

A Sacrificial Life

Built Different #2 - Jonathan Minter - June 7, 2026 - Philippians 2:5-11

INTRO: Good morning church! Today we are continuing our new sermon series entitled “Built Different.” Those in Christ have lives that are “Built Different” and stand out from the patterns, priorities, and culture of this world as their lives are built on Christ alone.

Our series is based around six (6) concepts of a life built different in Jesus from Romans 12:

Series Theme: Romans 12:1-2 (ESV) 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. ² 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.

Last week we learned about what it looks like “present your bodies” to the Lord by following Jesus who called us to deny ourselves, take up our cross daily and follow him. Today, we will hyper focus on the words “Living Sacrifice” in 12:1...

Now stop and think about those 2 words together for just a moment. “Living Sacrifice” - that’s an oxymoron isn’t it? I think Paul had a bit of smirk on his face when he wrote that, he may have chuckled a light chuckle.

There’s that old joke: “The trouble with living sacrifices is that they keep climbing down off the altar.”

So what in the world does Paul mean that we should be a living sacrifice? How do you even do that?

Need: There are two questions that tend to drive a lot of our activity in life: What does a successful life look like? And how can I become a successful person?

Most likely, your parents had answers to those questions and the way they answered them dictated much of what your life looked like growing up. And now, you have answers to these questions, and those answers are driving you forward.

If you say, as the world does, that a successful life looks like financial independence, a degree of comfort that isolates you from any potential risk, and the means to entertain yourself, then you are going to answer that second question - how can I become a successful person? - with a life focused on your education, job opportunities, amassing wealth and possessions and entertainment.

Or, if you say, as the world does, that a successful life looks like a self-directed life, a life where you are most authentically yourself, then you are going to answer that second question - how can I become a successful person? - with a life focused on, well, yourself. And this I think is one of the cruel weights the world puts on young people these days - an assumption that you don’t actually know who you are, you can’t trust anyone else, and you must discover who you really are. And that the way you become a successful person is to follow your feelings and desires, wherever those might take you.

Trans: But Jesus gives us a different answer to those questions. Jesus says that a successful life looks like a life of sacrifice. And how can we become a successful person? Well, he made a way for us and he showed us the way. His life of other-centered self-sacrificial love both made a way for us and showed us the way. Jesus didn’t climb his way to success, he descended, stepped down, to success. If you want to follow Jesus, that’s your path too.

BODY: Paul taught the Philippian church that the path to success was to live self-sacrificially like Christ. We can receive the reward God promises us when we follow Christ’s example of self-sacrifice. How do we follow Christ’s example of self-sacrifice so that we can receive God’s reward? The text gives us 3 downward steps of Christ’s self-sacrifice for us to follow.

Read text: Philippians 2:5-11 (ESV) ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled

A Sacrificial Life

Built Different #2 - Jonathan Minter - June 7, 2026 - Philippians 2:5-11

himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

FOLLOWING CHRIST'S EXAMPLE OF SELF-SACRIFICE, WE CAN:

1. Receive Christ's identity

EXP: (5-7a, 9) "have this mind among yourselves" "though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself" "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name"

Paul is writing this letter to a church that he helped establish in the ancient city of Philippi. And if you read the portion of the letter leading up to the passage we are in today, you'll see that he is calling on this church to serve one another in love, to be unified together, to get focused on the mission of God's church and his redemptive plan in the world. But they can't do that unless they get "built different."

Until they stop acting like the world around them, they won't be different at all. He wants them to be **"blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world."** (2:15)

But he doesn't just give them a list of do's and don'ts, or guardrails. He wanted to saturate them in the character of Jesus. If we are going to be "built different," we must follow Jesus. As we read in our scripture today, Christ ended up "highly exalted" and with a "name above every name." But how did he get there? Did he do it by military force and violence? Did he call down angels from heaven to enforce his will against an unwilling people? Did he do it by amassing wealth and social and political influence? No, he stooped down. He kept descending until he reached the very lowest point, all in obedience to his Father. Let's trace his steps down...

Philippians 2:6-11 is known commonly as "The Christ Hymn," because it is thought that this was a commonly sung hymn, or at least a variation of a hymn sung in the early church. Paul is trying to help them understand how to relate to each other, and maybe he's saying, "You know that song ya'll sing all the time about Jesus? You should take that to heart..."

Christ's first step downward was to make a careful consideration of both his status as God, but also his identity as the Messiah - the one who would step into the world he created to redeem it. He "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped."

Form (morphē) - He was in the "form of God" (*morphe theos*)

Equality (isos) - He had "equality with God" (*isos theos*)

Regard (hēgeomai) - Consider, deem, think (same word as ruler, but the idea when used of yourself is that you have made a decision to rule your thoughts in a certain way)

Grasped (harpagmos) - The only time this word is used in the NT, but comes from the root of harpazo, which means to snatch. So here the idea is that he didn't hold on tight to his form or equality with God.

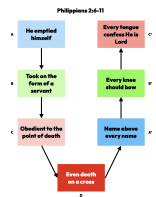
Emptied (kenōō) - Made null, voided, rendered useless. He rendered himself void and useless.

(Side note of trinitarian theology here, but this does not mean he stopped being God, it means that he willingly rendered that status as null and void for a time, there are deep waters here)

A Sacrificial Life

Built Different #2 - Jonathan Minter - June 7, 2026 - Philippians 2:5-11

Christ emptied himself, but it didn't end there. This section of Scripture is commonly seen as what is called a "chiasm" - or a way to structure poetry or what some would call "exalted prose" so it takes on more substance because of its form. This chiasm ends up looking like a "V." Christ descends, descends, descends to the point of death on a cross, but then he is exalted, exalted, exalted. Chiasms are used all over the place in the Bible, I would say mostly in the Old Testament, but whenever you see parallelism, you can start to look at it and say, okay, I think I see a pattern here.



So the first part of the descent is here: he emptied himself.

But then look at the 2nd half of this passage where the exaltation happens. He empties himself, but what does he get in return? "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name."

The first half of the passage is Jesus acting, the second half of the passage is the Father acting in response. Jesus steps down, the Father lifts him up. Jesus emptied himself, the Father gave him the name that is above every name.

ARG: Paul had to do some work on this himself. Just in the next chapter of Philippians after our reading today, you see that he has done some work on this. He struggled with the identity he had before Jesus found him and got to a different place. And for Paul, his identity work was around the things he used to consider strengths.

Philippians 3:7-9 (NIV) But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ.

Is it our responsibility to exalt ourselves? No. What is our responsibility? Like Jesus, empty ourselves. Stop worrying about protecting our name, our identity, our rights, our equality. Empty yourself and receive from him His identity for you. Now, you might say, "well, do I get a name that is above every name?" No, but check this out, you are going to get a new name:

Revelation 2:17 (ESV) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.

You will receive a new name directly from Jesus, and it is yours and yours only, known only to you and your Savior Jesus. I'll take that over the name my parents gave me or any name anyone wants to call me.

The core identity for a follower of Jesus is that you are a child of God,

ILL: I've been on staff at our church since 2012. Before that, I started my career in IT. I was doing web development in the late 90's, back when most people had dial-up internet still and there was a raging war between those who loved Netscape Navigator and those who loved Internet Explorer.

So during my formative years as an adult, starting my career, I was "the IT guy." In a lot of ways, I still am. What you do get so lodged in your head as your identity, doesn't it? I mean, I've been working at the church now longer than I was doing IT, but I still wrestle with whether I'm "Pastor Jonathan" or "IT guy Jonathan." As time is going on and I'm hopefully growing, it turns out neither of those identities really matter. I'm just trying to learn to live as a child of God, called to join him on his mission, living into the new name God is giving me.

A Sacrificial Life

Built Different #2 - Jonathan Minter - June 7, 2026 - Philippians 2:5-11

Or another way we form our identities is with our bodies - how we are embodied in the world. When you grow up like me, most of the time one of the shortest and smallest people in your grade, that gets lodged in your brain too. Just the other week, we got a delivery from UPS here at the church, and I offered to help the UPS guy bring it in. He looks back at me and says, "It's got some weight to it..."

But part of maturing is realizing that you are not your body, you *have* a body. But you do not *have* a soul, you *are* a soul.

APP: Who are you looking to for your identity?

Friend, there is a name that Jesus wants to give you, an identity that only he can give you. But first you must empty yourself.

That name that you have been calling yourself because of your failures? Empty yourself of that name.

Or maybe you've been spending all your time trying to make a name for yourself based on your achievements or success at work, or the status you are trying to earn by your possessions and what others will think of you. Empty yourself of that name.

That name someone gave you by wounding you. Maybe a parent, sibling, a spouse, a former spouse. You got wounded and you thought that was your name. Empty yourself of that name.

Come to Jesus. Look at his example. He emptied himself, and he received the name above every name. You can trust him. If you give up your rights and lay down your very soul, he will lift you up, he will exalt you, he will give you a name that is sweeter than any name you could dream up for yourself or that anyone else can give you. Place yourself entirely at his feet and empty yourself. He will fill you up.

This is the essence of what it means to be saved. You say to Jesus, "I have nothing in myself that can make me right with God. I consider it all as trash. I'm going to put all my trust in you to make me at peace with God. Jesus, make me right with God, make me a child of God - you're the only hope I've got."

Okay, let's keep descending with Jesus.

2. Accept Christ's position.

EXP: (7b, 10) V.7 "Taking the form of a **servant** born in the **likeness of men**"

Jesus could have come as a king, or come to a wealthy, influential family. No, he didn't just give up his equality with God, he took another step down and came as a servant.

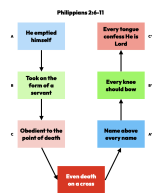
He was the suffering servant that was prophesied by Isaiah. But, to be a suffering servant was not the final position God had for Jesus, it was to exalt him before all of creation...

What did Jesus get on the other side of the "V"? We said the first action was Jesus' and the reward came from the Father. So his action was to take on the form of a servant, and God's reward for that was that now, "every knee should bow."

V.10 "so *that* at the name of Jesus **every knee should bow** in heaven and on the earth and under the earth"

Isaiah didn't just prophesy about a suffering servant. He also prophesied about one who would be exalted. In Isaiah 45:23: "To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance."

Now, some take this passage and think this means, "at the end of time, when God wraps all this up and we are in the New Creation, that's when this is going to happen. That's when every knee is going to bow"



A Sacrificial Life

Built Different #2 - Jonathan Minter - June 7, 2026 - Philippians 2:5-11

But the ESV has this translated correctly here - it says "every knee **should** bow" not "every knee **will** bow." Paul is saying, "Christ has been exalted, he has ascended to his throne, and as a result of that, if you have an accurate view of reality, you should bow the knee and recognize his position."

The way Jesus gets there, though, is just totally opposite to the way the world works. Instead of acquiring possessions, he was homeless. Instead of forcing obedience, he invited people to "come follow me." Instead of having people serve him, he became a servant.

ARG: James 4:6-10 (ESV) "6 ...God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves therefore to God...Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

If you desire God's grace He tells us exactly the stance to have before him and others. We take the posture of humility, not pride. We get serious about our sins and honest with God that we fall short. Those who have humbled themselves and have trusted in God, He exalts!

So if we walk down and descend like Jesus, do we get the same reward? Will every knee bow to us? Not exactly the same reward, but there are some astounding promises awaiting us who believe and trust.

Philippians 3:20-21 (ESV) "20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself."

If you want to know what your future self will be like in the new creation, it will be like Jesus's already glorified body.

The path to greatness in the Kingdom of God, the path to glory, is servanthood.

John 13:13-17 (ESV) "13 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. 16 Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

ILL: Have you ever thought about Jesus as a child? I mean, the incarnation is quite a crazy thing. We learned in the first part that he was in the very form of God, and instead he came in the likeness of man. The creator came in the likeness of his creation.

The singer Rich Mullins had a song about this called "Boy like me, man like you."

Well did you grow up hungry? Did you grow up fast?
Did the little girls giggle when you walked past?
Did you wonder what it was that made them laugh?

And did they tell you stories 'bout the saints of old
Stories about their faith

They say stories like that make a boy grow bold
Stories like that make a man walk straight

Well did you wrestle with a dog and lick his nose?
Did you play beneath the spray of a water hose?
Did you ever make angels in the winter snow?
Did you ever get scared playing hide and seek?
Did you try not to cry when you scraped your knee?
Did you ever skip a rock across a quiet creek?

We won't really ever know just how much Jesus emptied of himself when he became an infant. What did he know as a 3 year old?

There's that scene in the Chosen where they were trying to teach adult Jesus how to play a game and he wasn't very good at it. That made me chuckle but it makes you think, too.

The Bible doesn't give us video-camera footage of these things. The Bible tells us what we need to know, and all those sorts of questions we just get to ponder and one day talk to Jesus about it.

A Sacrificial Life

Built Different #2 - Jonathan Minter - June 7, 2026 - Philippians 2:5-11

But even contemplating these questions makes me sit in wonder about this God who took on the form of a servant, a humble baby born to a working class family. And every time he had the chance to become popular or have worldly power or influence, he just walked away. It seems like Jesus probably wouldn't have made a good social media influencer if he was born in our time and not 2000 years ago.

APP: Where are you taking your cues from? Who are you imitating? Church, we must be different. We must not imitate those in the world who would seek to gain the whole world and forfeit their soul.

"Have this mind among you" Paul says. The mind of Christ.

- The world wants others to serve them. The church should put others' interests above their own.
- The world puffs themselves up and acquires wealth and power and influence by any means necessary. The church should humble themselves and accept lowliness, being content to put their trust in Jesus to lift them up, even if it means losing by the world's standards.
- The world only sacrifices when they think they will gain something in return. The church should serve others even when we have no expectation of a return.

Do you want Christ's glory? You must accept his path of servanthood.

Okay, we've traced Jesus' first 2 steps downward - he emptied himself, he took on the form of a servant, and now his final step down.

3. Share Christ's suffering.

EXP: (8, 11) "he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." "every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Christ's third step downward was like a step onto nothing, like when you have that dream that you are falling into nothingness, a step into the abyss. He was obedient, to what? To whom? To his Father.

How far did he go in his obedience? All the way. To the point of death, even death on a cross. Ah, now we pick up on the theme of the living sacrifice again. His obedience to the Father led to suffering. He did this willingly, he was not subjugated by his Father against his will. He said:

John 10:18 (NLT) No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily.

But his suffering had a purpose, a sacrificial purpose, an atoning purpose.

1 Peter 3:18 (NIV) For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. (see also 1 Corinthians 15:3, Romans 5:6-8, 2 Corinthians 5:21)

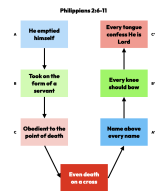
So he subjected his will to his Father in obedience, and what did he get in return? What was God's reward for him? Look at verse 11, now "every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." He became obedient to his Father in suffering, and now he is Lord.

ARG: What do we get out of this, though? What's on the other side of our death to self?

Philippians 3:10-11 (NIV) I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. (see also Romans 6:3-5)

When we share in his death, we get his life **and his inheritance!**

Romans 8:16-18 (NKJV) The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also



A Sacrificial Life

Built Different #2 - Jonathan Minter - June 7, 2026 - Philippians 2:5-11

be glorified together. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

So when we place ourselves in Christ's death (like when Noah placed himself in the coffin of the ark), we emerge on the other side of that, not just with Christ's life. No, this verse says we are "joint heirs" with Christ. What?!

And this is not just a "okay, I received my ticket to heaven when I die" kind of life and inheritance. No, you are sharing in Christ's eternal life right now and that eternal life is moving you towards the great inheritance of the Kingdom of God fully realized in the New Creation. And the question you have to ask yourself - is that actually a reward for you? Or are there other things you would place in a higher priority?

Do you feel like your obedience to God seems like suffering? There is good reason for that. Just look at Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before he was crucified. In agony, crying out to his Father, sweating like drops of blood. But Hebrews tells us why he chose to suffer - because he was able to see past it and the joy he would find in obedience.

Hebrews 12:2 (ESV) ...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (see also Hebrews 4:9)

ILL: Do you find joy in obedience? Do you find life in the death of self?

Dallas Willard, who was a Christian pastor turned UC Berkeley philosophy professor said he was frequently asked on college campuses whether Jesus could sin or not. His answer was famously: "Yes Jesus could sin, but he never did. He was too smart for that. He was too smart to sin."

You know, when you are working with your kids and you are trying to get them to obey you, you are essentially trying to get them to stop doing something they really want to do, and get them to do something they really don't want to do.

What he was getting at was that Jesus had a perfect view of reality in that he perfectly understood the fundamental goodness of God's kingdom.

And so aligning ourselves with God's reality turns out to be the smartest thing we can do. When we think of our own obedience to God, we can start with all honesty and say, "God, I really want to do this thing. Please help me not do this thing that I really want to do. I really want to be obedient to you and if I'm honest it feels like suffering" But human willpower only gets us so far. Obedience actually looks like moving from that starting point to a place where we can honestly ask God to turn us into the kind of person who doesn't want to sin anymore.

And this also fundamentally shapes the Christian view of suffering in general. Now, suffering is not something to be avoided at all costs, but something to embrace as part of God's cosmic work of redemption.

APP: Do you want to be "built different"? Do you want to look like Jesus? Suffer like Jesus.

First of all, willingly suffer on behalf of others. Stop expecting the world to revolve around you and bring you comfort at all costs. Go the extra mile on behalf of those at work. Or suffer on behalf of your enemies. Or, even weirder, suffer on behalf of your family...

Second, when you are going through a season of suffering that you don't have any control over, learn to at every step, more and more frequently, present your suffering as an opportunity to be refined more and more into Christ's image. Learn how to count it as joy when you suffer. It turns out this is the test of how much we actually love Christ and desire to be like him. Are we willing to suffer like him? In full obedience to

A Sacrificial Life

Built Different #2 - Jonathan Minter - June 7, 2026 - Philippians 2:5-11

the Father, in joy for what we know he has for us in the future, in full assurance of the glory that is waiting for us.

CONCLUSION:

Following Jesus means he made it possible for us to follow his example of self-sacrifice. We don't serve a God who expects us to climb the mountain of righteousness or goodness or moral purity before he loves us. No, we serve a God who came down to us. He kept moving down, down, down, all the way to the ultimate sacrifice on his cruel cross. But just like he was resurrected and exalted, when we die to self and identify with his death, we will receive his eternal life and will share that life with him forever in the new creation.

So, church. Let's be "built different". Instead of the world, which seeks to win by climbing up and over people, let's follow Jesus' example and:

1. Empty ourselves and accept Christ's identity instead
2. Humble ourselves and accept Christ's position of a servant
3. Become obedient to suffering all the way to death, and accept Christ's eternal life

Let's pray.