

What do you mean “DEDICATE your life to Jesus”? (Romans 12: 1-10)

Merv Coats, 1 Oct 2017

Hi I'm Merv Coates. My wife Adie & I have many **happy memories** of times with you at Mairangi Bay. We so much **appreciate** this church where people from all **nationalities** can feel **at home & come to know Jesus**.

I was **discussing Jesus & Christianity** with some uni students, & **one said, “I heard some of your guys talk about “dedicating” their life to God - What’s that about? How does that work?”**

I wonder how **you** would answer that question??

To help **answer** this question, I'd like us to look at **Romans 12**, which starts like this: Would you please **READ WITH ME** what it says from the screen: TOGETHER .. **Romans 12:1** “So then my friends, because of all God has done for you, I appeal to you to offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, **dedicated** to His service and pleasing to Him.”

Some translations say, “Give **back** to God all you **are**, and all you **have**”. + **WHY** do we do this? Verse 1 says: “because of **all GOD has done for you**.”

-> I understand your pastor has been taking you thru this book of **Romans**, which teaches us so much about **God’s kindness towards** us. So here in chapter 12 Paul appeals to us: “**because** of all God has done for you, I appeal to you to offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, **dedicated** to His service and pleasing to Him.” In other words, “Offer yourself **back** to God”. “**Dedicate** yourself to Him!”

So, what does it **mean** to **DEDICATE your life to God?**

One of the most helpful parallels is **taking Marriage vows**.

I remember the day I was married to Adie. V nervous☺.

The pastor asked us an important **question**: “Do you Merv Coates, take Adrienne to be your wife, to have and to hold from this day forward? That you will love her, honour, cherish and keep her, in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others keep yourself only for her, as long as y both shall live? If so, please answer I DO”

AND I said YES! And so did she☺ And this dedication / commitment changed both of our lives in wonderful ways.

But since the day of our marriage, it has been important to **REAFFIRM** our **love & commitment** to each other - **many times**.

I remember an occasion when we REAFFIRMED our vows **publically**. It was at conclusion of a **Marriage Enrichment weekend**. We had opportunity to **review** the vows that we had originally made, and to say them again - publically. Along with some other couples, we faced each other, **joined hands** and reaffirmed that we **still** love each other and are committed to each other. You could say we “**re-dedicated**” ourselves to each other.

In the same way, we sometimes need to “re-fresh” our dedication to GOD.

So, what does it mean to **DEDICATE your life to Jesus?**

- 1. The 1st key. - Surrender yourself & each area of your life to God. (Rom 12.1) Make yourself available for Him to use.**

A similar verse in Romans (6.13) puts it like this: “Don't let any part of your life be used to do evil. Instead, **surrender** yourselves totally to God. You have been brought from death to life. So **give every part of yourself to God** & all your abilities as **instruments** for good.”

Our bodies are instruments through which God wants to work in the world. This can only happen if every area of our lives is surrendered to God, as an act of worship & dedication.

- Think of your **LIFE RELATIONSHIPS** - friendships. Girlfriends/ boyfriends. Husbands/wives.

The Bible says, “Before you make decisions about your relationships, present your relationships to God. “

- Think of y life **AMBITIONS** – hopes /dreams/goals. Offer your **ambitions** to God as an act of worship.
- Think of your **ABILITIES** - talents with hands, speech, mathematics, cooking, making money, singing, Training others. + what the Bible calls Your “spiritual gifts”.

We have the privilege of surrendering all these to God. So He can use these gifts in His wonderful purposes. This is the most amazing PRIVILEGE, because you will discover that GOD can make more of your life than you can!

2. Now notice **our 2nd dedication key: Let God transform your thinking.**

Please READ with me Verse 2 and 3: “Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by **changing the way you think.**”

This a key way God transforms us - by changing the way we **THINK** - about **life & about GOD & about ourselves.**

This is a process Paul calls “**renewing** your mind.” If you walk close to Jesus, God will change your heart from the inside, so you learn to **think HIS way** about all areas of your life.

You will see **change** taking place in your **old habits of living / thinking / behaviour.** Some things that **were** important to you before won't seem so important any longer.

You will have new **attitudes**, new **motivation** & new **perspectives.**

3. Now here's the 3rd Key: Dedicate your **GIFTS and talents and skills** to God's service.

The Bible says that God gives to each follower of Jesus special **strengths/ gifts that enable you to amazingly bless** other people. Let's **READ** this **TOGETHER** from verse 4:

“⁴Just as our bodies have many parts and **each part has a special function**, ⁵so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

⁶In his grace, God has given us **different gifts for doing certain things well.** So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. ⁷If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. ⁸If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give **generously.** If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility **seriously.** And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it **gladly.**”

These verses remind us that **God has a special role** for you to play. And IF you are to play your part, God is calling you to **dedicate** to Him **all** your abilities, including *spiritual gifts, talents & acquired skills.*

Next, He doesn't want us to be **boastful** & proud about our abilities, but verse 3 says we are to “Have an honest **evaluation** of your capabilities.”

“**An honest evaluation**”. Neither **underestimating or over-estimating** your role. Your **pastors/ leaders** can help you with more detail on this, but let me suggest 3 questions you can **ask yourself** to get the ball rolling:

As you **pray** about how to show God's love, which ways of serving are you **drawn** to?

In other words, where do you feel a **strong desire** in your heart to help? Because if you are walking close to Christ, you will find that the **desires** you have come more & more from Him.

In the ways you serve **at present**, what really seems to **bless** and **encourage** other people?

The important thing for today's message is to dedicate all your capabilities and personal resources to Him.

Romans **6.13** covers the whole range of abilities when it says:

“Offer all your capabilities ... to God ... as instruments for Good.”

Closely related to that is our 4th key:

4. - Serve with spiritual enthusiasm.

Do you know, t. ATTITUDE with which we do things is just as important as WHAT we do. Some people say they are serving God, but it seems like it's a **terrible burden** ☹. They're **miserable** about it - not cheerful. ☹. But what does Romans 12 tell us?:

“When you give **Give generously**; When you show **kindness** do it “**gladly / cheerfully**.” When you lead others, **lead diligently ...**” **In other words**, exercise your gifts & abilities with **enthusiasm** 😊.

One thing I love about **Mairangi BCC** is that so many have this **positive attitude**. They **LOVE** serving God. They serve others even when at times it's **inconvenient**. I tell you GOD is going to **bless others thru you**, as you live this way. The seeds you are planting will certainly bring **fruit** in God's time.

So the spirit of Paul's instruction here is “Serve enthusiastically. Work **hard at your ministries, whatever they are, great or small**.” =>**Do your preparation**. Put in the **hard yards**, and your ministries will flourish. 1 Timothy 4.14 “Do not neglect your gift.... Practise these duties, devote yourself to them, Let your progress be evident to all.”

Finally, let the LOVE of God flow thru you to others. In other words, Commit yourself, in your daily life, to being a loving difference-maker. An **agent** of God's love.

Romans 12 has a whole section on this, but I'll just read Verses 9 and 10:

9Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. 10Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring others.”

He's talking about people who **let God fill them with His love for others**. **It's not just their own love**. - **GOD's love flows** thru them. I like **being** with people who live like that. I want to be more like that, yeah?! 😊

[These people are becoming more like **JESUS, the one we are dedicated to!**]

Let me close with a true story. This story really touched my heart:

It's told by Tony Campolo – a Christian sociologist, who has a special interest in what changes people;

There was a **school teacher** named **Miss Thompson**. In her class there was a boy named **Teddy Stallard** who just didn't seem interested in school. Usually he had a blank look on his face. He couldn't concentrate very well. When she spoke to Teddy, he usually only gave one-word answers. His clothes were musty and his hair was unkempt. He wasn't an attractive boy & most teachers found him hard to love.

When she marked his schoolwork, she found herself putting big X's next to many answers, & almost enjoyed doing it, as if somehow he deserved everything he got, and it served him right. She should have known better, because she had Teddy's records and she knew more about his **difficult home** life and background than she cared to admit.

Eg. His 1st Grade report said :“Teddy shows promise with his work and attitude, but poor home situation.”

2nd Grade: “Teddy could do better. Mother seriously ill. He receives little help at home.

3rd grade: Teddy is a good boy, but too serious. He is a slow learner. His mother died this year.

4th Grade: Teddy is very slow, but well behaved. His father shows no interest.

Christmas came, & the boys & girls in Miss Thompson's class bought her Christmas presents. They **piled their presents** on her **desk & crowded around** to see her **open** them. Among the presents, there was one from Teddy Stallard. She was **surprised** that he had bought her a gift, but he had.

Teddy's gift was wrapped in **brown paper** and was held together with sticky tape. On the paper were written the simple words, "**For Miss Thompson, from Teddy.**" When she opened Teddy's present, out fell a cheap and **gaudy** coloured glass **bracelet**, with half the stones missing, & a bottle of **cheap perfume**.

The other children began to **giggle** over Teddy's gifts, but Miss Thompson at least had enough sense to silence them immediately. She put on the bracelet & dabbed some of the perfume on her wrist. Holding her wrist up for the other children to smell, she said, "Doesn't it smell lovely?" So the children agreed with their teacher that it was beautiful.

At the end of the day, when school was over & the other children had left, Teddy **lingered** behind. He came slowly over to her desk & said softly, "Miss Thompson ... Miss Thompson, **you smell just like my mother ... and her bracelet looks real pretty on you too.** I'm glad you liked my presents."

When Teddy left, Miss Thompson got down on her **knees** & asked God to forgive her.

The next day when the children came to school they were **welcomed** by a new teacher. Miss Thompson had become a different person. She was no longer **just** a teacher; she had become an **agent of God - a Difference maker**.

She was now a **truly dedicated person** - committed to loving her children & doing things for them that would live on after her. She began to **pray** for the children in her class. She helped all the children, but especially the slow ones, & esp Teddy Stallard.

By the end of that school year, Teddy showed dramatic improvement. He had caught up with most of the students & was even ahead of some.

She didn't hear from Teddy for a long time. Then one day she received a note that read:

"Dear Miss Thompson: I wanted you to be the first to know. I will be graduating second in my class. Love Teddy Stallard."

4 years later, another note came:

"Dear Miss Thompson, They just told me I would be graduating 1st in my class. I wanted you to be first to know. The university has not been easy, but I liked it. Love Teddy Stallard."

And 4 years later: Dear Miss Thompson

"As of today, I am Theodore Stallard, M.D. How about that? **I'm a doctor!!** I wanted you to be the first to know. I am getting married next month, the 27th to be exact. I want you to come and sit where my mother would have sat if she were still alive. You are the only family I have now: Dad died last year. Love Teddy Stallard."

Miss Thompson went to that wedding and sat **where Teddy's mother would have sat**. She sat there because **God had worked in her heart** & she had done something for Teddy that he could never forget." 😊

Today please let me **encourage** each of you.

The **BEST THING** / the best thing you can ever do with your life – is to DEDICATE it fully to JESUS. If you do make that dedication, God will transform your heart & your whole life, and make you into a person who will honour GOD & bless other people in life-changing ways, like Teddy Stallard's teacher.

I really encourage you to **come back to God** today, & **dedicate** your life fully to Him.

If you want someone to **pray with you** concerning this decision, please come down here afterwards, and I know the pastors / leaders would love to pray with you.

Today can be a turning point for you. Please **don't miss this opportunity** to tell God you want to live for Him.

In Jesus' name, AMEN.

OPTIONAL PRAYER (Or Warren Payne may lead in Prayer):

Lord You know our hearts. You read us like a book. Today we really want to give our lives back to You. Please take us & make us the kind of people you want us to be. And please make us into loving difference-makers like Teddy Stallard's teacher. In Jesus name. AMEN.