Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study Worship Continually.

Introduction: The writer Erma Bombeck wrote, “When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left, and could say, ‘I used everything you gave me.’” That's the point Paul makes in these two verses. He's talking about using everything God gave him, giving his whole person—his all—to God.

We understand the idea of giving an offering of money at church. We put our cash or our check in an envelope and drop it in the plate. But most of us need some help with the idea of offering ourselves to God, giving our all to Jesus. We can't put ourselves in an envelope. We can't climb into the plate when the usher comes by and say; “My offering to God today is myself.” It would be easier to take out our checkbook and double our offering and put it in the plate than it would be to give our all to Jesus.

True spiritual worship is giving ourselves to God continually. Living godly in an ungodly world requires it.

1. Why do we give our all to God?
Paul presented God's mercies as his most persuasive argument for giving ourselves to God: “In view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies” (v. 1). Mercy, according to W. E. Vine, is “the outward manifestation of pity; it assumes need on the part of him who receives it, and resources adequate to meet the need on the part of him who shows it.” (Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, Vol. III, p. 60). In other words, mercy is identifying with someone's misery. Such as, God's heart that went out to us in our helpless condition, responding to our pain. God did more than say, “Oh, I'm sorry, that's too bad.” He dealt with the problem and provided a solution.

When we recognize what God has done for us through his son Jesus Christ, the only response is to worship him completely. We are sinners. That sin has deathly consequences. But while we were still sinners Christ died for us. He took our place taking upon himself the consequences and punishment of our sin so that now there is no condemnation for us. We are saved from the fires of hell to the eternal presence of God. That is an act of grace and mercy. It is the ultimate gift.

That should be motivation enough for us to worship God. If reflecting on God’s mercies doesn’t move us, then we are in trouble? Where would we be without God’s love and forgiveness?
2. What does worship look like?
Paul continued, “... to present your bodies as a living sacrifice” (v. 1). The expression living sacrifice is set against the backdrop of the Old Testament sacrifices. While in the Old Testament animals were offered, the New Testament we offer ourselves in worship. Just as the people of Israel presented their animal sacrifices to the priests, we hand over our bodies to God. When Paul used the term body, he was implying the whole person or the physical means whereby the entire person is expressed. This presentation can be seen in much the same way that a defeated general of an army handed over his sword, thereby demonstrating the surrender of his whole being.

A “living sacrifice” is an oxymoron, like same difference, pretty ugly, head butt, jumbo shrimp. Living sacrifice are two words that don’t make sense when put together, do they? They are contradictory. Living means, just that, alive. Sacrifice, by its very nature, means that if it is not dead yet it is going to be gone soon.

A living sacrifice says, “No one nor nothing nor even myself is more important than my relationship with God and his kingdom work. I want my whole life—body, mind, and spirit—to be a sacrifice for Jesus. I want my whole life to honor him. And if there is anything in my life that rivals my relationship with him, I’m giving it up.”

There were two “living sacrifices” recorded in the Bible. These two examples give us a clue as to what it means to offer a living sacrifice. The first was Abraham and Isaac. Abraham obediently placed Isaac on the altar and he would have died in obedience to God’s will, but the Lord sent a ram to take his place. When he stepped off the altar, Isaac was a “living sacrifice.” The second was Jesus. He was the perfect “living sacrifice,” because he actually died as a sacrifice, in obedience to God’s will.

3. When do we worship?
Paul continued, “this is your true worship” (v. 1). Unfortunately, we think of worship as one hour on Sunday; God thinks twenty-four hours each day, every day. Worship is a lifestyle.

Making a living sacrifice is a habit, a lifestyle. Warren Wiersbe said, “The problem with a living sacrifice is that it keeps crawling off the altar.” And, if we are honest, we often do that. We may sing, “Onward, Christian Soldiers” on Sunday, then go AWOL on Monday. Always, we must be on our guard. Always, we must give ourselves to God each day.

Making a living sacrifice is never just a one-time event. Jesus instructed us to take up our cross daily. There is a moment of sacrifice, and there is a moment-by-moment sacrifice or the practice of sacrifice. To keep from crawling off the altar, we must make it a daily habit to offer ourselves to God.

Offering ourselves to God is not something that should be contained within a sixty-minute worship service. A living sacrifice is a sacrifice that is alive and continuous in action. Giving our all moves away from one activity of making a commitment to all of our events: each relationship, each task, each opportunity, each problem, each success, each failure.
4. How do we worship? (v. 2)
Paul stated, “Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God” (v. 2). When we give ourselves to God, it is reflected in how we think. Believers live in an ungodly world without being trapped and molded by it. We live as godly people. People who are distinct, separated from the ways and the wiles of this world. We live as nonconformist people. People who are not chameleons that is, people who do not take its being and likeness from its surroundings. We live as transformed people. People who have been metamorphosed on the inside. We live as radical people, not just reasonable people.

People who worship continually are changed people. It is reflected in their walk, talk, and personality. When they give themselves to God, they are not self-centered, but Christ-centered. The world seeks to pressure their minds from without, but a godly person allows God’s Spirit to release his power from within.

One worships continually by:

- **Walking to the altar.**
  When the priests brought the animals to the altar, they were either carried, or led, or better yet dragged, to the place of sacrifice. Not so with living sacrifices. No one is going to horse-tie them and make them go to the altar. They go at their own will. That’s what makes a living sacrifice so special. A living sacrifice is not forced, coerced, or dragged to the altar.

- **Making the effort.**
  Walking to the altar always will take some effort. Being a living sacrifice is kingdom living. We got to want this kind of life. It is not going to be easy. The human tendency is to take the easy path, to play it safe, to avoid pain and hurt, effort and exertion.

- **Offering our bodies.**
  A person who is a living sacrifice lays their physical bodies on the altar. The word *offer* means to present. It’s the technical expression for submitting a victim for sacrifice. The word *sacrifice* shows clearly the expectation of believers to hand over their bodies to God in a manner resembling the way the people of Israel presented their offerings to the Lord. The word *bodies* means our physical body. Why would God want our bodies? Why doesn’t God say, “Offer your spirit? Because without our bodies we can’t do anything on this planet. If God’s got our body; he’s got us. Wherever our body goes, we are sure to follow. God doesn’t just want our job, money, or stuff. He wants it all, including our body.

  The body is given to us to make visible the beauty of Christ. God doesn’t want models for magazines; he demands our bodies because he wants models of mercy. He wants us to represent him in the world. God has no lips except your
lips; no eyes, but your eyes; no hands, but your hands; no ears, but your ears; no feet, but your feet.

- Feeling some pain.
  Making a living sacrifice is going to hurt. A living sacrifice is made at a high personal cost. It is easy to say you will make a sacrifice; it is harder to do it because it will cost you something. You have to give up something, and that will hurt.

- Going against the flow.
  A person who is a living sacrifice lives a counter-cultural lifestyle. Making a living sacrifice, people will think that you have gone mad. Crazy. Out of your mind. But it can be done. And, it should be done.

  The biblical word is *holy*. How will we know that we are worshipping continually? We will live holy lives. Holy means “distinct, separate, not the same, out of the ordinary, unusual.” God is a holy God. And, he expects his followers to be holy, to be different, to be like their heavenly Father. Christians are to be distinct, separate, not the same, out of the ordinary, unusual. God was distinct, different, out of the ordinary, and he called his followers to be like him.

**Conclusion:** Christians are to be godly. A godly person is not an odd person, but a different person. Their present lifestyle is not only different from past lifestyles but is different from the lifestyles of the unbelievers around them. They have given themselves to God. Their life becomes an act of worship.

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