

I SEE A CHURCH

SESSION FOUR

**I SEE A CHURCH THAT IS BUILT ON THE SACRIFICES OF
MANY AND NOT JUST THE GIFTS OF A FEW**



WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE

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**

"WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?"

Even if we don't say those words out loud, they're often the filter through which we run nearly every decision. If I am kind to someone, I'm hoping they'll return the favor. If I am generous, I am hoping I'll get some sort of reward or blessing.

While we may not act in overtly selfish ways, we all tend to be self-focused. But God calls us to live sacrificially instead of selfishly. He calls us to be a church that serves the needs of others, joyfully and willingly. We can't make this shift on our own—we need God's help. The good news is, he is more than able to change our hearts and minds, to make us into people who are becoming more like him—Who was and is the ultimate sacrifice.

A church made up of sacrificial people will not only be effective at helping others, they'll draw others toward Christ. As much as our nature tends to ask "what's in it for me?" we all have something inside us that wants to live for a cause greater than ourselves. The church provides us that divine opportunity.



I SEE A CHURCH



OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH PRAYER.

This should be a brief, simple prayer, in which you invite God to be with you as you meet. You can pray for specific requests at the end of the meeting or stop momentarily to pray if a particular situation comes up during your discussion.

GETTING STARTED

Telling our personal stories builds deeper connections among group members. Begin your time together by using the following questions and activities to get people talking.

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1. Tell about a time you were asked to sacrifice—either to give something or give up something. What happened? How did that feel?

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2. Most people have someone for whom they'd be willing to make a sacrifice: their children, spouse, or perhaps another family member. Who is someone you'd readily sacrifice your comfort or resources for?

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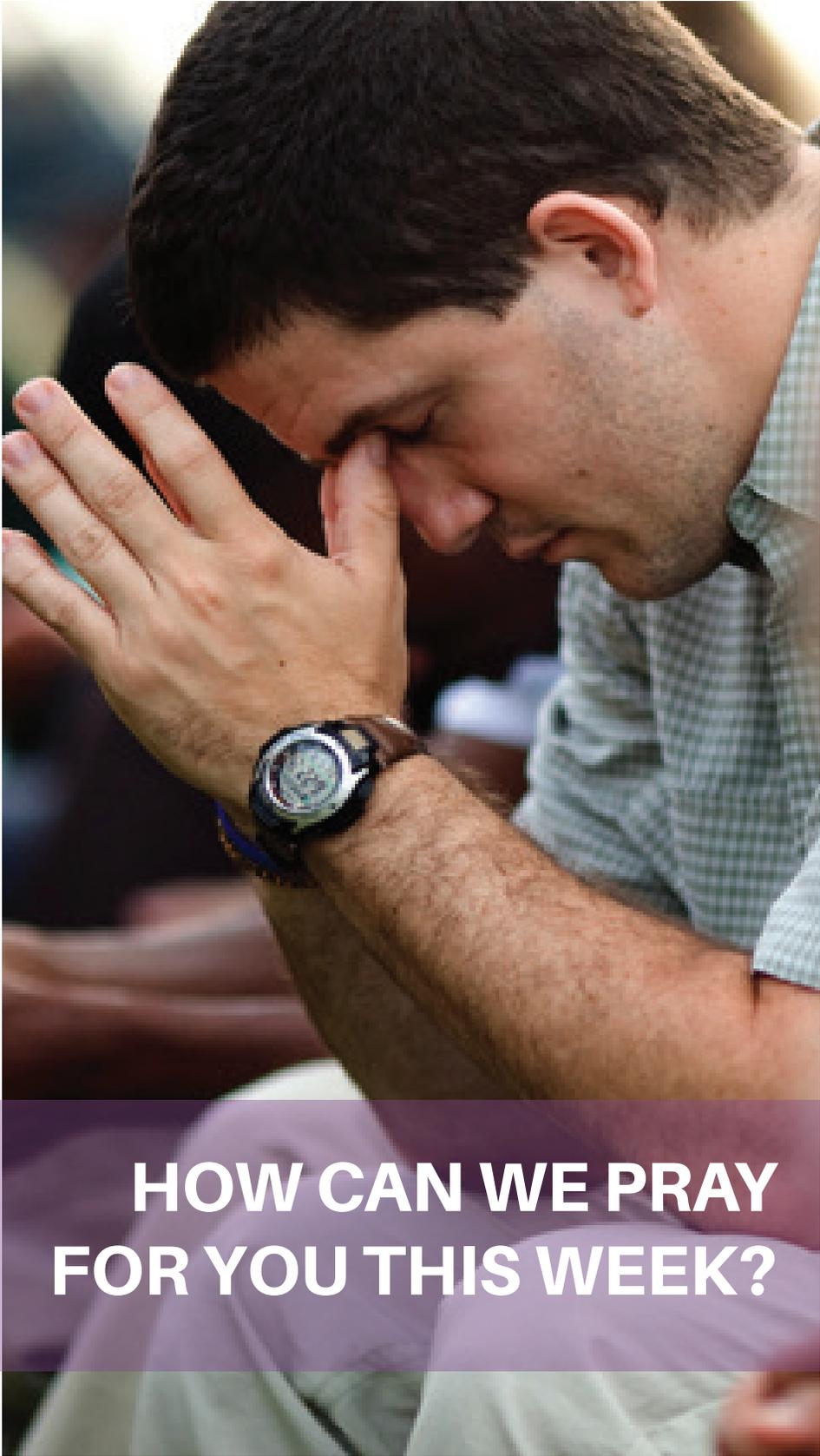






RESPOND

Now that we have spent some time reflecting on what God might be saying to us, let's talk about how we will apply the wisdom we have learned from the teaching and Bible study. Then think about practical steps we can take in the coming week to live out what we have learned.



HOW CAN WE PRAY FOR YOU THIS WEEK?

ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS

In the video, we were challenged to sacrifice our time, talents and treasures. What is one next step you could take in any one of these areas? Which of those three is most difficult for you to sacrifice? Explain.

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How might living more like an Acts 2 church impact your community, especially unbelievers in your city or town?

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Groups grow closer when they serve together. How could your group serve someone in need? You may want to visit someone who is sick, provide a meal for a family going through difficulty, or give some other practical help to someone in need. If nothing comes to mind, spend some time as a group praying and asking God to show you who needs your help. Have two or three group members organize a serving project for the group, and then—do it!

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Allow everyone to answer this question: "How can we pray for you this week?" Be sure to write prayer requests on your Prayer and Praise Report on page 100.

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CLOSE THIS SESSION WITH PRAYER.



GOING DEEPER

You can explore the following Bible passage as a group (if there is time) or on your own between sessions. Try writing down your reflections in a journal or in this study guide. A great way to gain insight on a passage is to read it in several different translations. You may want to use a Bible app or website to compare translations.

READ 1 PETER 2:4-5

This passage uses a metaphor of stones to describe a spiritual reality. What do the stones represent?

Verse 5 talks about “spiritual sacrifices.” What do you think that means? How are the sacrifices of our time, talent and treasure also spiritual sacrifices?

Now look at 1 Peter 2:9-10. According to this passage, what rewards does God give to those who make sacrifices?

READ HEBREWS 13:15-16

What do you think this text means by “the sacrifice of praise”? What specific actions and attitudes would you engage in when bringing God a sacrifice of praise?

Verse 16 tells us to “do good and share”—in other words, to give sacrifices of our time and our treasures. Who can you do good for this week? Who can you share with?



DAILY REFLECTIONS

Ask God to speak to you through His word.

DEVOTIONALS

Day 1.

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 9:6

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

CONSIDER:

What does it mean to sow generously? Compare and contrast generosity and sacrifice. What promises does this verse contain?

Day 2.

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 9:7

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

CONSIDER:

What does it mean to be a cheerful giver? How does this apply to giving of your time, talents and treasures?

Day 3.

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 9:8

And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

CONSIDER:

In your own life, or the life of someone you know, how have you seen this verse lived out?



Use these daily devotions to go deeper into this week's topic. Each day, read the verse given. Take your time. Ask God to speak to you through His word. Listen to what he wants to say to you, and respond to him as you meditate on the truths of Scripture.

DEVOTIONALS

Day 4.

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 9:9

As it is written: "They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor their righteousness endures forever."

CONSIDER:

What does it mean to scatter your gifts to the poor? How can you give not only your money, but also your time and your talents, when it comes to helping the poor? What promise does God make if we do so?

Day 5.

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 9:10-11

Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

CONSIDER:

What does this verse promise to those who make sacrifices to God? Why does God enrich us (verse 11)?

Day 6.

Use the following space to write any thoughts God has put in your heart and mind about the things we have looked at in this session and during your devotional time this week. You may also want to write down observations or questions that you'd like to share with the group at your next meeting.

SUMMARY:

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