

# Sermon 5

## Public Campus Life in Action

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**Main Text:** Romans 12:1–2

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

### Introduction

A transformed life on campus begins with personal devotion and sacrificing everything for Christ, resulting in a purposeful mission.

Life on a public campus is vibrant, diverse, and often filled with both opportunity and distraction. As students and staff, we are constantly shaped by culture, expectations, social pressure, and ideology. In Romans 12:1–2, Paul calls believers to live *differently* – to be *transformed* rather than *conformed*.

Let's explore how campus life can become a platform for devotion and a launchpad for mission.

### 1. Devotion and Surrender as the Starting Point (Romans 12:1)

#### Romans 12:1-2: A Sacrificial Living

*"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice..."*

What is this week about? It is a week where we come together, not to find out what He will give us, but what we will give to Him - total commitment, "our reasonable service." A week to recommit to obedience, love, and devotion to God—worship to Jesus Christ, not what He gives to us, but what we will give back to Him. Today's scripture reading will help spell out what Paul means when he says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God..." He is urging us—you and me, to present our bodies to God. The act of intelligent worship is us giving ourselves to God. So, our Christian journey is not just about what we can receive from God but about giving back to God everything. Scripture reminds us that the Christian journey is about worship—we are priests bringing sacrifices (offerings) to God. So, here we have Paul using sacrificial language to encourage and remind us that our gift to God is our body, which is our LIVING sacrifice by the mercy of God. Not some dead sacrificial animal that we give on our own, but instead, we present our bodies to Christ as a living sacrifice, through the mercies of God. It is by the mercies of God that we are saved. Placing ourselves WILLINGLY on the Altar as a sacrifice to Him. *When you have time, I encourage you to read Romans 1-11, which is primarily doctrinal. It will give you a better understanding of why Paul says that presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice is a very reasonable offering to God. It is our spiritual act of worship. This is the foundation of the sanctification process, giving ourselves to God.*

- a) **Devotion is a daily surrender:** Not a one-time act but a living, ongoing offering. Daniel and his friends thrived in the University of Babylon not by blending in but by beginning each day with an unwavering commitment to God.
- b) **Campus culture promotes self-expression,** but God calls for self-sacrifice – not in repression, but in dedication to Him.
- c) **Practical application:** Prioritize personal devotion time—prayer, Bible study, fasting—even amidst academic pressure. In essence, *Back to the Altar!!* Live at the Altar! [www.backtothealtar.org](http://www.backtothealtar.org). *Back to the Altar* is a global call from the Seventh-day Adventist Church inviting everyone to return to daily personal worship with God. Many are missing the deep spiritual connection they truly need in a world overwhelmed by busyness and media distractions. Following Jesus' example—who prioritized time alone with His Father—believers are urged to begin, live, and end each day in communion with God. Wherever we choose to meet with Him becomes our Altar. This appeal is for anyone seeking a closer walk with God, preparing for Christ's return, and wanting to lead others to do the same.
- d) **SOP Quotation for Bible Study:** “There is nothing more calculated to strengthen the intellect than studying the Scriptures. No other book is so potent to elevate the thoughts, to give vigor to the faculties, as the broad, ennobling truths of the Bible. If God's Word were studied as it should be, people would have a breadth of mind, a nobility of character, and a stability of purpose rarely seen in these times.” (Ellen White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 90)
- e) **SOP Quotation for Prayer:** “And if the Saviour of men, the Son of God, felt the need of prayer, how much more should feeble, sinful mortals feel the necessity of fervent, constant prayer.” Ellen White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 93.4)

## 2. The Renewal of the Mind (Romans 12:2a)

*"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..."*

This is a continuation of verse 1. Here, Paul tells us not to masquerade as people of the world. We should not pattern ourselves after the world or become its victims. Instead, as an act of intelligent worship, we do not conform, but we are transformed. Do not let what's happening on your college campus squeeze you into its world...be not conformed. But be TRANSFORMED. Think of a caterpillar and its transformation process... Think about the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly. Known as [metamorphosis](#), it is a fascinating biological process involving four distinct stages: egg, larva (caterpillar), pupa (chrysalis), and adult (butterfly). This is what we go through when we allow the Holy Spirit to transform us. Public campuses are fertile grounds for intellectual growth but also secular worldviews, hence the need to be rooted in Jesus lest wrong worldviews permeate our carnal nature.

- a) We need the *Word of God* to anchor our thoughts – it's the lens through which we filter everything else.
- b) Allow the Holy Spirit to shape your thoughts, desires, and decisions through Scripture.
- c) Meditate on the Word. Find a quiet place and meditate on what you have read. He studied the Word of God, and His hours of greatest happiness were found when He could turn aside from the scene of His labors to go into the fields, to meditate in the quiet valleys, to hold communion with God on the mountainside, or amid the trees of the forest. The early morning often found Him in some secluded place, meditating, searching the Scriptures, or in prayer. With the voice of singing, He welcomed the morning light, with songs of thanksgiving, He cheered His hours of labor and brought heaven's gladness to the toil-worn and disheartened. Ellen White. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 52.

- d) Memorize Scripture. Memorizing Scripture helps us know God more deeply, live more wisely, and love more fully. It places truth in our hearts so we can carry God's presence wherever we go. "We must be better acquainted with our Bibles. We might close the door to many temptations if we commit to memory passages of Scripture." [\*The Review and Herald\*, May 13, 1884](#)

**Challenge:** What are you allowing to shape your worldview – God's truth or campus trends? Are you getting squeezed in by the pressures on campus?

### 3. Discernment that Leads to Mission (Romans 12:2b)

*"...Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will."*

The first thing you should meditate on, first thing in the morning, is the WORD OF GOD. And the last thing you should meditate on at night is the WORD OF GOD. This is how you will filter everything God wants for your life. Filter it through the WORD OF GOD.

So, search your heart and meditate on this WORD that you are hearing, and ask God to show you what part of your heart or your life you need to put on the Altar now. The Holy Spirit is here to help you discern what you need to do. I wish we had time to explore that now, but we will look at the Holy Spirit a little more when we delve into Spiritual Gifts. The Christian life is based on thinking, not doing. Feelings will change, and feelings do not renew the mind. We flip from one thing to the next, looking for a good feeling. A transformed life is not based on feelings or doing; it is based on thinking. I am not saying God is against feelings or doing; actually, God is into feeling and doing. He tells us to be doers of the Word. However, what I am saying is that feelings and doing are insufficient foundations for the Christian life. The first question to ask is not how do I feel or what do I do, but instead, it is, WHAT IS TRUE HERE? WHAT DOES GOD'S WORD SAY? This comes about by the renewing of your mind. Think and test everything and have it approved.

So, how do I get transformed? Paul, in 2 Corinthians 3:18, says, *"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."* How can I get this transformation? By beholding the glory of the Lord, with personal communion with Him. The Word of God must have a very high place in your personal communion with Jesus Christ. You cannot have personal fellowship with Jesus and not be transformed by it. When that personal fellowship is based on the Word of God, not your feelings, you will see the transformation we are talking about. The Holy Spirit does the changing.

What is stopping you from having a personal relationship with Him? It is simple but not easy. But if you do it, God will reward it. We read it at the end of verse 2: *"...Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will."* You will be able to discern God's will for your life. You can know and live out God's will through a transformed life in Christ. You can live a life that will demonstrate what is the perfect and acceptable will of God. Just keep that fellowship with Christ going. God is asking for a decision. Will you make it today?

### BREAKOUT GROUP DISCUSSION

- A devoted and renewed student or staff member doesn't just survive campus life – they step into purpose. How can this be achievable?
- The mission is not just preaching; it is living out God's will in the classroom, the dorm, and on social media. In what practical ways can we embody God's mission beyond preaching – specifically in everyday settings like the classroom, dorm, or on social media?

- c) The Holy Spirit guides us into the mission, which involves finding those who need encouragement, organizing campus ministries, starting study groups, and serving in practical ways. How can we become more attentive to the Holy Spirit's guidance in recognizing the needs around us and taking action through ministry, study groups, or acts of service?
- d) Read the following statements from the Spirit of Prophecy and respond to the question:
- o All heaven is waiting for men and women through whom God can reveal the power of Christianity." Ellen White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 93.
  - o "A true, lovable Christian is the most powerful argument that can be advanced in favor of Bible truth. Such a man is Christ's representative. His life is the most convincing evidence that can be borne to the power of divine grace." Ellen White, *In Heavenly Places*, p. 318.
  - o The badge of *Christianity* is not an outward sign, not the wearing of a cross or a crown, but it is that which reveals the union of man with *God*. Ellen White, *Ministry of Healing*, p. 470.
  - o Question: People sometimes get tired of hearing sermons. They want to see sermons. Be the difference!! What you profess to be and what you do must be congruent. Your profession will have a significant influence on secular minds. You may be the only Bible someone ever reads. Someone is watching you. Someone may say in heaven, "I am here because of you." What does it mean to 'be the sermon in today's world, and how can our daily actions reflect the true power of Christianity to those who may never enter a church?

### Conclusion:

- The world needs students who are set apart – transformed, not conformed.
- On public campuses, your devotion is your protest, your mind/heart is the epicenter of the great controversy, your campus is your mission field, and your life is your testimony.
- Let's not blend in – let's live boldly! We are chosen to stand out, to reflect a higher standard, and to be a living contrast in a world that has lost its way.

### Appeal:

In these two verses (Romans 12:1, 2), we see Paul begging us to make an intelligent decision to follow Jesus. In light of everything he has said in the first eleven chapters of Romans, Paul is saying, *I am making an appeal to your will. I beg you, I beseech you, I implore you brethren, in light of everything God had done, all the mercies He has shown you, past, present, and future mercies....PLEASE PRESENT YOURSELF AS A LIVING SACRIFICE. And this is your reasonable service.* Present yourself as a living sacrifice now!

Will you present your life today as a living sacrifice?

Will you commit to daily devotion and study of the Word?

Will you allow the Holy Spirit to lead you into mission – right where you are?

If this is your commitment, please stand with me as we pray.