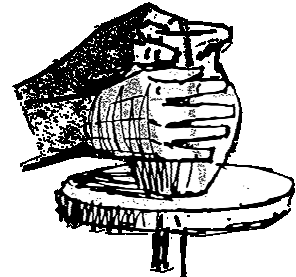


# His Workmanship: Westside

*"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works."*

—Ephesians 2:10



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Isaiah 64:8

## How to Make Spiritual Sacrifices Acceptable to God, by John Piper

### A. Sacrifices Acceptable to God.

Notice, in 1 Peter 2, six steps in making spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God.

#### 1. Jesus Christ is the Living Stone.

Jesus Christ the living Stone is chosen by God and precious, 1 Pet 2:4. Peter called him a stone because of prophecies in the Old Testament: "*Behold I am laying in Zion a stone,*" Is 28:16, and "*The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner,*" Ps 118:22.

#### 2. Those longing for Him come to Him.

Believers who have tasted the kindness of the Lord—those who have tasted that the Lord is good, loving, and merciful, v. 2—they now long for Him the way a baby longs for milk, and they come to Him: "*And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but chosen and precious in the sight of God,*" v. 4.

#### 3. We are shaped into living stones.

The result of coming to Him is that we are shaped into living stones for use in a spiritual building. "*You also as living stones are being built up,*" v.5. Contact with the Living Stone makes us alive and shapes us to fit in our place in His architectural plan.

#### 4. We are built a spiritual house.

When we come to the Living Stone

and are shaped into living stones ourselves, we are built a "*spiritual house.*" Christ is the builder here. He builds individual Christians into a spiritual temple. It's spiritual because it houses the Holy Spirit. "*Do you not know that you are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you?*" 1 Cor 3:16. The context refers to the local church, not to individuals.

What we see so far is that God lays this stone, Jesus Christ, in Zion, that is, in Jerusalem, and men reject it—crucify Him—but God has chosen this Stone and regards Him as infinitely precious, and He raised Him from the dead, made Him an ever-living stone, and gave Him the place of highest honor at the head of the corner. God did all this so that Christ might gather a people who would themselves be alive like Him and would make a temple, a church—an eternal dwelling place for the Spirit of God.

**5. We are a holy priesthood.** Not only are we living stones being built into a spiritual house for God's habitation, we are also a "holy priesthood." In other words, we are not merely the passive building where God dwells; we are also the active participants in worship—and not just participants, but special participants, priests set apart

for service to God. All believers are priests. This is the great teaching about the "priesthood of all believers." We all are the priests of this new spiritual house, and our privilege now as priests is to draw near to God with spiritual sacrifices. The priests brought the sacrifices into the tabernacle in the Old Testament. But now that tabernacle is replaced by the church of Christ. The atoning altar is replaced by Jesus Christ and His shed blood. The Aaronic priests are replaced by those of us who believe in Christ.

**6. Spiritual sacrifices are offered to God through Christ.** The goal of all this is that spiritual sacrifices would be offered which are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Jesus must get His proper due here. God's aim is that we offer Him spiritual sacrifices, but we can only do that "*through Jesus Christ.*" Jesus is the Living Stone. Everything hangs on our coming to the Living Stone. If we don't come to Jesus, the Living Stone, then we don't have life, and we are not built into a spiritual house, and we do not become a holy priesthood, and we cannot offer spiritual sacrifices. It all hangs on Jesus and connecting with Jesus—

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**“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise,”  
—Psalm 51:17**

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coming to Jesus. That's why Peter ended with the words *"to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ,"* v.5.

**B. Sacrifices by Our Precious Jesus.** Jesus is the only way to God. This should cause us to love Him with all our hearts. He is the only way to be alive forever. He is the only way we can become a dwelling for God. He is the only way we can do anything acceptable to God. This is why He is precious, above all cost, to us who believe, v. 7. Yes, He is infinitely precious, immeasurably worthy. There is no greater value in the universe than Jesus. He means more to us than anything or anybody else.

Just think of all the people around the world who know there is a God. Nature declares His glory, and their own consciences tell them it must be so. But they don't know how to do anything fully acceptable to this God—because they don't know Jesus. They try rituals and disciplines and sacrifices and vows and relics and virtues; but all that is in vain—because the only sacrifice acceptable to God is *"through Jesus Christ."* God says sacrifices that are acceptable to Him are acceptable *"through Jesus Christ,"* not through human effort or human merit or human achievement. Jesus Christ is the only acceptable sacrifice.

Paul said, *"I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me,"* Rm 15:18. Through

Christ we know God and come to God and experience the presence of God and offer acceptable sacrifices to God. Without Him all is distance and darkness and wrath. Christ is precious, very precious.

**C. Sacrifices Spiritual and Acceptable.** Now let's walk backward through some of these six steps and take another look at them. What are these spiritual sacrifices that we offer to God through Jesus Christ? If offering acceptable sacrifices to God is the goal of everything else, these sacrifices must be very important. What are they?

**1. Our Bodies.** Paul said that we are to *"present your bodies as living sacrifices holy and acceptable to God which is your spiritual service of worship,"* Rm 12:1. That means that everything we do with our body is to be done as an act of worship to God. Whether we eat, drink, drive a car, hammer nails, make a meal, program a computer, read a book, shoot a basketball, or mend a shirt—whatever we do with our body, we do to the glory of God, 1 Cor 10:31. If we do it for God's glory in God's way, then it is our spiritual service of worship.

**2. Praise and Thanks.** Sacrifice includes singing or speaking words of praise, *"Continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name,"* Heb 13:15. Praises and thanks can be from God's people alone and in group worship.

**3. Acts of Love.** Sacrifice includes acts of love like giving and sharing. *"Do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with*

*such sacrifices God is pleased,"* Heb 13:16. For example, Paul received gifts of support from the Philippian church and said, *"I received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God,"* Phil 4:18. Spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, then, are the deeds we do, the words we speak, the songs we sing—when we do them spiritually, that is, when we do them in reliance on the power of the Spirit, according to the will of the Spirit, and for a manifestation of the Spirit—which is a manifestation of Christ.

**D. What We Should Ask About Our Worship.** This is clearly a word to us about our worship here at Westside. Is it spiritual? Are our worship leaders spiritual people? Do we sing in the power of the Spirit? Is our teaching and preaching in reliance on the power of the Spirit, according to the will of the Spirit? If it is not, it is not acceptable to God. If it is, He will accept it, not because it's perfect—it never will be in this age—much less because it's refined or well-crafted, but because it comes *"through Jesus Christ."* Spiritual sacrifices are sacrifices from Christ and through Christ and for Christ. They get their power from the Spirit of Christ, they get their content from the Word of Christ, and they have their goal in the glory of Christ. They flow only from a heart devoted to His power, His Word, and His glory. That is the only worship God accepts.

**High Horse**, from p. 4 *executions."* In medieval Europe, heresy was a crime against the state, Madden explains. Local nobles, often greedy, illiterate, and eager to placate the mob, gleefully agreed to execute people accused of witchcraft or some other forms of heresy. By the 1100s, such accusations were causing grave injustices (in much the same way that apparatchiks in Communist countries would level charges of disloyalty in order to have rivals "disappeared"). *"The Catholic Church's response to this problem was the Inquisition,"* Madden explains, *"first instituted by Pope Lucius III in 1184."* I cannot defend everything done under the various Inquisitions—especially in Spain—because some of it was indefensible. But there's a very important

point to make here: Christendom, even in its most terrible days, even under the most corrupt popes, even during the most unjustifiable wars, was indisputably a force for the improvement of man. Christendom ended greater barbarisms under pagan Rome. The Roman church often fell short of its ideals, but its ideals were undoubtedly a great advance for humanity. Similarly, while some rationalized slavery and Jim Crow in the U.S. by invoking religion, it was ultimately the ideals of Christendom itself that dealt the fatal blow to those institutions. When Obama alluded to the evils of medieval Christendom, he failed to acknowledge the key word:

*continued on p. 3*



**God makes my heart clean in 2015** “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” —Ps 51:10

**High Horse**, from p. 2 “medieval.” What made medieval Christendom backward wasn’t Christendom but medievalism. It was the age called the “Dark Ages.”

The core problem with those who glibly invoke one cliché after another about the evils of organized religion and Catholicism is that they betray the progressive tendency to look back on the last two thousand years and see the Catholic Church—and Christendom generally—as holding back humanity from progress, reason, and enlightenment. They fault the Roman Church for not knowing what could not have been known yet and for being too slow to accept new discoveries that only seem obvious to us with the benefit of hindsight. Nearly everything we revere about modernity and progress—charity, education, the rule of law, decency, the notion of the universal rights of man, and reason—were advanced by the Church for most of the last two thousand years.

It is perverse that Obama feels compelled to lecture the West about not getting too judgmental on our “high horse” over radical Islam’s medieval barbarism in 2015 because of Christendom’s medieval barbarism in 1215. It’s also insipidly hypocritical. President Obama can’t bring himself to call the Islamic State “Islamic,” but he’s happy to offer a sermon about Christendom’s alleged crimes a thousand years ago.

The Islamic State is crucifying people right now. Romans crucified people over 2,000 years ago. Does this mean that Italians can’t criticize Islamists? How is it that the sins of Christendom are eternal but the sins of

**Travel** Judy Sartin is in FL with family to celebrate her birthday Sat; the Reameses are in KS visiting Randy’s ill mother; the Lucases return Tues from NY & DC

Muslim fanatics right now aren’t even Muslim? The Islamic State is enslaving people right now. America had slaves 150 years ago. And speaking of non-sequiturs, vests have no sleeves.

**Anglo-American Exceptionalism and Slavery.** Slavery will always remain a stain on America’s honor. But America



put an end to it at an enormous price. Moreover, slavery was a constant on every continent for thousands of years. The

remarkable thing isn’t that we had slaves, it’s that we ended slavery. We ended it because deep in the founding principles of this country were Judeo-Christian principles that eventually couldn’t be reconciled with slavery.

**On a High Horse.** It’s entirely fair to argue that we shouldn’t get on a high horse with regard to how the French or the Canadians do things. But the Islamic State? The Mullahs of Iran? Boko Haram? We are so much better than they by any objective moral or intellectual standard it’s insulting to be asked to make the case. That doesn’t mean that we don’t have faults, but it does mean that *our faults are entirely irrelevant* and no one should bring up such irrelevancies. Reasonable people will hear false equivalencies if we compare Islamists to civilized nations.

One last thing about this high horse. Obama is telling people not to get on a high horse *from his saddle of a much higher horse*. Is there anyone in public life who preaches from a higher equine altitude than this president? Christians who are being slaughtered today in Africa and the Mid-East don’t need a lecture from Obama, they need a leader who stops the genocide.

## Discipleship Here At Home

### PRAY FOR healing, protection, help

·Christine Adams’s 9 mo-old grandson, Ezekiel

—kidnapped by his birth father 1/15; pray he will

be found and for his mother Kayla Knighten

·Sandra Perry—kidney failure, may need

dialysis or transplant; heart valve issues

recently diagnosed; neuropathy from diabetes

·Tyler Huelsman—car accident; asks prayers for

spiritual strength

·Frank Savarese—recovering from surgery on

salivary gland; to return to work tomorrow

·Tracy Corray—recovering double kidney

infections, stones, very high fever, severe pain

·Samantha Harrod—recovering from drainage of

cyst infection, pain; may need further surgery

·Bill Dennis—in rehab following infected knee

drainage; weak heart; pseudo-gout

·Ed Fink—prostate cancer; treatment for brain tumors

·Kaylee Chavez—age 10, at St. Jude’s in

Memphis for brain cancer treatment; donate at

[www.youcaring.com](http://www.youcaring.com), type her name at top

·Judy Strand—hep C; on liver transplant list

·Chris Bennett, former member—all tools for biz

stolen; recovering from fall, fractured pelvis

·Buford Wrather, Cheryl Reames’s dad—stroke,

complicated by Parkinson’s; in CO Springs

·Mark Campbell—in hospital last week

·Sylvia Chapman, Brett’s grandmother—

third stage pancreatic cancer; chemo

·Judy Sartin—rotator cuff injury; spinal stenosis

·Brittany Tope’s mother—breast cancer in spine;

pain in broken ribs which tumor has injured;

grandmother—on dialysis

·Pat Wilkes—knee pain; bursar impingement and

tom tendon on right shoulder causing pain

\* Sharon Rupinen, Sandra Perry’s sister—

surgery recovery

·Kenny Boyd’s coworker Kim Phillips—asks our

prayers for heart problems

·Rick Robbins, friend of Howells—brain surgery

**CHRONIC CONDITIONS**

Logan Corray; Addison Tope; Christian

Harrod; Rocco Jr; Tim Huelsman—asthma

Bill Dennis—adjusting pacemaker and meds

Nell Free—pacemaker, heart; back pain

Autumn Hadders—epilepsy; celiac disease

Danielle Huelsman—vertigo, CV syndrome

Hannah Huelsman—polycythemia, thickening of

blood; heart murmur, acid reflux, chest pain

Kirk Johnson—MS

Menards—aging; Lloyd, diabetes, weak;

Virginia, macular degeneration; high BP

Lynda Szymanski—COPD, lung weakness

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**Exposing current thoughts & trends** *moral equivalency*

**The High Horse Equivocator**, by Jonah Goldberg, *National Review*

Last Tuesday, the so-called Islamic State released a slickly produced video showing a Jordanian pilot being burned alive in a steel cage. Last Wednesday, the United Nations issued a report detailing various “mass executions of boys, as well as reports of beheadings, crucifixions of children, and burying children alive” at the hands of the Islamic State. And last Thursday, President Obama seized the opportunity of the National Prayer Breakfast to forthrightly criticize the “terrible deeds” committed “in the name of Christ.” He referred to the tendency of people to “hijack” religions for murderous ends. *“And lest we get on our high horse and think this is unique to some other place, remember that during the Crusades and the Inquisition, people committed terrible deeds in the name of Christ. In our home country, slavery and Jim Crow all too often was [sic] justified in the name of Christ.”*

Obama’s right. Terrible things have been done in the name of Christ. I have yet to meet a Christian who denies this. Christians admit they aren’t without sin. They know they’re sinners, and they say so, quite a bit. Yes, we are descended from cavemen who broke the skulls of their enemies with rocks for fun or profit. But that hardly mitigates the crimes of a person who does the same thing today.

The president felt the need to chide a room full of religiously literate people about how they shouldn’t get too judgmental about what the Islamic State is doing right now because Christians did bad things almost 1,000 years ago. The comparison is ridiculous, and it would still be ridiculous if all of Obama’s assumptions about the Crusades, the Inquisition, slavery, and Christianity were accurate (they’re not).

**Crusades and Inquisitions.** The Inquisition and the Crusades aren’t the indictments Obama thinks they are. For starters, the Crusades—despite their terrible organized cruelties—were a defensive war. “The Crusades could more accurately be described as a limited, belated and, in the last analysis, ineffectual response to the jihad—a failed attempt to recover by a Christian [sic] holy war what had been lost to a Muslim holy war,” writes Bernard Lewis, the greatest living English-language historian of Islam.

As for the Inquisition, it needs to be clarified that there was no single “Inquisition,” but many. And most were not particularly nefarious. For centuries, whenever the Catholic Church launched an inquiry or investigation, it mounted an “inquisition.” Historian Thomas Madden, director of the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at Saint Louis University, writes that the *“Inquisition was not born out of desire to crush diversity or oppress people; it was rather an attempt to stop unjust*

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*Assembly Schedule*

**Sunday**

Bible classes	9:00 am
Morning assembly	10:00 am
Afternoon assembly	1:30 pm

**Wednesday**

Bible classes	7:30 pm
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**Sunday morning**

- **adult Bible class**, Lessons 3-4, “I Have Become A Christian! Now What?” Jim Reingrover

- **Sermon**, “Peter’s Epistle to Westside: Lessons from 1 Peter,” Jim Reingrover

**Sunday afternoon**

- **Lessons from the Life of Christ**, How Jesus Interacted with Antagonists, Sinners, and Women, Lk 7:36-60; 8:1-3; 10:38-42, Kenny Boyd

**Wednesday night: Daniel: Determined to Walk with God**, chapter 6