

Read: Romans 12:1-8

Living for the Lord

Romans 12:1-2

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—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

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

"Do five jumping jacks!" the leader shouted. Only two people of the entire group did them though. Everyone else stood still as could be. The group laughed. It was actually the two who did jumping jacks that had made the mistake. The leader never said, "*Simon says* do five jumping jacks!"

"Simon Says" is one of the easiest games to play. All you have to do is what the leader says when he speaks those magic words. And yet, it's easy to get carried away, isn't it? Once you play for a while, it can be easy to lose your focus. And just when you're not paying attention, you get in trouble—you're out because you do what others are doing and not what "Simon Says."

Being a Christian is also one of the easiest things you could do. You simply believe in the true God and then do what he says. Pretty simple, right? Yet you and I know how difficult this can be!

Everything might be going fine, until we lose our focus and concentration. Suddenly we start to see what other people do—how they lie, cheat, steal, say bad words, tell bad jokes, or other sins—and we start following their lead instead of what God says. There is danger in following the world instead of Jesus. You won't just be out of the game, you'll be out of heaven! That's bad! And that's why we hear the warning today, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world." In other words, don't follow the lead of sinful people and do what they do!

Thanks be to God for Jesus! He washed us clean of all the times we've followed the world instead of following him. His mercy and undeserved love bring us forgiveness. They guarantee that we can and *will* be with him in heaven.

Because of his great love then, let's follow Jesus' lead instead and show him how thankful we are. That's also what the apostle Paul says to us today. He said, "In view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as a living sacrifice." What he means is that when we think about God's love and forgiveness, we can use our lives to serve and follow Jesus. We can thank Jesus by listening to

him, loving him, and obeying him. “Simon Says” may be a fun game, but doing what Jesus says is even better. What a cool thing! We get to live for the one who lived and died for us!

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 Younger Children

- What sins do you think are easy to fall into?
- How do you know that Jesus forgives those sins?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Why do some people say that the ways of this world are “fun,” but the ways of God are “boring?”
- What are ways that you can offer yourselves as a living sacrifice of thanks to God?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Explain in your own words why peer pressure is such a difficult thing to deal with.
- When you are older and have your own family, what things in this world do you think will distract you from staying connected to Jesus?

Closing Prayer:

Dear Lord, help me to stay away from the sins of this world. Instead, lead me to follow you. Fill me with your love that I may live for you. Amen.

Hymn: CW 465:1,4 – Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken

Jesus, I my cross have taken, All to leave and follow you.
Destitute, despised, forsaken, You on earth once suffered, too.
Perish ev’ry fond ambition, All I’ve ever hoped or known;
Yet how rich is my condition! God and heav’n are still my own.

Haste, my soul, from grace to glory, Armed by faith and winged by prayer.
All but heav’n is transitory; God’s own hand shall guide you there.
Soon shall end this earthly story; Swift shall pass the pilgrim days,
Hope soon change to heav’nly glory, Faith to sight and prayer to praise.