

## August: What Does Walking in Love Look Like? Cresta McGowan



### 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(NIV)

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?” Isaiah 58:6 (NIV)

### Upward Gaze:

Dear Heavenly Father, be with me as I study your word today. Help me to understand the message of walking in love and what this means for my journey as a daughter of Christ.  
Amen

### Development of Theme:

What does it mean to be a living sacrifice to the Lord? There is the obvious physical aspects of our bodies - take good care of them, we only get the one - but being a living sacrifice is a spiritual focus. Let's journey through this idea to see what the Lord has truly called us to do.

I think “living sacrifice” is the challenging part of this paradox. When we think of sacrifice, we think of death, as in the Old Testament covenant when people sacrificed animals to the Lord for forgiveness of their sins. We must remember - we live under the new life of Jesus Christ! That should make us jump for joy. Gone is the shed blood of animals because of HIS holy sacrifice. Therefore, under Paul's urging us to be a living sacrifice, we should understand that true worship is a “dynamic expression of both the believer's faith and the community's faith” (“Bible Gateway”). We are called to express our joy of Christ through our actions, our intentions, and our fellowship with one another. This is walking with Christ as a living sacrifice.

Paul also reminds us that this demonstration of a living sacrifice should be holy and pleasing to God. How are we to be holy? We must set ourselves apart from the world, both in design and declaration. If we are to be holy in arrangement as a living sacrifice, our worship must mirror that which transcends an earthly approach. Hebrews 8:5 tells us “They serve at a sanctuary that is a **copy and shadow of what is in heaven.**” Our worship must reflect this as well.

How are we to do this in a world that glorifies a purely fabricated existence? We are to do this through the love we have for Christ in our hearts. Isaiah 58:6 specifically warns us about false fasting. In fact, the book of Isaiah, beginning with chapter one “[exposes] false religion that had the right form and ritual, but no sincerity. Chapter 58 presents the other side: the spiritual work God prefers. However, we must do this work with sincerity - we must be the living sacrifice as we walk with God in both deed and form. Works, no matter how good, cannot replace our spiritual walk with Christ. Some Israelites ignored the ethical side of the law and thought they could disobey God and simply be forgiven by going “through the motions,” prophets like Isaiah reminded them that God despises ritual done by insincere people. I am reminded of Claudius in

*Hamlet*, the now king who murdered his brother to take the crown. He knows he has done wrong, but he is unwilling to release what he's gained to be a living sacrifice of repentance. He says: "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below: Words without thoughts never to heaven go."

Words and actions cannot replace spiritual commitment, and spiritual commitment cannot replace words and actions. The two are inextricably entwined with one another. As are we. We must present ourselves in our walk with Christ as his living sacrifice embodying all that is in this: both the physical and the spiritual in sincerity and joy. We are to walk with both an outward and inward evidence of God's righteousness. We are to be his living sacrifice.

### **Inward Glimpse (Reflection):**

Read Romans 1:9 This scripture reminds us who we serve and of whom we must remember at all times.

- How am I treating my spiritual body?
- How can I better my walk with Christ through my walk in life?
- What choices can I make that nourish my soul in a healthy way?

### **Outward Glance (Discussion):**

Consider some ways your prayer group might encourage one another to grow our spiritual bodies. What supports do we need from each other to develop into the embodiments of Christ's love and desire for us?

### **One more peek:**

19 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; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

### **Works Cited**

"Bible Gateway." *Roman 12:1 NIV* - - Bible Gateway, Bible Gateway Blog, 2008.  
Zondervan. "Bible Gateway." *Isaiah 58:6 NIV* - - Bible Gateway, Bible Gateway Blog, 2011.