

JULY EDITION

THE WORD MADE FLESH

DAILY DEVOTIONAL



THE EVERYDAY CHOICE OF TURNING TOWARD THE
LIFE GOD INTENDED FOR YOU, WITH LESSONS ON
SACRIFICE, WORSHIP, PRAYER, AND CONSECRATION.

O BENACHI RENNER JUMBO

JULY 2026 DEVOTIONAL

ACCEPTABLE SACRIFICE

*“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.”*

Romans 12:1

WEEK 1

THE ALTAR

The Foundation of Acceptable Sacrifice



WHAT IS A LIVING SACRIFICE?

SCRIPTURE

Romans 12:1 (NIV)

"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."

BIBLICAL STORY

The altar was the centre of Israel's worship. Everything on it was given over entirely, consumed, set apart from ordinary use and offered to God. When Paul writes to the Roman church and calls them to present their bodies as a living sacrifice, he is reaching for the most powerful image in his listeners' religious imagination. He is not speaking of something ceremonial and temporary. He is describing a whole-life posture: a self that has been placed on the altar and left there. Not offered once and retrieved, but offered and remaining. The shock of Paul's phrase is the combination of two words that seem to contradict each other. A sacrifice, in every tradition his readers knew, was dead. Paul's sacrifice breathes.

REFLECTION

The living sacrifice is the central image of this month's devotional, and it deserves to be held carefully before we move on to its many dimensions. What does it mean to be a living sacrifice? It means that you have made a fundamental decision about ownership. The altar is a declaration: I do not belong to myself. My time, my gifts, my ambitions, my comfort, my relationships, my future — these are not mine to spend as I choose. They have been given over. But here is what distinguishes Paul's call from every form of religion that demands death from its devotees: God does not want your death. He wants your life, fully alive, fully engaged, fully surrendered. The sacrifice He desires is not passive resignation. It is active, willing, joyful consecration. The altar is not a place of ending. In the kingdom of God, it is always a place of beginning.

TODAY'S DECLARATION

I am a living sacrifice, fully offered to God. My life is not my own to spend as I please — it has been placed on the altar of His purposes. I choose today to remain there, not out of duty, but out of love for the One who gave everything for me.

PRAYER

Lord, I come to this month with open hands. I have often treated my life as something I manage, something I protect, something I spend on my own priorities. Today I lay it down. Not as a joyless act of religious duty, but as the most logical response I know to what You have done for me. You gave Your Son. I give myself. Take everything I am and everything I have, and use it for Your purposes and Your glory. Teach me this month what it truly means to live as a sacrifice that pleases You. In Jesus' name, Amen.



THE MERCY THAT MAKES IT POSSIBLE

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:4-5 (NIV)

“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.”

BIBLICAL STORY

Paul’s call to offer ourselves as living sacrifices in Romans 12 does not begin with a command. It begins with a foundation: ‘in view of God’s mercy.’ The preceding eleven chapters of Romans are that mercy, laid out in exhaustive and glorious detail — the problem of sin, the provision of the cross, the gift of righteousness, the security of God’s love, and the sovereignty of His purposes across history. Only after all of that does Paul say: therefore. The sacrifice is a response. It is never the starting point. Acceptable sacrifice is always the fruit of received mercy, never the means of earning it.

REFLECTION

One of the most common distortions of the sacrificial life is the belief that our sacrifice earns God’s favour. That if we give enough, surrender enough, serve enough, God will finally be pleased with us. This is religion’s oldest lie, and it produces either pride or exhaustion, depending on how well you think you are doing. Paul dismantles it before he even makes the call. It is ‘in view of God’s mercy’ that we offer ourselves — not in order to obtain it. The altar is not a transaction. It is a thanksgiving. The person who has truly understood what mercy means — that they were spiritually dead and were made alive, that they were condemned and were justified, that they were enemies and were adopted as children — does not need to be convinced to give their life to God. They cannot imagine doing anything else. The deepest motivation for sacrifice is always a vision of grace.

TODAY’S DECLARATION

My sacrifice is not an attempt to earn what God has already given me freely. I offer myself today in view of His mercy, which has been poured out on me in full. I do not serve to be loved. I serve because I am loved, and that love has changed everything.

PRAYER

Father, before I say anything else this month, I want to begin where Paul begins: with mercy. Your mercy toward me is staggering. I was dead, and You made me alive. I was lost, and You found me. I was Your enemy, and You called me Your child. Let that reality be the ground I stand on today — not my performance, not my sacrifice, not my effort — but Your mercy. And from that ground, let genuine love and gratitude rise up in me that makes offering myself feel less like duty and more like the most natural thing in the world. In Jesus’ name, Amen.





HOLY AND PLEASING

SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 1:15–16 (NIV)

“But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’”

BIBLICAL STORY

In the Levitical system, not every animal brought to the altar was accepted. An animal with a defect — blind, lame, diseased, injured — was rejected. God was not being harsh. He was establishing a principle: what is offered to Him must reflect His character. The standard was not perfection for its own sake but integrity — wholeness, sincerity, the genuine article. When Malachi confronted Israel for bringing blemished animals to the altar, God’s grief was not merely about the quality of the gift. It was about the attitude behind it. They were giving God what they could afford to lose. He asked for something else entirely.

REFLECTION

Paul says the living sacrifice is to be ‘holy and pleasing to God.’ These two qualities are not separate requirements. They are one reality described from two angles. Holy means set apart, consecrated, belonging to God’s realm rather than the world’s. Pleasing means that what is offered genuinely delights God — not merely technically qualifying but warmly received. A life that is holy without being pleasing is religion at its worst: scrupulous, cold, and proud. A life that aims to please without pursuing holiness is sentimentality: sincere but shapeless. Together, they describe the texture of an acceptable sacrifice. God does not want a performance of virtue. He wants a life that has been genuinely given, genuinely set apart, and is genuinely delighting in His company. The blemish He is most concerned about is not your weakness or your wound — it is the divided heart that offers Him something while holding back everything else.

TODAY’S DECLARATION

I offer myself to God today as a holy and pleasing sacrifice. Not perfect, but sincere. Not without weakness, but without division. I hold nothing back. I give Him the whole of what I am, and I trust that a life genuinely offered is always welcomed.

PRAYER

Holy God, I want the sacrifice of my life to please You. Not merely to meet some minimum standard, but to genuinely delight Your heart. Show me the places where I have been giving You the blemished offering — the parts of my life I can afford to lose while clinging to the parts I want to keep. I do not want a divided life. I want the kind of wholehearted surrender that You call holy and that You receive with joy. Purify my motives. Consecrate my will. Make me an offering You are glad to receive. In Jesus’ name, Amen.





TRUE AND PROPER WORSHIP

SCRIPTURE

John 4:24 (NIV)

“God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

BIBLICAL STORY

Paul calls the living sacrifice our ‘true and proper worship’ — or in some translations, our ‘rational service.’ The Greek word is ‘logike latreia,’ from which we get ‘logical’ and ‘liturgy.’ In other words: this is what worship actually is, when you think it all the way through. The Samaritan woman in John 4 was fixated on the location of worship — which mountain, which temple. Jesus redirected her entirely. It is not about geography. It is not about ceremony. The Father is seeking those who worship in spirit and in truth, from the inside out, from the depths of a life genuinely given.

REFLECTION

We have often reduced worship to music. We speak of worship as the singing part of a church gathering, as if it begins at the first chord and ends when the pastor takes the microphone. But Paul’s vision of worship is something far larger and far more demanding. Worship is the orientation of a whole life toward God. It happens in the boardroom and the kitchen, on the commute and in the hospital waiting room, in the moment of temptation and in the hour of celebration. Every decision made in surrender to God’s will is an act of worship. Every relationship tended with His love is an act of worship. Every suffering accepted with trust is an act of worship. Singing is a beautiful expression of what the heart has already decided. But the decision itself — the choice to live as a living sacrifice — is the worship God calls true and proper. It is the worship that makes sense of everything.

TODAY’S DECLARATION

My whole life is an act of worship. I do not divide my existence into sacred and secular, into Sunday and the rest of the week. Every moment I live in surrender to God is worship. I offer my ordinary days to Him as gladly as I offer my prayers.

PRAYER

Lord, expand my understanding of worship today. Let me see the ordinary moments of my life through the lens of offering. The meeting, the meal, the conversation, the task — let me bring each one to You as an act of consecration. I want my whole life to be a song sung to You, not just the minutes when I have music in my ears. Teach me to worship in spirit and in truth, not just in feeling and in form. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



DO NOT CONFORM

SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 1:15–16 (NIV)

“But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’”

BIBLICAL STORY

Immediately after the call to present ourselves as living sacrifices, Paul gives a companion instruction: do not be conformed. The word he uses — ‘suschematizo’ — means to be pressed into a mould, to take on the shape of an external form. The world has moulds. It has patterns of thinking about success, about worth, about pleasure, about power, about the body, about relationships, about money. These patterns are pervasive and persuasive and almost invisible precisely because they are everywhere. A sacrifice left on the altar of a culture that opposes God will quickly absorb the culture’s shape.

REFLECTION

The opposite of conformity, in Paul’s vision, is not isolation. He is not asking us to withdraw from the world and build walls against its influence. He is asking for something more radical: transformation. The Greek is ‘metamorphoo’ — the same word used for the Transfiguration, and for a caterpillar becoming a butterfly. It describes a change that comes from the inside out, not the outside in. The world forms us from the outside. The Spirit transforms us from within. And the mechanism of transformation is the renewing of the mind — a deliberate, ongoing reorientation of the way we think. What we fill our minds with shapes what we become. The person who reads the Word, prays, listens to wise voices, and submits their thinking to the truth of God is putting themselves in the path of transformation. The sacrifice that remains on the altar is a sacrifice that is being changed by the fire, not by the surrounding culture.

TODAY’S DECLARATION

I refuse to be pressed into the world’s mould. I am being transformed from the inside out by the renewing of my mind. I will feed my mind on truth, submit my thoughts to God, and let the Spirit change the way I see everything. My life is shaped by the altar, not the culture.

PRAYER

Lord, show me the places where the world has been quietly shaping me. The assumptions I have absorbed without examining. The values I have accepted without questioning. The patterns of thought that look normal but are not aligned with Your truth. Renew my mind. Break the moulds. I give You permission today to challenge everything I think I know and to replace it with what is actually true. Transform me from the inside out. In Jesus’ name, Amen.





THE PROBLEM OF CLIMBING DOWN

SCRIPTURE

Luke 9:62 (NIV)

"No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

BIBLICAL STORY

The Old Testament altar law had a stark implication: once an animal was placed on the altar, it could not be retrieved. There was no ritual for taking back what had been given to God. The New Testament equivalent is seen in the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. They sold a field and brought part of the proceeds to the apostles, pretending it was the whole amount. The sin was not keeping some of the money — Peter explicitly says they were free to keep it. The sin was the pretence of full surrender while holding back. They wanted the appearance of sacrifice without the substance of it. It cost them everything.

REFLECTION

The living sacrifice faces a unique temptation that dead sacrifices do not: the temptation to climb down from the altar. When sacrifice becomes costly — when obedience is inconvenient, when generosity feels like loss, when the path God has given us feels less attractive than the path we could choose for ourselves — we are tempted to take back what we gave. To retrieve the offering. To re-negotiate the terms of our surrender. Jesus' words about the plough are severe because the stakes are severe. A person with their hand on the plough and their eyes on what they left behind is not ploughing a straight furrow. They are dividing their attention between two incompatible directions. The acceptable sacrifice is one that stays given. Not because it never feels the pull to climb down, but because it has decided, in the place of deep conviction, that what lies ahead is greater than what lies behind.

TODAY'S DECLARATION

I stay on the altar. When sacrifice becomes costly, I do not negotiate new terms. When obedience is inconvenient, I do not reclaim what I have given. I have put my hand to the plough and I will not look back. The One I have offered myself to is worth every cost.

PRAYER

Lord, I confess that I have sometimes climbed down from the altar when the cost became clear. I gave myself in a moment of worship and then quietly took myself back when surrender became uncomfortable. Forgive me for the partial offerings, the half-surrenders, the pretended consecrations. Today I choose again, with full knowledge of what it may cost, to place myself back on the altar and to stay there. Give me the grace to mean it. In Jesus' name, Amen.





ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 1:6 (NIV)

"To the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves."

BIBLICAL STORY

In Leviticus 1, when a worshipper brought a burnt offering to the altar, the priest declared it 'an aroma pleasing to the Lord.' The one bringing the offering did not have to wonder whether it was received. The declaration was made. The acceptance was announced. Paul echoes this in the most expansive terms possible: we are accepted in the Beloved. Not merely tolerated. Not provisionally approved. Accepted — fully, finally, freely — in the One whom God loves with an eternal love. Our acceptance is grounded not in the quality of our offering but in the perfection of Christ's.

REFLECTION

The greatest threat to genuine sacrifice is performance anxiety: the nagging fear that what we offer is not enough, that God is measuring us and finding us insufficient, that one more failure will exhaust His patience. This fear produces two equally destructive responses. Some people strive harder and harder, trying to offer enough to feel secure. Others give up entirely, concluding that the standard is impossible. Paul's answer to both is the same: you are accepted in the Beloved. Your standing before God is not determined by the quality of your sacrifice. It is determined by the perfection of His Son. You offer yourself, not to achieve acceptance, but from within acceptance already received. When you bring your ordinary, imperfect, sometimes-wavering life and lay it on the altar, it is received — not because it is flawless, but because it is brought in the name of the One whose offering was.

TODAY'S DECLARATION

I am accepted in the Beloved. My standing before God does not rise and fall with the quality of my sacrifice. I offer myself today from a place of security, not in search of it. God receives me because He has received His Son, and I am found in Him.

PRAYER

Father, let the truth of my acceptance sink deeper into me today than any feeling of inadequacy can reach. I know that I sometimes bring You a stumbling, inconsistent, imperfect offering. And I know that You receive it — not because it is impressive, but because I am bringing it in the name of Jesus, whose sacrifice was perfect and complete. Let that security free me from the exhausting attempt to earn what I already have. I offer myself today, freely and gratefully, from within the love of the Beloved. In His name, Amen.



WEEK 2

THE COST

What Genuine Sacrifice Requires



THE GRAIN OFFERING

SCRIPTURE

Leviticus 2:1 (NIV)

“When anyone brings a grain offering to the Lord, their offering is to be of the finest flour.”

BIBLICAL STORY

Not every sacrifice in Israel’s worship system involved blood. The grain offering — the ‘minchah’ — was brought by those who could not afford a whole animal. But there was nothing cheap about it. The finest flour. Oil. Salt. Frankincense. Carefully prepared, deliberately composed, brought with intention. The grain offering teaches something that the blood sacrifices sometimes obscure: God is interested in the daily, the domestic, the unglamorous. The work of the hands. The ordinary provision. The labour of the week. These too are offerings. These too can be brought to the altar.

REFLECTION

We tend to reserve the language of sacrifice for the dramatic moments: the missionary who leaves their homeland, the believer who loses their job for their faith, the martyr who stands before a firing squad. These are real sacrifices, and they are honoured by God. But the grain offering reminds us that most of a life of sacrifice is made up of something quieter. The finest flour is the best of your attention given to a task that no one will praise. The oil is the care you pour into a relationship that is not particularly rewarding. The salt is the faithfulness that preserves your commitment when passion has faded. The frankincense is the prayerfulness that frames even tedious work as an offering. The person who learns to bring the grain offering — who learns to sanctify the ordinary — is the person whose whole life becomes an altar.

TODAY’S DECLARATION

I bring my ordinary life to God as an offering. My work, my attention, my care, my faithfulness in small things — these are my grain offering. I give the finest of what I have in every moment, knowing that God receives the dedicated ordinary as gladly as He receives the dramatic.

PRAYER

Lord, teach me to offer You the grain. The work of this week — ordinary, unheroic, unnoticed by most — I place before You today. Let me do it with the excellence and the intentionality of a Levitical priest preparing the finest flour. Let me bring the oil of genuine care, the salt of faithful commitment, the frankincense of prayer. Make the whole of my daily life a living minchah that pleases You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.





THE COST OF OBEDIENCE

SCRIPTURE

2 Samuel 24:24 (NIV)

“But the king replied to Araunah, ‘No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.’”

BIBLICAL STORY

David had sinned, and the plague on Israel had stopped at the threshing floor of Araunah. A prophet told him to build an altar there and offer a burnt offering. Araunah, hearing that the king was coming, offered to give him everything he needed — the threshing floor, the oxen, the wood. No charge. A gift. David’s refusal is one of the most celebrated statements in all of Scripture about the nature of acceptable sacrifice: I will not offer God something that costs me nothing. He paid the full price. That is the standard of David’s offering, and it is the standard he passes down to us.

REFLECTION

The defining characteristic of sacrifice is precisely what the word implies: something is given up. Cost is not incidental to sacrifice. It is its essence. A sacrifice that costs nothing is not a sacrifice at all — it is a donation of surplus. It is clearing out the wardrobe and giving God the items you were going to throw away regardless. David understood that God is not glorified by receiving what we were happy to part with. He is glorified when we bring what we valued, what we wanted to keep, what we would have preferred to hold on to. This does not mean that every act of obedience must be painful. But it does mean that a life of sacrifice will regularly bring us to moments where genuine cost is involved — where the obedience that pleases God is precisely the obedience that is not convenient. What we do in those moments reveals what the altar truly means to us.

TODAY’S DECLARATION

I will not offer God what costs me nothing. My sacrifice is real, not ceremonial. When obedience is inconvenient, costly, and crosses my preferences, I will offer it anyway — not with resentment, but with the understanding that cost is what makes a sacrifice worth giving.

PRAYER

Lord, convict me of the places where I have been offering You what costs me nothing. The easy generosity, the convenient service, the faith that requires no risk. I want to be a person of David’s calibre — someone who insists on paying the price, who refuses to reduce worship to what is comfortable. Show me what it looks like for my sacrifice to be genuinely costly today, and give me the grace to bring it without complaint. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



JULY 10 · THE COST

LOSING TO FIND

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 16:25 (NIV)

“For whoever wants to save their life will lose it,
but whoever loses their life for me will find it.”

BIBLICAL STORY

The paradox at the centre of Jesus’ teaching appears in all four Gospels, in multiple forms, with varying emphasis. That repetition is a signal: this is not a peripheral idea. It is the axis around which everything turns. The disciples heard this in the shadow of the first passion prediction. Jesus had just told them He was going to suffer and die. Peter had rebuked Him. And Jesus responded not only by correcting Peter’s theology of the Messiah but by extending the principle to all who would follow: the cross is not just Mine. It is yours. Take it up daily. Follow Me into the logic of losing-to-find.

REFLECTION

The natural human instinct is self-preservation. We protect ourselves — our reputation, our comfort, our futures, our identities. This instinct is not entirely wrong. But Jesus identifies the place where self-protection becomes self-destruction: when it leads us away from the cross. The person who clutches their life — who refuses the costs of following Jesus, who builds their existence around keeping themselves safe — will discover that what they saved was not their life at all. It was a smaller, contracted, defended version of life that never touches the fullness it was made for. The person who loses their life for Jesus — who stops managing and protecting and calculating, who places the whole of themselves on the altar of His purposes — finds not less life but more. This is the great surprise of sacrifice: it is not subtraction. In the economy of the kingdom, it is always multiplication.

TODAY’S DECLARATION

I lose my life to find it. I release my grip on self-preservation and trust the paradox of the kingdom. What I lay down for Jesus I do not lose — I find it returned to me transformed, enlarged, and more alive than anything I could have kept by clinging.

PRAYER

Jesus, I confess that I have been clutching my life with both hands — protecting it, managing it, keeping it safe from the costs of real discipleship. Today I open my hands. Not because it is easy, but because I believe You. I believe that what You give back is greater than what I lay down. Help me to live in the daily practice of this paradox — losing to find, dying to live, giving to receive. In Your name, Amen.



THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE

SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 13:15 (NIV)

“Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise — the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.”

BIBLICAL STORY

The writer of Hebrews calls praise a sacrifice. That language would have been striking to readers who grew up in a tradition where sacrifice meant blood and fire. But the word ‘sacrifice’ is used deliberately. Praise, in this context, is not the easy outflow of happy feelings. It is the ‘fruit of lips’ offered in the face of circumstances that make praise costly — persecution, suffering, the loss of possessions described in the preceding chapter. The Hebrews were losing things because of their faith. Into that context comes the call: do not stop praising. Make your praise a sacrifice, precisely when it costs something to give it.

REFLECTION

There is a kind of praise that is not a sacrifice at all. When life is going well, when we feel God’s presence, when our prayers are being answered and our relationships are thriving — praise in those moments is natural and right, but it is not what Hebrews is talking about. The sacrifice of praise is praise offered when everything in us wants to stay silent or complain. It is the choice to bless God’s name when the circumstances make that choice feel absurd. Job did it when he learned he had lost everything: ‘The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.’ Paul and Silas did it at midnight in a Philippian prison, singing hymns while their wounds were still fresh. The sacrifice of praise is among the most powerful acts of faith available to a human being, because it insists on the truth of God’s goodness in the face of evidence that seems to contradict it.

TODAY’S DECLARATION

I offer the sacrifice of praise today. Whatever my circumstances, I choose to bless God’s name. My praise is not dependent on how I feel or what is going well. It is a faith-declaration that God is good, that He is sovereign, and that He is worthy of my worship in every season.

PRAYER

Lord, I bring You the sacrifice of praise today. Not because everything feels easy or makes sense, but because You are worthy regardless of my circumstances. I choose to open my mouth and declare Your goodness even in the places where I am still waiting, still hurting, still confused. Let my praise be an offering that pleases You precisely because it costs me something to give it. May the fruit of my lips honour You today. In Jesus’ name, Amen.





BROKEN AND POURED OUT

SCRIPTURE

Mark 14:3 (NIV)

“She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.”

BIBLICAL STORY

The woman who anointed Jesus in Bethany brought an alabaster jar of pure nard — a perfume worth a year’s wages. She did not dab a little on His feet and save the rest. She broke the jar. A broken jar cannot be retrieved from. Once broken, the contents are gone. Those watching were indignant at the waste. Jesus was not. He said she had done a beautiful thing. He said she had anointed His body in advance for burial. He said that wherever the Gospel is preached in the whole world, what she did would be remembered. The most extravagant act of sacrifice in the room — the one that looked most like waste — turned out to be the one with the greatest eternal significance.

REFLECTION

The broken jar is one of the most searching images of acceptable sacrifice in the Gospels. She did not make a careful, proportionate gift. She gave everything, irreversibly, without the possibility of taking it back. And the breaking of the jar — the irreversibility — is part of what made it beautiful. God is drawn to extravagance. Not the extravagance of self-display, but the extravagance of love that holds nothing back. What is your alabaster jar? What is the thing of greatest value to you — your time, your career, your financial security, your reputation, your plans for your own future — that you have been carrying carefully, preserving, keeping intact? The broken jar asks a question we would rather not answer: what would it look like to break it?

TODAY’S DECLARATION

I am willing to break the jar. I hold my most precious things before God today and release my grip on them. I will not give from surplus while holding back what is most costly. Like the woman in Bethany, I choose extravagance over calculation when it comes to loving Jesus.

PRAYER

Lord, show me my alabaster jar. Show me what I am preserving, what I am careful not to give too much of, what I have decided is too valuable to pour out. And give me the courage to break it — not in a moment of emotional impulse that I will regret, but in a deep, settled, love-driven act of surrender. I want to do something beautiful for You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.





THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERINGS

SCRIPTURE

Philippians 3:10 (NIV)

“I want to know Christ — yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.”

BIBLICAL STORY

Paul writes these words from prison. He has already listed his considerable religious credentials in the preceding verses and called them all rubbish compared to knowing Christ. But the knowing he is after is not abstract or theological — it is participatory. He wants to know the power of the resurrection, yes. But in the same breath, the same sentence, the same desire, he wants participation in the sufferings. He does not treat these as two separate tracks. They are one. The resurrection power flows through the fellowship of suffering. You cannot have one while refusing the other.

REFLECTION

Western Christianity has tended to preach a gospel of resurrection power without the fellowship of suffering. We want the healing without the waiting, the breakthrough without the wilderness, the Easter morning without the Friday afternoon. But Paul’s desire — and the witness of Scripture throughout — is that the deepest experiences of God are found precisely in the places of cost. Not because suffering is good in itself, but because it strips away everything else and leaves us with nothing but God. The sacrifice that goes deepest is not the offering of what we can spare. It is the willingness to share in the sufferings of Christ — to embrace the loss, the misunderstanding, the unanswered prayer, the costly obedience — as a pathway into knowing Him in ways that comfortable religion never reaches.

TODAY’S DECLARATION

*I embrace the fellowship of His sufferings. I do not run from the costs of following Jesus.
I know that the places of greatest sacrifice are often the places of deepest encounter, and I
choose today to pursue knowing Christ above pursuing comfort.*

PRAYER

Lord, I want to know You — really know You, not just know about You. And I hear Paul saying that the deepest knowing runs through the fellowship of suffering. I do not ask for suffering for its own sake, but I release my demand to be exempted from it. Where following You costs me something, let that cost become a place of encounter. Let me find You in the wilderness the way I rarely find You in the abundance. Make me someone who knows You, at whatever price that knowing requires. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



LAYING DOWN LESSER THINGS

SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 12:1 (NIV)

“Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

BIBLICAL STORY

In the ancient world, a runner competing in the games stripped off every unnecessary garment. Nothing loose, nothing heavy, nothing that would catch the wind or slow the stride. The writer of Hebrews uses this image for the life of faith — and notices that there are two categories of weight. There is sin, which is its own obvious problem. But there is also ‘everything that hinders’ — a separate category. Things that are not sin, perhaps, but that are slowing the run. Good things, even. Things that would be fine in a different season but are a weight in this one. The acceptable sacrifice is not only the laying down of what is wrong. It is the willingness to lay down what is merely lesser.’,

REFLECTION

The concept of ‘things that hinder’ is one of the most searching and least preached aspects of the sacrificial life. It is relatively easy — at least in principle — to identify sin and work toward repentance. It is far harder to identify the legitimate good things that are taking the space and energy God intends for something greater. A relationship that is not sinful but is consuming. A hobby that is wholesome but has become an idol. An ambition that is not wrong in itself but is competing with a calling. The sacrifice of lesser things — the willingness to lay down good things for the sake of better ones — is one of the most sophisticated forms of offering a life can make. It requires the kind of discernment that only comes from spending enough time with God to know what He is asking for in this season.

TODAY’S DECLARATION

I throw off everything that hinders, not only what is sinful. I hold my good things loosely enough that God can lift them from my hands when He has something better. I run the race stripped down and focused, carrying nothing that would slow my stride.

PRAYER

Lord, show me what is slowing me down. Not just the obvious sins — those I am already working on — but the hindrances. The good things that have become weights. The legitimate pleasures that have grown into distractions from my calling. Give me the courage to lay them down, even when they are not wrong, even when no one else would understand why. I want to run well. Strip me down to what is essential for the race You have set before me. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



WEEK 3

THE BODY

Offering the Physical Self to God





YOUR BODY AS AN OFFERING

SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 6:19 (NIV)

“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own.”

BIBLICAL STORY

Paul’s language in Romans 12 is shockingly specific: offer your bodies. Not your souls. Not your spiritual intentions. Your bodies — the physical, material, flesh-and-blood vessel you inhabit. This was countercultural in a Greek world that considered the body an inferior container for the soul, a temporary inconvenience on the way to purely spiritual existence. Paul will have none of it. The Incarnation settled the question: God took a body. The Resurrection settled it further: the body was raised, transformed but real. The body matters to God, and the sacrifice He asks for is embodied, physical, and specific.

REFLECTION

When Paul says to offer your bodies, he means something comprehensive. The eyes and what they look at. The tongue and what it says. The hands and how they are used. The feet and where they go. The body’s appetites and how they are governed. The body’s energy and how it is spent. The sleeping and the waking, the eating and the working — all of it is included in the offering. The body is not irrelevant to holiness. It is the arena of holiness. Every act of bodily self-discipline is an act of sacrifice. Every physical appetite held in check by the will of God is an offering. Every use of the body’s energy in service of others is worship. The temple metaphor Paul uses is not decorative. It means that what happens in the body has spiritual significance, and that the body’s consecration to God is as real and important as the consecration of any ancient sanctuary.

TODAY’S DECLARATION

My body is an offering to God. I present it today — my eyes, my hands, my tongue, my energy, my appetites — as a living sacrifice. I choose how I use my body in ways that honour the One who indwells it. My body is a temple, and I will treat it accordingly.

PRAYER

Lord, I offer You my body today. Every part of it. The places that feel strong and the places that feel weak. The appetites I manage well and the ones that still give me trouble. The energy I have today, and the way I choose to spend it. I consecrate my physical existence to You — not as a grim discipline, but as an act of love. You took a body for my sake. I give mine back to You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



THE TONGUE AS ALTAR

SCRIPTURE

Proverbs 18:21 (NIV)

“The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”

BIBLICAL STORY

James devotes more concentrated attention to the tongue than to almost any other topic in his letter. He calls it a fire, a world of evil, a restless and deadly thing. He notes that with the same tongue we bless God and curse people made in God’s image. The inconsistency is stunning. The ancient altar was a place where something was transformed — consumed and changed by fire, lifted up as an offering. James is suggesting that every conversation is, in some sense, an altar moment. The words we speak either offer something alive to the world, or they consume and destroy. What comes from our mouths is always an offering of some kind.

REFLECTION

Offering the tongue as a living sacrifice may be the most daily and demanding form of bodily consecration there is. We speak thousands of words a day. Every one of them is a choice — to build or to undermine, to tell the truth or to shade it, to encourage or to diminish, to speak with grace or with contempt, to use words in service of others or as weapons in service of ourselves. The sacrifice of the tongue is not silence. It is not a grim refusal to engage. It is the deliberate offering of our speech — its power, its colour, its reach — to the purposes of God. It means asking before we speak: is what I am about to say something I am willing to lay on the altar? Is it an offering, or is it something I would not dare to bring to God? A tongue wholly surrendered to God becomes one of the most powerful instruments of His kingdom in the world.

TODAY’S DECLARATION

I offer my tongue to God today as a living sacrifice. My words will be chosen with the awareness that they carry the power of life and death. I will speak in ways I am glad to bring to the altar — truthful, kind, building, and full of grace.

PRAYER

Lord, set a guard over my mouth today. Not to make me silent, but to make me careful — careful in the best sense, full of care for the people my words will touch. Tame the restless impulse to speak before I think, to wound when I am wounded, to diminish when I feel diminished. Fill my mouth with words that are worth giving — words of truth, of grace, of life. Let my speech be an offering You are glad to receive. In Jesus’ name, Amen.





THE OFFERING OF TIME

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 90:12 (NIV)

“Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”

BIBLICAL STORY

Moses wrote Psalm 90 — the oldest psalm in the Psalter — in the shadow of forty years in the wilderness. He had watched an entire generation die in the desert, one by one, because of disobedience. He knew the fragility of a human life with an acuteness that few people ever acquire. And his prayer is not for longer life but for wiser use of whatever life remains. Numbering our days is not morbid. It is a spiritual discipline that confronts us with the most uncomfortable truth about time: there is a finite amount of it, we do not know how much, and every day spent is one that cannot be retrieved.

REFLECTION

Time may be the most democratically distributed resource in existence. The wealthy and the poor, the powerful and the powerless — each one has twenty-four hours in a day, and no one gets more. And it is the most irreversible of all our offerings. Money given away can theoretically be replaced. A relationship sacrificed for God’s purposes can sometimes be restored. But time offered is gone. Which means that the way we spend our hours is a window into what we actually value, regardless of what we say we value. The living sacrifice is a person who has brought their calendar to the altar — who has held their hours up to God and asked not ‘what do I want to do with my time?’ but ‘what are You asking me to do with the time You have given me?’ This does not produce a life without rest or pleasure. It produces a life of intentionality, where even rest is chosen as an act of stewardship.

TODAY’S DECLARATION

My time belongs to God. I bring my calendar and my hours to the altar today, releasing ownership and asking for intentionality. I will spend this day as a steward of moments I have been entrusted with, not as a consumer of hours I believe are mine to waste.

PRAYER

Lord, teach me to number my days. Give me a heart of wisdom about time — not anxiety or rigidity, but the kind of clarity that knows what matters and acts accordingly. Show me where I am wasting what cannot be recovered. Show me where I am too busy with good things to have time for the best things. Help me to offer You not just the religious hours but all the hours, surrendered to Your purposes and used for Your glory. In Jesus’ name, Amen.





THE SACRIFICE OF SLEEP AND SABBATH

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 127:2 (NIV)

"It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives sleep to his beloved."

BIBLICAL STORY

Elijah, after the great triumph on Mount Carmel, collapsed in the wilderness under a broom tree and asked to die. The angel of God did not rebuke him, did not tell him to pray harder, did not remind him of his calling. The angel touched him and said: arise and eat. And then, again: arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you. God's first provision for a burned-out prophet was not a vision. It was food and sleep. The body's need for rest is not a spiritual failing. It is a gift from God and a declaration of dependence: we are creatures, not machines. We are sustained by a Creator who neither slumbers nor sleeps, so we do not need to stay awake to keep the world going.

REFLECTION

One of the strangest sacrifices a person can make is the sacrifice of productivity — the willingness to stop working, stop striving, stop proving, and rest. In a culture that treats busyness as a virtue and rest as laziness, choosing Sabbath is genuinely countercultural. It is an act of faith: the declaration that the world's continuation does not depend on my continued effort, that God is Lord of the hours I am not occupying, that my worth is not measured by my output. The living sacrifice is not a burned-out, sleepless martyr. It is a person who works from a place of rest, who returns regularly to stillness, who understands that the body offered to God includes the body that sleeps, the spirit that Sabbaths, the soul that stops. Sustainability is not selfishness. A burnt-out offering is not a better offering.

TODAY'S DECLARATION

I receive rest as a gift from God, not a concession to weakness. I practice Sabbath as an act of faith, declaring that the world does not depend on my continuous effort. I offer God a body that is rested and a soul that knows how to be still, and I trust that He sustains what I release in my ceasing.

PRAYER

Lord, teach me the spirituality of rest. Forgive me for the anxious striving that keeps me moving when You are calling me to stop. Forgive me for the pride that equates my worth with my productivity. I receive the gift of sleep and Sabbath as signs of trust in You. As I rest, I declare that You are God and I am not. You hold the world while I sleep. And I trust that the offering of a rested, sustained, sustained-by-You life is more acceptable than the wreckage of a burned-out one. In Jesus' name, Amen.





THE SACRIFICE OF SEXUALITY

SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 6:18 (NIV)

“Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.”

BIBLICAL STORY

The Corinthian church existed in one of the most sexually permissive cities in the ancient world. The culture’s attitude toward sexual activity was roughly equivalent to its attitude toward eating: appetites were appetites, and satisfying them was morally neutral. Paul confronted this directly and radically. The body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. Sexuality is not a peripheral issue for the living sacrifice. It is one of the most specific and most contested areas in which the body is either offered to God or reclaimed for the self.

REFLECTION

The sacrifice of sexuality does not mean the denial that sexuality exists. God created sexual desire, and He called it good. The sacrifice is the offering of that desire to God’s design and God’s timing — the choice to be governed not by appetite but by covenant. For those who are married, it means the faithful and generous love that makes a marriage a living demonstration of Christ’s love for the Church. For those who are single, it means the chaste stewardship of desire in ways that honour God and protect others. For everyone, it means the refusal to let cultural permissiveness redefine what God has designed. This is among the costliest of all bodily sacrifices in a culture saturated with sexual content and pressure. But it is also among the most powerful declarations a person can make: my body does not belong to my appetites. It belongs to God.

TODAY’S DECLARATION

I offer my sexuality to God as part of my living sacrifice. My desire belongs to His design. I will govern my body in ways that are holy and honourable, trusting that His design for sexuality is better than any alternative the culture offers. My body is a temple, and I will treat it accordingly.

PRAYER

Lord, I bring this part of my life to You today — the part that the culture says belongs to me and my desires, but that You say belongs to You. Wherever I have given ground here that I should not have, I repent and ask for restoration. Wherever I am fighting a daily battle for purity, give me Your strength and not only my own resolve. Let my sexuality be part of my worship — offered to Your design, expressed in ways that honour You and the people I love. In Jesus’ name, Amen.





THE SUFFERING BODY

SCRIPTURE

Colossians 1:24 (NIV)

“Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.”

BIBLICAL STORY

Job’s suffering was not the result of his sin. His friends insisted otherwise, but God’s verdict at the end of the book was clear: Job had spoken what was right, and his friends had not. The book of Job is among the most important in all of Scripture precisely because it dismantles the convenient equation of suffering with punishment. Suffering comes to the righteous. It comes to the faithful. It comes to those who are closest to God. And when Paul says he rejoices in suffering for the church, he is not performing spiritual toughness. He is testifying that the suffering body, offered to God, becomes a vehicle for something beyond what he can accomplish when comfortable.

REFLECTION

Few things are more resistant to the language of sacrifice than physical suffering. When the body fails, when chronic illness takes up residence, when pain becomes the constant background of life — the temptation is to experience this as a subtraction from the offering, a diminishment of what we have to give. The biblical witness suggests something different. The suffering body, held before God in trust rather than protest, becomes in His hands one of the most powerful sacrifices of all. It is not a waste. It is a declaration of faith that cannot be faked: that God is good even when circumstances say otherwise, that life in Him is worth more than life without pain, that the resurrection is real enough to hope for even now. The person who offers their suffering body to God does not stop being a living sacrifice. They become, in a profound way, more fully one.

TODAY’S DECLARATION

I offer my suffering to God. My body’s limitations, its pain, its weakness — I place these on the altar and trust that God can use even this as a sacrifice that serves His purposes. My pain is not wasted. Held before God, it becomes something.

PRAYER

Lord, I bring You my suffering today. Not with pretended joy, but with honest trust. I do not understand why this is my experience. I have not resolved all my questions. But I place my suffering body in Your hands and ask You to do with it what I cannot — to make it an offering that serves Your purposes, a testimony to Your sustaining grace, a declaration that You are enough even when everything else falls away. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



THE WHOLE SELF

SCRIPTURE

1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NIV)

“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

BIBLICAL STORY

The Shema — the great declaration of Jewish faith from Deuteronomy 6 — calls Israel to love God with all their heart, soul, and strength. Jesus, when asked for the greatest commandment, quoted it and added: and with all your mind. The vision is total. There is no part of the human person that is exempt from the love of God and the call of consecration. Paul’s prayer in 1 Thessalonians gathers the whole person into one request for sanctification: spirit, soul, and body — through and through. The acceptable sacrifice is not a partial offering.

REFLECTION

We have a tendency toward a compartmentalised sacrifice. We offer God our spiritual practices while guarding our emotional lives. We offer Him our public behaviour while protecting our private thoughts. We surrender our career aspirations while quietly keeping our relational habits unexamined. Paul’s vision will not tolerate this. The whole self is the sacrifice — every dimension of the human person, held up before God and made available for His sanctifying work. This is not a counsel of perfection that produces despair. It is an invitation to completeness: the kind of life where there is no room that God is not welcome in, no corner that has a sign on it reading ‘private,’ no part of the self that is exempt from the transforming love of God. The whole self offered is the whole self made whole.

TODAY’S DECLARATION

I offer my whole self to God today. Not parts of me, not the acceptable pieces. Spirit, soul, and body — every room of my inner life, every dimension of my person — belongs to Him. I close no door to His presence and exempt no part of myself from His sanctifying work.

PRAYER

God of peace, sanctify me through and through. Go into the rooms I have kept closed. Illuminate the corners I have not invited You into. Touch the parts of my spirit, soul, and body that I have not fully surrendered. I do not want a partial consecration. I want the whole thing — my whole self given to Your purposes, kept by Your power, and made blameless by Your grace. Not by my effort alone, but by Yours working in me. Make me whole. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



WEEK 4

THE COMMUNITY

Sacrifice Lived Among Others



SACRIFICIAL LOVE

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:16 (NIV)

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.”

BIBLICAL STORY

Jesus used the language of sacrifice most explicitly not about individual piety but about community. ‘Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.’ The first Christians understood this as the pattern for their common life. In a city like Jerusalem after Pentecost, where thousands of new believers had gathered from across the diaspora and many had no means of support, the response was spontaneous and total: they sold what they had and shared with anyone who had need. The sacrifice was not only personal. It was social. It reshaped community.

REFLECTION

John pulls the great theological statement of the Gospel — the laying down of Christ’s life — and immediately applies it horizontally: we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. The cross is not only the model of God’s love toward us. It is the template for our love toward one another. And lest this remain abstract, John makes it concrete in the next verse: if anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Sacrificial love is not a feeling. It is a decision, enacted in practical and sometimes costly ways, to treat the needs of others as claims on our own resources. The community shaped by living sacrifices is a community in which people lay down their lives for each other — their time, their money, their preferences, their comfort — as a daily practice of love.

TODAY’S DECLARATION

I lay down my life for my brothers and sisters. Sacrificial love is not a theory I admire — it is a practice I choose. I will meet the needs around me with the resources God has given me, treating the welfare of others as a genuine claim on my own.

PRAYER

Lord, make me a person of sacrificial love. Not the theoretical love that wishes people well from a distance, but the kind that costs something. Show me the need closest to me today — in my family, my church, my neighbourhood — and give me the will to respond to it generously. Let the love that was laid down on the cross flow through me to the people around me. In Jesus’ name, Amen.





THE SACRIFICE OF FORGIVENESS

SCRIPTURE

Colossians 3:13 (NIV)

"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

BIBLICAL STORY

The parable of the unmerciful servant is one of Jesus' most searching. A man forgiven an astronomical debt — ten thousand talents, a sum so large it was functionally impossible to repay — went directly from his audience with the king and seized by the throat a fellow servant who owed him a hundred days' wages. The contrast is almost comical in its absurdity. But Jesus told the story because the contrast is not as obvious to us as it should be. We stand forgiven of an incalculable debt to God, and we regularly refuse to release the much smaller debts that other people owe us.

REFLECTION

Forgiveness is a sacrifice because it costs the person who forgives, not the person who is forgiven. It means releasing a debt that is real, releasing the right to recompense, releasing the resentment that has been a kind of dark comfort. It means absorbing the pain of what was done to you rather than returning it, and choosing not to let the wound define the relationship. This is not the same as pretending the wrong never happened, or removing yourself from further harm, or trusting someone who has not yet proven trustworthy. Forgiveness is a separate act from reconciliation, and it is always personal and internal before it is relational and visible. But it is a sacrifice, and it is one of the most Christlike things a human being can do. The cross is the model: the One who was wronged absorbed the cost, released the debt, and opened the way to restoration.

TODAY'S DECLARATION

I choose to forgive. Not because it is easy or because the debt was small, but because I have been forgiven a debt immeasurably greater than any owed to me. I release the right to hold this over someone else. I absorb the cost. I lay forgiveness on the altar as one of my most Christlike offerings.

PRAYER

Lord, I bring You the people I have not yet forgiven. The wounds that are still fresh. The older griefs I have been carrying so long they feel like part of me. I confess that I have sometimes held onto unforgiveness as a kind of justice, a way of keeping score. But I hear You calling me to release it — not because the wrong did not happen, but because You have forgiven me so much more. Help me today to choose the sacrifice of forgiveness, not once but as many times as it takes. In Jesus' name, Amen.



THE SACRIFICE OF SERVING

SCRIPTURE

Mark 10:45 (NIV)

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

BIBLICAL STORY

On the night of the Last Supper, Jesus took a towel and a basin and washed His disciples' feet — the task of the lowest household servant. John's account says He did it 'having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.' To the end — fully, completely, to the uttermost extent of love. The foot-washing was not a demonstration of humility as a virtue to be admired. It was an enactment of the Gospel itself: the greatest One present becoming the servant of all. And it came with a commission: as I have done for you, so you should do for one another.

REFLECTION

Service is sacrifice because it places other people's needs above our own preferences, our own convenience, and sometimes our own dignity. The world's systems are built around ascending: climbing higher, gaining more influence, accumulating more status. Jesus' system runs in the opposite direction. The greatest is the servant of all. The first is the last. The leader is the one with the towel. This is not false modesty or the performance of humility for social credit. It is the genuine laying aside of status — the willingness to be seen doing the unglamorous task, to serve where there is no audience, to give your energy to others' flourishing rather than your own advancement. Every act of service rendered in the spirit of the towel and basin is an act of sacrifice, and it bears in its ordinariness the shape of the cross.

TODAY'S DECLARATION

I serve as Jesus served — with a towel and a basin, not a crown and a throne. I lay down my preferences, my status, and my comfort to meet the needs of the people around me. My greatest moments of service may be the ones no one sees, and I am content with that.

PRAYER

Jesus, I want Your servant heart. Not the performance of service for the sake of a reputation as a humble person, but the genuine delight in laying down my preferences for the flourishing of others. Show me today where the towel is waiting. Who needs serving that I have not noticed? What unglamorous task is mine to do? Give me eyes to see and hands willing to reach for the basin. In Your name, Amen.





THE SACRIFICE OF GENEROSITY

SCRIPTURE

2 Corinthians 8:1–2 (NIV)

“And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.”

BIBLICAL STORY

The Macedonian churches — Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea — were not wealthy. They were under pressure. And yet, Paul says, they gave beyond their ability, urgently begging for the privilege of sharing in the relief of the Jerusalem church. Two words stand out: ‘overflowing joy’ and ‘extreme poverty.’ These are not the conditions under which most of us would expect generosity. But Paul presents them as the context from which one of the most beautiful examples of sacrificial giving in the New Testament arose. The Macedonians gave out of what they did not have, because they understood grace.

REFLECTION

Generosity is always a sacrifice because money represents what we traded our time and labour for. To give money is to give a piece of your life. The Macedonians gave not only financially but personally — they gave themselves first, Paul says, before they gave their resources. That sequencing matters. Generosity that is merely financial without the giving of self is philanthropy. Generosity that begins with the self and then extends to resources is sacrifice. The person who has truly laid themselves on the altar will find that their money becomes naturally included in the offering — that the tight grip loosens, that the calculation softens, that the joy of giving begins to compete with and eventually defeat the anxiety of losing. Generosity is one of the clearest visible signs that the altar has done its work.

TODAY’S DECLARATION

I am a generous person because I have been given a generous God. I give not from surplus but from surrender. My money is part of my sacrifice, and I hold it loosely enough that God can direct it toward the needs He sees that I may not.

PRAYER

Lord, make me a Macedonian giver — someone who gives out of joy even in difficulty, who gives beyond what seems reasonable, who gives themselves first and then gives everything else from that place of self-surrender. Break the power of financial anxiety in me. Replace the grip of security-seeking with the open hand of trust. Let my generosity be a form of worship, a declaration that You are my security and I do not need to hold onto what You may be asking me to release. In Jesus’ name, Amen.





HONOURING THE VULNERABLE

SCRIPTURE

James 1:27 (NIV)

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”

BIBLICAL STORY

The prophets of Israel were relentless on a single theme: God is not interested in your religious performances if the vulnerable among you are being neglected. Isaiah 58 is perhaps the most direct: God refuses to accept the fasting of a people who exploit their workers and fight among themselves. The fast He chooses is to loose the chains of injustice, to share your bread with the hungry, to provide shelter for the wanderer. The acceptable sacrifice, in the prophetic tradition, has always had a social dimension. Worship that is not connected to justice is, in God’s terms, not worship at all.

REFLECTION

James distils the entire prophetic tradition into a single sentence. Pure and faultless religion — the religion God accepts — is not measured by the quality of your theology or the sincerity of your prayer, but by what you do with your hands and your resources for the people who have no one to advocate for them. The orphan and the widow in James’ context are simply the most vulnerable people in that society. In our own context, we can read them as a stand-in for every person on the margins: the refugee, the prisoner, the person in poverty, the elderly person left alone, the child without adequate care. The living sacrifice is not only an individual offering. It is a community that organises its common life around the most vulnerable among them. The altar and the open hand are not separate. They belong together.

TODAY’S DECLARATION

My sacrifice includes those who cannot sacrifice for themselves.

I will look after the vulnerable with my time, my resources, and my advocacy.

The acceptable worship God seeks is not only vertical, directed toward heaven.

It is horizontal, directed toward the most vulnerable around me.

PRAYER

Lord, open my eyes to the vulnerable in my world. The people right around me who are in distress and would benefit from my attention. Give me not only compassion but practical, consistent engagement — the kind that costs something and changes something. Let my religion be the kind You call pure and faultless: not impressive performances before You, but faithful care for the people You love most. In Jesus’ name, Amen.





THE SACRIFICE OF UNITY

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:3 (NIV)

“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

BIBLICAL STORY

In John 17, Jesus prayed — with the cross hours away — for the unity of His followers. He prayed that they might be one as He and the Father are one. The standard He held up is breathtaking: the unity of the Trinity. He then connected that unity to mission: that the world may believe. The fractures in the body of Christ are not only internal problems. They are a testimony against the Gospel. When the community of those who claim to follow the God who is love is marked by bitterness, factionalism, and contempt, something essential is missing from the witness.

REFLECTION

Unity is a sacrifice because it costs us the luxury of being right in a way that divides. It costs us the satisfaction of the last word. It costs us the comfortable company of people who see everything exactly as we do. Paul says we are to make every effort to keep the unity — not to create it, because the Spirit has already established it, but to keep it, to protect it, to refuse to be the person who breaks it. This means choosing repair over distance, conversation over avoidance, generosity of interpretation over suspicion. It means staying at the table when the easier option is to leave. The community that stays together through genuine disagreement and genuine forgiveness is itself a living sacrifice — an offering of diversity held together by love, a living argument for the power of the Gospel.

TODAY'S DECLARATION

I am committed to the unity of the body of Christ. I will not be the person who fractures what the Spirit has joined. I sacrifice my right to be right, my comfort in homogeneity, and my taste for distance, in order to keep the bond of peace that Christ died to create.

PRAYER

Lord, make me a peacemaker in the body of Christ. Where there is division I have contributed to — by taking offence, by sowing criticism, by withdrawing from relationship rather than working through it — I repent. Give me the courage to make the move toward repair. Give me the humility to value unity over being right. Let the community I am part of be a living demonstration of the Gospel it preaches. In Jesus' name, Amen.





THE MISSION THAT COSTS

SCRIPTURE

Romans 10:14 (NIV)

“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?”

BIBLICAL STORY

The book of Acts is a record of sacrificial mission. Stephen gave his life. James gave his life. Paul gave his freedom, repeatedly. Peter walked into the house of a Gentile. Philip left a successful revival for a desert road. Every advance of the Gospel in Acts came at personal cost to someone. The growth of the church was not the result of a comfortable people comfortably sharing their comfortable faith. It was the result of a people who had placed themselves on the altar and remained there when it became costly to do so.

REFLECTION

Paul’s logic in Romans 10 is inexorable and personal. The chain runs from God’s mercy all the way to someone’s mouth opening to speak, and at every link the chain requires a person willing to be part of it. Someone has to go. Someone has to speak. The good news does not travel on its own. It travels through people who have surrendered their comfort, their reputation, their time, and in some contexts their safety to carry it to those who have not heard. The living sacrifice is always a missionary sacrifice — not necessarily in the sense of crossing oceans, but in the sense of being willing to speak when silence is easier, to go where it is uncomfortable, to offer the Gospel to the person in front of you at the cost of the awkwardness it might create. Mission is the natural overflow of a life fully offered. If we are genuinely on the altar, we cannot stay quiet about the God who put us there.

TODAY’S DECLARATION

My life is a missionary sacrifice. I do not wait for comfort before I share the Gospel. I do not require the absence of awkwardness before I speak the name of Jesus. I am on assignment, and I will carry the good news wherever the Spirit sends me, at whatever cost that sending involves.

PRAYER

Lord, make me bold. Not the forced boldness of someone performing courage, but the genuine boldness that comes from knowing what I carry and caring more about the people who need it than about my own comfort. Put people in my path today who need the Gospel. Give me the right words and the right moment. And when the opportunity comes, give me the courage not to miss it. I am available. Send me. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



WEEK 5

THE FIRE

Refinement, Fragrance and Eternal Glory



TRIED BY FIRE

SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 1:7 (NIV)

"These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed."

BIBLICAL STORY

The ancient smelter's fire had one purpose: to separate gold from everything that was not gold. The impurities rose and were skimmed away. What remained was purer than what had been placed in the fire. Peter draws on this image not to romanticise suffering but to give it meaning. The trials that come to the believer are not random misfortunes. They are the smelter's fire, applied to something God considers more valuable than gold: genuine, proven faith. The fire does not create what is good in us. It removes what is not, leaving what was always there in cleaner, clearer form.

REFLECTION

The sacrifice placed on the altar encounters fire. In the Levitical system, fire was not the enemy of the offering — it was the agent of its transformation. It was what turned the offering into the 'pleasing aroma' that rose to God. The fire of trial in a believer's life works similarly. It is not punishing what was offered; it is purifying it. The impatience, the self-reliance, the unexamined assumptions, the easy faith that has never been tested — these are what the fire removes. What remains after the trial is not less than what was placed in the fire. It is more: leaner, truer, proven. The person who comes through genuine trial with their faith intact has something the person who has never been tried does not have: the knowledge that their faith is real. Not theoretical, not inherited, not performed. Real.

TODAY'S DECLARATION

I do not despise the fire. The trials I face are refining my faith, removing what is impure, and leaving what is proven and genuine. I trust the smelter who knows exactly how much heat is needed and when to lift the offering from the flame.

PRAYER

Lord, I trust You in the fire. I will not pretend that it is not hot. I will not perform a calm I do not feel. But I trust that You know what You are doing — that You can see the gold even when I cannot, that the impurities You are removing were always in the way of what You intend me to be. Sustain me in this season. Be the presence in the fire, as You were with the three young men in Babylon. And let what comes out of this trial be something that gives You praise, glory, and honour. In Jesus' name, Amen.





THE FRAGRANT OFFERING

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 5:2 (NIV)

“And walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

BIBLICAL STORY

The language of the ‘pleasing aroma’ that ascends to God runs through the whole sacrificial system of the Old Testament. It is, in one sense, an anthropomorphism — a way of speaking about God’s pleasure in human terms we can understand. But Paul uses it for Christ’s sacrifice in Ephesians 5 and then immediately draws the line of imitation: walk in the way of love as He loved us. The fragrant offering is not only what Jesus did for us. It is the pattern we are called to embody. Our lives of love — our daily, costly, Christlike love for the people around us — are meant to be fragrant. They are meant to rise.

REFLECTION

Paul does not say that Jesus’ sacrifice was a painful necessity that God reluctantly accepted. He says it was fragrant — pleasing, welcome, received with joy. And he calls us to the same. The lives we offer, the love we live, the sacrifice we make — these are not grim religious obligations that God tolerates because He must. They are, when genuinely given, fragrant offerings that please Him. The person who has truly given their life to God does not live in a posture of heavy-shouldered duty. They live in something lighter — the freedom of someone who has stopped managing and started offering, who has released the grip and felt the relief of open hands. Their sacrifice is fragrant because it is given in love, and love always carries a scent that rises.

TODAY’S DECLARATION

My life is a fragrant offering. The love I give, the sacrifice I make, the way I walk in imitation of Christ — these are received by God with joy, not merely with tolerance. I do not live as someone carrying a burden. I live as someone making an offering, and the offering pleases the One who receives it.

PRAYER

Lord, let my life be fragrant to You. Not impressive, not exhausting, not a performance of sacrifice that I secretly resent. Let it be genuinely given — offered in the freedom of love rather than the weight of duty. As Christ gave Himself for us as a fragrant offering, let me give myself for others in the same spirit. Let the love I live be something that rises — something that pleases You and points the people around me toward You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.





THE ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY

SCRIPTURE

2 Corinthians 4:17 (NIV)

“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”

BIBLICAL STORY

Paul wrote these words having been beaten, imprisoned, stoned, shipwrecked, and left for dead. He calls these things ‘light and momentary.’ He is not dismissing them or pretending they did not hurt. He is measuring them against something else — an eternal weight of glory that is being achieved through them. The Greek word for ‘achieves’ is ‘katargazetai’ — it is working, producing, accomplishing something. The sacrifice is not passive. The suffering is not meaningless. The offering is generating something, building something, producing a weight of glory that will one day make the cost seem incomprehensibly small.

REFLECTION

We come to the end of this month where we have followed the living sacrifice from the altar to the fire to the fragrant offering that rises. And here, at the end, is the perspective that makes it all coherent: the eternal one. Paul’s ability to call his extraordinary sufferings light and momentary is not denial. It is eschatology — the practice of looking at present reality through the lens of what is coming. The sacrifice we make in this life is seed planted in eternity. It is not lost. It is invested. Every cost of obedience, every act of love, every bit of suffering held before God in faith, every tongue guarded and body offered and relationship forgiven and enemy loved — these are being transformed, through the mysterious alchemy of God’s purposes, into a weight of glory that our present experience cannot contain. The altar is not the end of the story. It is the beginning of something eternal.

TODAY’S DECLARATION

My sacrifice is not lost. It is being transformed into an eternal weight of glory that far outweighs every cost. I fix my eyes not on what is seen and temporary, but on what is unseen and eternal. I offer my life with confidence, knowing that what I give to God He never wastes.

PRAYER

Lord, give me Paul’s perspective. Let me see my present troubles, my daily sacrifices, my costly obediences — not as losses but as investments. Not as burdens but as seed. You are working in the things I cannot see, building something I cannot yet imagine, producing a weight of glory that will one day make me wonder how I ever hesitated to give You everything. I close this month with open hands, a yielded will, and a heart full of trust. Take my life. Use it for Your glory. And let that glory be eternal. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



JULY EDITION

THE WORD MADE FLESH

DAILY DEVOTIONAL



Evangelist Dr. (Mrs.) Obenachi Renner Jumbo is a distinguished retired Nigerian public servant, seasoned finance professional, devoted wife and mother, and a passionate minister of the Gospel. Yet, beyond her accomplishments and responsibilities in public service, she is a woman deeply devoted to God and committed to advancing His Kingdom through the ministry of His Word.

As the Convener of Vessels of Virtue Ministry, an interdenominational fellowship based in Abuja, Nigeria, and the Coordinator of the Word Lovers Club, she has spent years teaching, mentoring, encouraging, and leading believers into a deeper understanding of God's Word. Her ministry has been driven by a simple but profound conviction: that lives are transformed when people encounter God daily through Scripture.

This conviction gave birth to ***The Word Made Flesh Daily Devotional***. Having witnessed the power of God's Word to redirect destinies, restore hope, strengthen faith, and provide clarity in life's most challenging moments, she was inspired to create a devotional that would serve as a daily guide for believers seeking direction, spiritual growth, and a closer walk with God. Each page reflects her desire to see readers experience divine encounters that become genuine turning points in their spiritual journey.

Her passion for inspiring purposeful living is also reflected in her published works. She is the author of ***The Urgency of Now***, a call to intentional living and decisive action; ***Maranatha***, a stirring reminder of the believer's hope and readiness for Christ's return; and ***The Architecture of Greatness***, a guide to building a life of purpose, excellence, and lasting impact. Together, these works reveal her commitment to raising believers who are spiritually grounded, purpose-driven, and prepared for God's assignment in their generation.

Through her writings, teachings, and ministry, Dr. Obenachi continues to challenge hearts, strengthen faith, and inspire lives. Her prayer is that every reader of ***The Word Made Flesh Daily Devotional*** will encounter God's presence, hear His voice, and experience the divine turning points that lead to a life of purpose, victory, and lasting significance.