

Renewal, renovation and peace

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I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom. 12:1-2, ESV)

It feels like we live in a world that is uncertain and in chaos. The stock market is falling, grocery shelves are empty, schools and restaurants are closing, churches are meeting virtually and we are isolated in our homes unsure of what will happen next. We find ourselves in a new (ab)normal; stressed, worried, fearful and wondering when it will all end.

Desperation can lead us to the one who can meet us at our deepest need. Let's take a minute to look at Romans 12:1.

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."

What might spiritual worship look like for us during these stressful times?

Paul appeals to us to present ourselves to God as a living sacrifice. Sacrifice in times as scary and uncertain as these can seem a bit jarring. What would it look like to seek God for what he has for our hearts and minds as we now have to work from home, manage kids who are out of school, create new schedules, battle loneliness and fear, worry about an unknown virus that could affect us or those we that love, and wrestle with anxiousness about the future? It can all feel very overwhelming.

In the midst of all of this uncertainty, what would it look like to present ourselves to God?

How might we offer our bodies and our lives as a sacrifice to God and therefore offer spiritual worship to him?

As we offer God our fears, our anxieties and our desire for stability in a time of craziness, we sacrifice our control to him. We are, in essence, offering praise to the God who is worthy of our praise, is faithful and good, and is in control of all things.

Paul goes on to state, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind."

Paul tells us to not be conformed to the world.

In what ways is the current chaos in our world affecting your mind?

Where do you sense God asking you to renew your mind?

The Greek word used in this verse for “renew” is the idea of “renovating” something. In other words, Paul is telling us to “renovate” or to “make new” our minds. Our thoughts need to be renovated, not just temporarily tweaked. We need to ask the Lord to renew/renovate our minds so we will trust him with our fears, our anxieties and every part of our life. Paul says through the “renovation” of our mind we will be transformed. Reading God’s word and meditating on his character is one way our minds can be renewed and our life transformed. When we fill our thoughts with truth it will affect our minds. Praying for our needs and the needs of others is another way we can “renovate” our minds and be transformed.

Without a doubt, the Lord is with us through these times. What an opportunity we have to move towards him in the midst of our fear, uncertainty, loneliness, sickness and sadness. As we lean into him, we will find him faithful to meet our every need.

How can we be a light to others in the midst of a time that seems so dark?

There are many ways to sacrificially extend “light,” love and help to those around us. We can also remember to pray for those who are on the front lines battling the coronavirus providing medical care, leadership and hope to those in need.

“Lord Jesus, I come to you now with my worry, my fear, my loneliness, my anxiety about a future that is unknown, and my desire to control things that are out of my control. Lord, thank you for being a good God who never leaves us or forsakes us. Continually remind us that you are still on the throne and in control. Help us to draw near to you. Reveal to us the areas of our life that need to be renewed and given to you as an offering of spiritual worship and praise. Renovate our minds so that we may be transformed by you. Lead and guide us through these uncertain times. Grant us peace that surpasses all understanding and comfort that only you can provide. In your Name. Amen.”

