

Consecration

How do I show gratitude to God for saving me

The desire to express your gratitude to God is a natural and good response to God's saving grace. The Bible says that the proper way to do this is to consecrate yourself to Him: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to present your bodies as a sacrifice—living, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1)¹.

What does it mean to present my body as a sacrifice?

A) Around four thousand years ago, God chose a man named Abraham to be the father of a group of people that would belong uniquely to God. These people were known as the Jews. God established a covenant with them and gave them a system of worship. Part of that worship system was the practice of sacrifices.²

B) A sacrifice consisted of an individual offering up something on an altar to God. Most sacrifices involved offering an animal (usually a sheep or bull) while others involved offering grain or barley. God intended the sacrifices to be physical object lessons that would help His people understand spiritual realities. One of the lessons they communicated was that God wants us to consecrate our lives to Him.

C) The sacrificial system is the context for the command in Romans 12:1. When you present your body to God as a sacrifice, you are yielding every part of yourself to God. This sacrifice is described as "living, holy and acceptable to God." It is "living" because you are spiritually alive in Christ; it is "holy" because you are separated from sin unto God; it is "acceptable" because God is pleased with the offering of what He has cleansed.

D) Presenting your body to God as a sacrifice is an act of submission and consecration. The motivation for this offering is the mercy of God—He graciously gave His only Son to die in your place. The proper response ("reasonable service") for you as a new convert is to willingly yield yourself to Him. You are to give up the right to have your own way and surrender unconditionally to God's will and purpose for your life.

What does a consecrated life look like? How do I put this into practice?

A) When you consecrate something, you set it apart from everything else to a special, specific purpose. For example, an athlete who competes in the Olympics dedicates (consecrates)

¹ This translation is a combination of the ESV, NIV and YLT.

² This worship system is described in detail in the Old Testament books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

himself to the training required to achieve that goal. It affects what he eats, how much he sleeps, where he goes, who he associates with and how he spends his time. In the same way, when you consecrate yourself to God, that decision affects everything you do.

B) The Bible gives us two practical directives for how to live a consecrated life. The first is to “consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (ESV, Romans 6:11) and the second is to “be filled with the Spirit” (ESV, Ephesians 5:18).

What does it mean to consider myself dead to sin and alive to God?

A) Romans 6 begins with a question: Should a Christian continue sinning after they are saved? The answer is emphatic—“By no means!” (ESV, Romans 6:1–2). Paul then goes on to explain why—as a Christian, you died to sin and are now alive to God in Jesus (Romans 6:3–10).

B) When Paul says that you are “dead to sin” he means that your relationship to sin has been severed—sin no longer has control over you. When you were a sinner, sin reigned over you and you were under its control. But as a Christian, the only control sin has in your life is the control that you allow it to have (see the lessons on Spiritual Warfare and Conquering Sinful Habits).

C) When Paul says that you are alive to God in Christ he means that you now have a relationship with God through your union with Christ. When you were a sinner, you were dead to God, that is, you were spiritually dead and had no relationship with God. But as a Christian, you are now united with Christ in His resurrection. Through Christ you are spiritually alive and have been adopted by God as His child (see the lesson on Salvation).

D) If you, as a Christian, are dead to sin and alive to God, then why are you told to “consider *NIV “count”] yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus”? The answer is that God wants you to live out in practice what is true of you in spirit—you are to demonstrate this truth (your new state) through action.

E) There are two parts to obeying this command. First, you are not to allow sin to have control over your attitudes and actions (Romans 6:12). This means resisting temptation and rejecting the influence of the world (Romans 12:2). Second, you are to yield yourself to the control of the Holy Spirit (Romans 6:13). This means reading and obeying God’s word and responding with a ‘Yes’ to the prompting of the Spirit.

What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?

A) The key to understanding what Paul means when he says to be “filled with the Spirit” is found in the contrast between the two parts of Ephesians 5:18. The full verse reads, “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit” (ESV).

B) Notice the contrast between being “drunk with wine” and being “filled with the Spirit.” When a person is drunk, we say that they are “under the influence.” What we mean is that their attitudes, actions and words are being influenced by the presence of alcohol in their bloodstream. They will say and do things while drunk that they would never do if they were sober. God does not want you to be under the influence of alcohol—instead, He wants you to be “filled with the Spirit.”

C) Being “filled with the Spirit” means that you are to be “under the influence” of the Holy Spirit. You are to be yielding to the Spirit and allowing Him to control your attitudes, actions and words. Just as a person is transformed by the influence of alcohol, you are to be transformed by the influence of the Holy Spirit. He will guide you to say and do things that are pleasing to God.

Are these actions something that I do just once?

A) No, these actions should become a daily part of your walk with God. However, as the journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step, so the consecrated life also begins with the first offering up of yourself to God.

B) Here is a suggested prayer for the first step of your journey in the consecrated life: “Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for saving me and giving me new life. I now give my life back to You and consecrate myself to You as a living, holy and acceptable sacrifice. I purpose to resist temptation and to say ‘Yes’ to the Holy Spirit. I also purpose to yield every area of my life to the control of the Spirit, and I will commit, through Your grace, to walk each day according to His guidance. In Jesus name, Amen.”

C) Here is a suggested daily prayer as you continue to resist temptation and yield yourself to the Holy Spirit: “Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace which gives me the desire and power to do your will. Today I choose to consecrate myself to you. Help me to resist temptation and to say ‘Yes’ to the Holy Spirit. Help me to live each moment under His influence. In Jesus name, Amen.”