



# Links Players

## WHY AM I HERE? 5: LIVING SACRIFICIALLY

*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. (Romans 12:1, ESV)*

CAN YOU IMAGINE THE SACRIFICES REGULAR GOLFERS MAKE to hit their drives 20 yards farther or knock five strokes off their index? You don't have to imagine, all you have to do is get online and search for "more golf distance" and you'll find gadgets, lessons, and equipment galore. You too can buy a better game!

Or maybe not. The right equipment will make a difference, and some gadget out there may address your exact swing flaw. Generally speaking, though, really improving anything in golf takes sacrifice. Lessons, equipment, and talent will all help, but giving yourself to the game is required to become the best you can be.

That is a big commitment, and most of us won't make it. We love the game, but not enough to sacrifice other things. Like relationships and jobs, for instance. What about sacrificing ourselves not to golf, but to God? Do we love him that much?

In the previous 11 chapters of Romans, Paul wrote a marvelous and rich theological treatise. It is deep, rational, and not for the faint of heart. He built up to a kind of semi-climax in chapter 11 when he wrote about the mystery of salvation and the amazing mercy of God.

Then, by those mercies of God, he appealed to the Christians in Rome—and by extension he appeals to us—to present their bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God. The old covenant required the sacrifice of animals set apart (holy) for that purpose. Now we can present ourselves.

This is not a legal sacrifice, as Jesus took care of that, but a far more glorious living sacrifice. That is to say, we offer ourselves to God as long as we live. Jesus said something quite similar in Luke 9:23, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

Learning to live sacrificially is far more challenging—and far more rewarding—than improving at golf, a very hard game. You can give yourself to God and to golf, though, and to family and to work, but only if God is in all ways first. And so I appeal to each of you, my friends, do that. Present yourself as a living sacrifice.

**Opening questions** What kinds of sacrifices have you made to improve your golf game? What worked the best? What is the strangest golf game improvement thing you've seen?

**READING** Romans 12:1-2; Luke 9:23-25; Hebrews 13:15-16

### Sacrifice (Romans 12)

Have you ever sacrificed yourself to God then crawled down off the altar? Why is giving up ourselves to God so challenging? How is it worship? What is the "renewal of your mind," and how do you do that?

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### Your cross (Luke 9)

How are "take up your cross" (v. 23) and "living sacrifice" the same? What image does the phrase "take up your cross" bring to mind? Why did Jesus need to give the warning he gave in verses 24 and 25?

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### Do good (Hebrews 13)

What is a "sacrifice of praise?" The writer says that doing good and sharing are also sacrifices that please God (v. 16). How are they different than the "sacrifice of praise? Is there a practical side to sacrifice? If so, what is it?

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