



## Prayer Guide: Romans 12:1-2 (The “Altared” Life)

According to Merriam Webster online, “altar” is “often used figuratively to describe a thing given great or undue precedence or value especially at the cost of something else.”<sup>1</sup> For our purposes, “an altar is the place where man meets God and God meets man. Throughout Scripture, when man meets God at the altar, there is a change...”<sup>2</sup>

*“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.” Romans 12:1-2*

### 1. The call to the altar

We are called to live a life altered by our experience with God at His altar minute by minute by dying to self. We relinquish our ways to His, our will to His. The Message describes it this way:

*“So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.” Romans 12:1-2, MSG<sup>3</sup>*

#### Ask yourself:

1. After reading through the above versions of Romans 12:1-2, can I honestly say I give my everyday, ordinary life to God as an offering?
2. Do I fit seamlessly into the culture around me or does my “altared” life make me different?
3. How often do I respond instantly to God’s prompting?
4. In what ways does our culture drag me down to its level of immaturity?

#### Take action:

1. We have begun, as a church, to dig into prayer in a deeper way. Now is a good time to find a composition book, notebook, or journal to make notes, record prayers, and keep a list of your requests.

2. Write your answers to the above questions in the form of a prayer, especially if you find you fit into the culture a little too well, delay when God prompts, or are dragged into worldly immaturity by our dysfunctional culture.
3. Ask God to not only show you where your life needs alteration, but ask Him how to make those “altarations.”

## **2. Orthodoxy versus orthopraxy of the believer:**

Don't let those four-syllable words scare you. They have simple definitions. To be orthodox is to conform to an established mode of behavior or belief. Orthopraxy is the implementation of our beliefs through our actions. For believers, our *orthodoxy* and our *orthopraxy* must match. In other words, what we say we believe needs to match our actions.

### **Ask yourself:**

1. Do my actions confirm or deny my belief in the importance of presenting my body as a living sacrifice?
2. In what ways do I demonstrate (or fail to demonstrate) my willingness to meet God at the altar?
3. How often do I go to the altar with an expectation of holy change?
4. When was the last time I took my burdens, my sin to the altar and surrendered completely to God?

### **Take action:**

1. Ask the Lord to prompt you when He wants you to go forward to the altar during a service—not to be seen by others or receive any kind of praise but because He wants to meet with you there.
2. Make a commitment to go to the altar when prompted, write and date it.
3. Make an altar where you are. Kneel if you can, bow your head if you can't. Either way, be sure to bow your heart before the Lord. Ask Him to give you a glimpse of your heart as He sees it.
4. While you're at the altar, ask God to show you how well you are living Romans 12:1-2 and where He wants change to begin.

## **3. The Altar: What it requires and what it gives:**

The first altar in Scripture is seen in Genesis 4 although the word “altar” isn't used. You'll probably remember Cain and Abel brought their offerings to the Lord. Cain brought “an offering” from the crops he grew. Abel brought an offering from the firstlings of his flock and their fat portions.<sup>4</sup>

From the first, the altar was an ugly place of death, sacrifice, and blood, just as it was in the Garden of Gethsemane,<sup>5</sup> when Jesus sweated drops of blood in His distress. The altar is the place where we die to self. It brings us close and keeps us on our knees.

Our tendency is to avoid the altar, and the dying to self it demands, but it's not optional for the believer who wants to live a disciple life. An altar is an essential element of becoming a living sacrifice.

### **Ask yourself:**

1. Are my sacrifices to God more like Cain's or Abel's?
2. Which do I offer Jesus more of: my resources (money), time, or self-will?
3. If Jesus requires all out surrender, and He does, am I willing to give Him unlimited access to my time, my resources, my will?
4. Would I give up something I enjoy if He asked?

### **Take action:**

1. Ask God to reveal one "worldly" thing He wants you to surrender. Write it down in your journal and ask Him to help you die to self and surrender to Him.
2. Consider an area of your life "off limits" to God...maybe thoughts, books, TV, movies, music. What area is more like the culture than our King? Pray for a willingness to surrender in that area in order to move closer to our Lord.

## **4. Transformed:**

The word translated as "transformed" is *metamorphoō* and means to be changed into something new or different, just as a caterpillar is transformed into a butterfly. This word is a present tense, passive voice, imperative mood, plural number.<sup>6</sup> The description is simpler than it sounds.

Transformation (**present tense**) happens immediately. It's not something that will happen only when we get to heaven. When we ask God for transformation, we are transformed immediately.

Transformation (**passive voice**) happens *to us* by the power of the Holy Spirit. We can't transform ourselves.

Transformation (**imperative mood**) isn't optional; it's required for the believer.

Transformation (**plural number**) isn't one-and-done. We go to the altar more than once because we need ongoing, lifelong transformation.

### **Ask yourself:**

1. When people look at my life, do they see someone transformed by the power of God?
2. In what way have I allowed ongoing transformation? Have I become more and more like Jesus as time has passed?
3. Do I need a trip to the altar to meet with God in anticipation of further transformation?

### **Take action:**

1. Pray a simple pray of surrender. Ask God to make you more like Jesus today than you were yesterday. Pray that same pray of surrender tomorrow and every day.

### **Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/altar>

<sup>2</sup> Noland, S. Sermon, "Altared." 11/7/21. <https://www.facebook.com/HopeChurchTupelo/videos/210920644451301>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=romans+12%3A1-2&version=MSG>

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 4:2-5

<sup>5</sup> Luke 22:39-44

<sup>6</sup> "Romans 12 (KJV) - I beseech you therefore, brethren,." Blue Letter Bible. Web. 8 Nov, 2021. <[https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rom/12/1-2/t\\_conc\\_1058002](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rom/12/1-2/t_conc_1058002)>.

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