she died soon after. She gave up her life because her daughter needed her to.

Can you imagine what life will be like for that little girl? Can you imagine how she'll feel about her mother as she grows up? Will she talk to her family daily of how happy she is to have life? Will she tell all her friends about how her mother decided her daughter's life was more important than her own? If you were that daughter, would you want in some way to show how thankful you were to your mother for the action of love she showed you?

But what if that daughter didn't? What if she changed the subject every time her mother came up? What if she just shrugged her shoulders anytime people asked her about her mom? What if she didn't care?

That wouldn't be right, would it?

The apostle Paul opens today's Bible reading with one simple word, "therefore." And that one simple word reminds us of everything God laid out for us in the book of Romans, which is all about one person—Jesus. Jesus loved our life so much more than he loved his own, believing it was better for him to die than to live without you and me, forgiven and with him in heaven.

"Therefore" urges us to look back and remember Jesus' sacrifice for us. What a difference it made for us! It's why we consider ways to "offer our bodies as a living sacrifice." What does that mean? It means this: live for Jesus. It means when people ask you about your faith, don't be ashamed to share it! It means inviting your friends to church so they can hear about the sacrifice Jesus made so they could live in heaven. It means loving others how Jesus loved you. Because by faith, God has already made you holy and pleasing to him.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- What is one way that Jesus has shown love to you?
- We show love for Jesus by loving others. What is something that you can do for someone else today?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- What does it mean when Paul says that God has shown you *mercy*?
- Name two ways you can live for Jesus today.

Questions for Middle School and Above

- In your own words, explain what Paul meant when he said, "Offer your bodies as living sacrifices."
- What are some things that make it difficult to follow Paul's instructions in today's devotion?

Closing Prayer:

Dear Jesus, thank you for giving your life for me. Help me to live for you each and every day. Amen.