

Small Group Study Guide

Four Ways to Give God What He Really Wants

Based on Romans 12:1 • Duration: 75-90 minutes

Opening (10 minutes)

Welcome & Prayer

Begin with a welcoming atmosphere. Acknowledge that group members may be dealing with various challenges—physical, emotional, or spiritual—and that God meets us where we are.

Opening Prayer: *"Lord, thank You for bringing us together. Help us to be honest, encouraging, and open to what You want to teach us through Your Word and each other. Amen."*

Icebreaker Question

Share briefly: "What's one act of kindness someone showed you recently that really stood out?"

Introduction to the Topic (10 minutes)

Key Verse

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." (ESV)

Context Setting

- The "therefore" in Romans 12:1 points back to God's incredible mercy in Romans 11
- We don't sacrifice to earn God's love—we sacrifice because we already have it
- Living sacrifice = daily worship through how we treat others and live our lives

Discussion Starter (5 minutes)

"When you hear 'living sacrifice,' what comes to mind? What makes this different from other kinds of sacrifice?"

Study Section 1: The Sacrifice of Honor (15 minutes)

Scripture Focus

Romans 12:9-10 - "Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor." (ESV)

Teaching Point

Honoring others means treating people as worthy even when they haven't earned it. This challenges our natural tendency toward self-protection and "getting even."

Group Discussion Questions

1. **For Everyone:** What does "genuine love" look like in practice? How is it different from politeness?
2. **Application:** How can we "outdo one another in showing honor" in our current life circumstances?
3. **Honest Sharing:** Who in your life is hardest to honor? (No need to name names—just share what makes it difficult)

Supporting Scripture

1 Peter 2:17 - "Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor." (ESV)

Action Challenge

This week, choose one person to honor through a specific action. Share your plan with the group (if comfortable) for accountability.

Study Section 2: The Sacrifice of Humility (15 minutes)

Scripture Focus

Romans 12:3 - "For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has given." (ESV)

Teaching Point

Humility isn't thinking less of yourself—it's thinking of yourself accurately. Like body parts, we each have different functions but equal value.

Group Discussion Questions

1. **Reflection:** How does the "body" analogy in Romans 12:4-5 encourage you, especially if you feel your contributions are small?
2. **Personal:** What "messy work" that others might avoid could you embrace as service to God?
3. **Grace-filled:** For those dealing with limitations (health, energy, etc.), how can humility look different than for those with abundant physical resources?

Supporting Scripture

Romans 12:16 - "Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight." (ESV)

Encouragement for the Group

Remind the group that even prayer, encouragement, and listening are valuable "behind the scenes" ministry that requires humility.

Study Section 3: The Sacrifice of Generosity (15 minutes)

Scripture Focus

Romans 12:13 - "Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality." (ESV)

Teaching Point

Generosity isn't about wealth—it's about willingness. God asks for an open hand with whatever we have: time, skills, attention, prayer, or financial resources.

Group Discussion Questions

1. **Practical:** What are different ways people can be generous beyond financial giving?

2. **Personal:** How can someone practice hospitality even with limited energy or space?
3. **Encouragement:** Share about a time when someone's generosity (big or small) made a significant impact on you.

Supporting Scripture

2 Corinthians 9:7 - "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (ESV)

Sensitivity Note

Acknowledge that generosity looks different for everyone based on their current circumstances, health, and resources. Sometimes the most generous thing someone can offer is their presence and prayers.

Study Section 4: The Sacrifice of Obedience (15 minutes)

Scripture Focus

Philippians 2:8 - "And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." (ESV)

Teaching Point

Jesus modeled perfect obedience as an expression of love, not to earn it. Our obedience flows from gratitude for love already received.

Group Discussion Questions

1. **Application:** Where is God calling you to obedience even when it feels difficult?
2. **Honest Discussion:** How do we practice obedience when our emotions, health, or circumstances make it challenging?
3. **Hope-filled:** How does Jesus' example of obedience encourage us in our own struggles to follow God?

Supporting Scripture

John 14:15 - "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." (ESV)

Grace Reminder

Obedience isn't about perfection—it's about direction. God knows our limitations and meets us in our weakness.

Integration & Application (10 minutes)

Reflection Questions for the Group

1. Which of the four sacrifices (Honor, Humility, Generosity, Obedience) resonates most with you right now?
2. Which one feels most challenging in your current season of life?
3. How can this group support each other in living out these sacrifices?

Practical Next Steps

- Each person shares one specific way they want to practice sacrificial living this week
 - Exchange prayer requests related to these areas
 - Consider pairing up for accountability and encouragement
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Closing (5 minutes)

Final Encouragement

God isn't asking for perfection—He's asking for availability. Your current limitations don't disqualify you from serving Him; they simply shape how you serve. Even small acts of sacrifice become beautiful worship when offered with a willing heart.

Closing Prayer

Go around the circle allowing each person to share a one-sentence prayer of commitment or request for help in living sacrificially. End with a group prayer thanking God for His mercy that makes our response possible.

Take-Home Reminder

"We don't live for Him to earn His love—we live for Him because of His love."

Leader Notes

Time Management Tips

- Keep discussions moving but allow for meaningful sharing
- If someone dominates conversation, gently redirect: "Thank you for sharing. Let's hear from someone else."
- Have 2-3 backup questions ready if discussion stalls

Sensitivity Reminders

- Be aware that some may be struggling with depression, anxiety, or physical limitations
- Emphasize that sacrifice looks different for everyone based on their circumstances
- Avoid making assumptions about what people "should" be able to do
- Create space for honesty about struggles without pressure to "fix" everything

Prayer Requests

- Be prepared to pray for physical healing, emotional struggles, and family challenges
- Remember that invisible illnesses are real and deserve the same care as visible ones
- Close with assurance of God's love regardless of our ability to "perform"