

## 060 What Does True Worship Look Like?

*Romans 12:1*

Message by Dr R Bruce Montgomery ~ Grace Church ~ 11/27/16

### **Introduction photo – cover of VOM magazine**

You may recall that before Richard and Celeste Wahlberg came to serve at Grace Church, they were serving the Lord in Afghanistan for eight years. Richard worked with PacTec. Celeste taught and served as principal at the International School in Kabul.

There they became friends with Dr. Hannelie Groenewald and her husband Werner Groenewald. Inspired by the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the U.S., they had left their comfortable home in South Africa in April 2003 to serve on the front lines in Afghanistan. The children Jean-Pierre and Rodé were students of Celeste, and friends of the Wahlberg children.

Werner's background as a pastor in Africa prepared him for working with various humanitarian organizations, providing leadership training, community development education and English language courses.

In October 2014 Werner spoke at a conference on the subject of "Counting the Cost for Christ." He ended it by saying, "We only die once. It might as well be for Christ."

I can still remember the stricken look on Richard's face almost exactly two years ago, when with great sorrow he told me that on November 29, 2014 Werner and the two children had been killed in their home by the Taliban.

The Voice of the Martyrs ministry recently made a short video in which Hannelie retells the story of her family's faithfulness and sacrifice.

**Video "Hannelie"** available for viewing on-line at [persecution.com/IDOP](http://persecution.com/IDOP)

### **TIME OF PRAYER FOR PERSECUTED CHURCH**

### **MESSAGE**

**Romans 12:1** *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.*

Today with Romans 12 we begin some very practical, concrete applications of all that has come before. The first word **therefore** tips us off that what follows is the outworking of what came before.

Back in the mid-seventies I was introduced to Francis Schaeffer's book and video series entitled "**How Should We Then Live?**" A master with words, the little word **then** in the title was most important. His point is that those who have received God's revelation in the Bible and through Christ must act upon it. It demands application.

He wrote: "*As Christians we are not only to know the right world view, the world view that tells us the truth of what is, but consciously to act upon that world view so as to influence society in all its parts and facets across the whole spectrum of life.*"

Paul has spent eleven chapters explaining the incredible grace of God to us. To borrow Schaeffer's phraseology, "*How then shall we live - in light of God's mercy and grace and the fact that we have been redeemed from sin's penalty by the death of Jesus Christ and freed from the tyranny of sin by the power of the Holy Spirit?*"

Paul would respond, "*In view of what I have written, you must not live for yourselves but instead give yourselves totally to God. Surrender your lives, offer your bodies to God as living sacrifices.*" This, he concludes, is **your spiritual act of worship.**

"Wait," you say. "*I thought worship was all about music, and singing and instruments. Something we do on Sunday morning.*" Yes, we do refer to what we are doing right now as a "worship service," but we have sadly missed the point if we limit worship to something that we do for an hour a week in a church building. Yes, worship includes singing to the Lord, but that is only one form of worship. Worship goes much deeper than that.

Surrendering your whole self to God – as the Groenewalds did when they went to Afghanistan – that, my friends is what Paul would call genuine worship.

We refer to this act of personal surrender in many different ways in Scripture: consecration, dying to self, yielding to the Spirit, taking up your cross, making Jesus “Lord.”

Here Paul uses the phrase *offer* your **bodies**. It’s the same terminology he used in **Romans 6:13** *Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God. . . and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.*

As he points out, each part of our bodies are to be offered to God for his use: our eyes, our ears, our mouths, our minds, even our feet that can take us like the Groenewalds to those who haven’t heard the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ..

**Romans 10:14,15** *How can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful of the feet of those who bring good news.”*

**Romans 12:1** *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.*

In Jewish culture, a sacrifice was an animal that was brought by a person to a priest at the temple. The priest would take it to the altar, kill it, pour out its blood, and then burn the animal’s body. The animal died in place of the worshipper. But here, in Paul’s metaphor, rather than being a dead sacrifice (which is of no use except to be eaten), we are to remain alive.

We should recall that there were different sorts of sacrifices. There were sacrifices for sin, which were a picture looking forward to the death of Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God. But in addition, there were sacrifices of thanksgiving, offerings by worshippers who simply wanted to thank God for some great blessing or deliverance in their lives. It is this kind of sacrifice we are to offer when we offer ourselves to God – not a sacrifice to atone for sin, but one of gratitude to the one who has already atoned for our sins.

**Hebrews 13:15** *Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.*

**Things surrender is not.** 1. Surrendering ourselves to God is not **passive resignation**, or **fatalism** (like the song *que sera sera, whatever will be will be, the future’s not mine to see, que sera sera*).

2. Surrendering to God is not **repressing your personality**. God made you with your unique personality, and wants to use that personality to bring him glory.

C.S. Lewis: *“The more we let God take us over, the more truly ourselves we become – because he made us. He invented all the different people that you and I were intended to be . . . It is when I turn to Christ, when I give myself to His personality, that I first begin to have a real personality of my own.”*

3. Surrendering does not mean **giving up rational thinking!** Last phrase can be translated **your reasonable act of worship** or **your reasonable service**. One version translates it **the most sensible way to serve God**.

Surrendering your life to God is not a foolish emotional impulse, but a rational, intelligent act, the most responsible and sensible thing you can do with your life.

By calling it reasonable, Paul is saying that the living sacrifice idea he is urging on us is logical. It is to be performed using your reason, with the mind engaged. As you read the testimony of Hannalie and Werner you discover they had thought it through, counted the potential cost before they left South Africa.

Surrendering is not for cowards or doormats. God often calls surrendered people to do battle on his behalf.

4. Surrendering is not just a **one time event**. Paul says **I Corinthians 15:51** *I die every day*. There is an initial moment of surrender, but there is the ongoing life long practice of moment-by-moment surrender.

**Luke 9:23,24** *“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. <sup>24</sup>For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.*

The cross was an instrument of death – a death so cruel it was outlawed as a means of execution of Roman citizens. A familiar image to those listening – carrying crossbeam – a one-

way trip. Jesus is demanding a total commitment of one's life – saying “no” to the world and saying “yes” to Jesus.

Becoming a Christ follower means not only embracing the death of Jesus on the cross in our place, it must also include accepting the reality of a cross for ourselves.

Not talking about mere difficulties or hardships. Hear people use the phrase in reference to having to a cranky boss, or a difficult neighbor, or an unsaved spouse, or an illness. *“It’s my cross to bear”* they lament.

But is much more than that – Jesus is talking about dying to self – self-denial. Not just talking about denying sins, but denying self. The opposite of being self-centered.

Denying ourselves is not a popular subject in our culture – we pamper ourselves, indulge ourselves. Instead of “denying ourselves daily” we deny ourselves nothing. But we do so at great expense! There is a huge cost in being self-centered and self-indulgent. Deciding to follow Jesus is a radical commitment to let Jesus call the shots in your life, not a convenient means to better yourself in this world!

Don’t overlook this little word “daily.” Saying “yes” to Jesus and “no” to self isn’t just a part-time job or a once a week happening. It isn’t a “once in a life-time experience.”

We think that dying to our self is like laying a \$1,000 bill on the table. *“Here’s my life, Lord. I’m giving it all.”* But the reality is that Jesus has us take that \$1,000 to the bank and cash it in for quarters. We go through life putting out 25 cents here, 50 cents there. We listen to our neighbor’s complaints, we go to a committee meeting or a social event when we’d rather stay home, we give a cup of water to a shaky little old man who, tomorrow, won’t even remember that we visited him in a nursing home.

Foundational to the idea of offering ourselves to God is the teaching that if we are truly Christians, we are not our own, but rather belong to Jesus. **I Corinthians 6:19-20** ***Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own, you were bought with a price.***

And that price, of course, is nothing less than the precious blood of Jesus Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.<sup>1</sup> If you want to know how much you matter to God, look at Christ with his arms outstretched on the cross, as if to say, *“I love you this much! I’d rather die than live without you.”*

The supreme example of self-surrender is Jesus. The night before he was crucified Jesus surrendered himself to God the Father’s plan. He prayed, **Mark 14:36** ***“Abba, Father. . . everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”***

Jesus didn’t pray, *“Father, if you’re able to take away the pain of suffering and death on the cross, please do so.”* That God had the ability and power to do so was a given. He had already affirmed ***“everything is possible for you.”***

Instead, he prayed *“God if it’s your best interest to remove this suffering, please do. But if it fulfills your purpose, then that’s what I want as well.”*

Genuine surrender says, *“Father, if this pain, this sickness, this problem, this circumstance is needed to fulfill your purpose in my life or bring you glory in someone else’s, please **don’t** take it away!”*

This level of maturity does not come easily and is never automatic. It requires battling our own self-centered nature.

We read that in Jesus’ case he agonized so much over God’s plan that he sweat drops of blood.

Everyone eventually surrenders to something or someone. Maybe its to the opinions and expectations of others, or perhaps its to bitterness and resentment, or maybe to fear, or lust, or ego.

You were designed to worship God, but if you don’t you will create substitutes (the Bible calls them idols) to give your life to.

You are free to choose what you surrender to, but you are not free from the consequences of your choice. The famous missionary E. Stanley Jones said, *“If you don’t surrender to Christ, you surrender to chaos.”*

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<sup>1</sup> I Peter 1:18,19

Surrender to God isn't just one way to live, it is the best and only way to live. All other approaches to life end up in frustration, disappointment, and self-destruction. The enemy would whisper in our ear that if we deny ourselves, we will be miserable. But nothing is further than the truth.

What on earth are you living for? Do you believe in Jesus? Are you willing to follow him no matter what? Are you willing to lay down your life for the cause of the one who laid down his life for you?

***Take my life, a living sacrifice,  
Knowing it's the least that I can do  
Make my life, a living sacrifice  
holy and acceptable to you.***

**[BLANK SLIDE]** *I looked upon my life  
and realized at last  
Within myself  
there's nothing I can do*

*And yet here I stand  
To offer all I am  
And give myself completely  
LORD to YOU*

***Take my life, a living sacrifice,  
Knowing it's the least that I can do  
Make my life, a living sacrifice  
Holy and acceptable to you.***

**[BLANK SLIDE]** *I cannot be content  
Until I reach that place  
How little I have  
Given up to YOU*

*LORD break down my will  
Make my desires YOUR own  
I long to give my  
Everything to you.*

***Take my life, a living sacrifice,  
Knowing it's the least that I can do  
Make my life, a living sacrifice  
holy and acceptable to you.***

***Take my life, a living sacrifice,  
Knowing it's the least that I can do  
Make my life, a living sacrifice  
Holy and acceptable to you.  
Holy and acceptable to YOU.***

God greatly used Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ (now referred to as CRU). It is estimated that through CRU staff around the world, the ***Four Spiritual Laws*** tract and the ***Jesus film*** more than 150 million people have come to faith in Christ.

Why did God bless his ministry so greatly? There may be many factors we will never know about, but let me share one insight. When he was a young man Bill wrote out a contract and signed it at the bottom: *"From this day forward, I am a slave of Jesus Christ."*

Have you ever made such a commitment to God? Or are you still arguing and struggling with God over his right to do with your life as he pleases?

Right now is your time to surrender – to God's grace, love and wisdom

**Hymn of invitation: *I Surrender All***