Today’s Lesson Objective: Participants will be encouraged to give their bodies, which encompass their whole lives, in service to God.

Bible Study Title: Giving God Our All: A Call to Holy Living

Scripture Reading: Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)

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.
2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Bible Exposition

In Romans 12, Paul was writing to believers in Rome, urging them to live holy. Paul transitioned from teaching theology in the first eleven chapters of the book of Romans to duty and conduct in chapter 12. Believers are instructed to offer their “bodies as living sacrifices” (verse 1), which conveys the thought that the “body” embraces the whole man/woman. Paul said that when a person receives Jesus, “The new creation has come. The old has gone” (see 2 Corinthians 5:17). Salvation brings a change in one’s heart and the believer is expected to live a life different from the one he/she lived prior to salvation. At salvation, the Holy Spirit becomes active in the believer’s heart and the believer’s heart is subsequently bent on serving, obeying, and pleasing God. To live holy lives, we must do the following: (1) We are to be led by the Holy Spirit. Believers must obey the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The ministry of the Holy Spirit works not only to “teach you all things and will remind you of everything” (John 14:26), but also to convict believers when they sin (see John 16:8). (2) We are to surrender our will to God’s will as we follow Him. One of the crucial keys to holy living is surrendering. We surrender when we offer our bodies as living sacrifices. To sacrifice means “to forfeit, surrender, or give up something.” Surrendering is yielding and relinquishing our rights and allowing God, through His Holy Spirit, to direct us. Therefore, to sacrifice or surrender our will to God’s will is to give up any right to be our own boss and allow God to have complete control. (3) We must read and meditate on God’s Word. Psalm 1 says that we are to meditate on God’s Word day and night. Allow the Holy Spirit to do His transforming work in your life and you will enjoy a more intimate relationship with God. In sum, our offering our bodies as living sacrifices requires that we give God our all—and it is God’s desire that believers live lives that are pure and holy. Second Timothy 2:22 serves as a reminder of what God requires of His children: “Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”
Personal Daily Prayer Devotional Guidance—Daily Affirmation

Today, I will begin praying that God will guide me in making the right choices so that I can live my life to please God. I vow to daily cooperate with the Holy Spirit’s transforming work in my life. I understand this is my true and proper worship. I will institute the following spiritual disciplines in my daily prayer life to accomplish this goal:

1. Start my day in prayer, thanking God for another day to spend in service and worship of Him.
2. During my morning prayer, I will pray for people and the situations I may encounter this day so that I may make the right decisions and be receptive to those in need.
3. At midday, I will pause and reflect on how my day has been going, repent of those things that I did not do well, and praise God for those situations I have been successful in.
4. At the end of the day, I will spend some quiet time thinking about my day. I will thank God for another day to thank and praise Him for giving me an opportunity to do what is right in His sight.

Today’s Small Group Prayer Guide/Activity

Volunteers will be selected to read a statement below (along with the Scripture) aloud and pray for victory for those young people locally, nationally, and globally who may be struggling in that area of their spiritual lives. As a wrap-up to the lesson, the leader will then lead the group in prayer.

1. I desire to live a holy life and to do what is pleasing in God’s sight. (Read 1 Peter 1:15-16.)
2. I realize that to grow in God, I need to meditate on God’s Word daily. (Read Joshua 1:8.)
3. To live a holy life, it is up to me to take the steps necessary to guard my heart from those things that are corrupting. If my heart is pure, my life will be pure. But if my heart is corrupt, my life will be corrupt. (Read Proverbs 4:23.)
4. Living a life of holiness will require that I flee the temptations, lures, and enticements of the devil. (Read James 4:7.)
5. There are times when I may stray away from God’s will. When I genuinely ask God for forgiveness, God promises to forgive me and cleanse me from all unrighteousness. (Read 1 John 1:9.)

Service Project: Give as Your Heart Is Burdened for Others

Holiness is a deliberate choice as one seeks to please God. Ask God to lead you to a Christian peer who is struggling to live for Christ. Then, pray together this month for their strength to abandon fleshly desires and live a life dedicated to holiness.
Today’s Lesson Objective: Participants will learn that to please God is to do those things that God approves.

NOTE: Materials Needed for the Small Group Prayer Guide/Activity: Large map or globe of the world; compass; handheld electronic media devices available; Internet access.

Bible Study Title: Giving God Our All: I Want to Please God

Scripture Reading: Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)

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.
2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Bible Exposition

Paul’s letter to the Romans is not only Paul’s longest letter written, but also, Paul recorded his longest greetings in the letter to the Christians in Rome. Paul opened his letter to the believers in Rome, establishing himself as God’s man by identifying himself as a “servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God” (Romans 1:1). Just as Paul addressed the letter to those in Rome “who are called to belong to Jesus Christ…who are loved by God and called to be his holy people” (Romans 1:6, 7), his letter is for those today who belong to Jesus. In Romans 12, Paul’s exhortations to the Roman believers were given to inform them as to how they were to behave and to encourage them to dedicate themselves totally to God. Yesterday, we learned from Paul that believers must set aside their “bodies as living sacrifices” (verse 1); Paul was using the “body” as a metaphor for the inner life of the entire person. As believers live holy lives, this service is well-pleasing to God, which is a believer’s reasonable service (verse 1). As believers present themselves to God in service—having been redeemed by the blood of Jesus at Calvary—they realize that not only is such offering reasonable, but also, every believer has a duty to sacrifice himself/herself to God as an instrument of righteousness. As Paul called himself a servant, believers must also have servant hearts. Believers must be willing to allow themselves to be used in God’s service, doing the work which God has called them to do. This service is pleasing to God. As believers, a service we can give to God includes the proclamation of the Gospel or the Good News. Winning souls for Jesus is one of the greatest missionary tasks that we can do for the kingdom of God. Every believer should have a passion for the lost and seek to be Gospel people. There are young people actively involved in missionary work, spreading the Good News of Jesus. Let us remember to pray for young people all over the world…that God will continue to give them the passion to live for Christ. In addition, let us pray for young people who do not yet know God that they will one day turn from sin, come to Jesus, and give their all to God.
Personal Daily Prayer Devotional Guidance

At the 2013 Baptist World Alliance, the Youth Singapore Declaration declared that as followers of Jesus they are to be part of the change they desired to see in this world—stating that it is evident that things on this Earth are not as our God created them to be. Therefore, the Baptist World Alliance covenanted together to be “Gospel” people whose mission is represented in the mission statement below (using the acronym G.O.S.P.E.L.):

G = Giving
O = Open to God’s Mission
S = Speaking Out
P = Prophetic Action
E = Evangelization
L = Living

There are young people all over the world who are engaged in active missionary service to reach people with the Gospel. In the space below, using the acronym G.O.S.P.E.L., list ways that you will give of yourself in order to share the Gospel message with others in your part of the world.

G–Giving. I will ____________________________________________________________

O–Open to God’s Mission. I will ______________________________________________

S–Speaking Out. I will ______________________________________________________

P–Prophetic Action. I will ____________________________________________________

E–Evangelization. I will _____________________________________________________

L–Living. I will ___________________________________________________________
Today’s Small Group Prayer Guide/Activity

Your Bible Study Group leader will break up the class into four (4) groups. The group leader will place a large map or globe of the world on the front desk or in the center of the room. Each group will represent the directions of the world: north, east, south, and west. Each group is asked to locate newspaper articles regarding situations around the world (in all directions of the world)—by using their Smart phones or similar handheld electronic media devices—which are in need of prayer and intercession (e.g., hunger, wars, poverty, peace, diseases, human teenage trafficking, etc.). Each group should identify those needs by writing them on a sheet of paper. Each group will then be asked to take their global prayer requests and needs, stand and turn in the direction of the world they represent (north, east, south, or west), and each member of the group will take a turn praying for young people all over the world for their needs, courage, and faith. Each member of the group is asked to take his/her list home and remember to pray for his/her section of the world every night this month during his/her evening personal time of prayer.

Service Project: Give by Devoting Yourself to Prayer

Select a prayer partner and for the entire month, pray for churches in your nation as well as for young people everywhere to be bold witnesses for God. Remember that when you give of yourself in prayer, you are doing the will of God—and that pleases God.
Today's Lesson Objective: Participants will learn that their worship must be real, true, and genuine in order for it to please God.

Bible Study Title: Giving God Our All: Is My Worship True and Pleasing?

Scripture Reading: Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)

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.
2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Bible Exposition

As we continue examining Romans 12:1-2, today we will look at Paul's statement when we offer our bodies as living sacrifices—holy and acceptable to God; this represents true and proper worship. What is worship? According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, worship is “to honor or show reverence to a divine being with great respect or devotion.” In John 4:23-24, Jesus says, “A time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.” Giving of ourselves in worship to God is a spiritual act of worship. Worship is all about God, and God is to be the object of our worship. In fact, a person worships God because he/she recognizes that God is worthy of worship. In John 4:23-24, Jesus is not prescribing how worship should be performed—Jesus just wants one's worship to be true, genuine, and spiritual, which God considers pleasing. Worship can be private or in public. Worship can be expressed to God in various forms: through praise and worship of God during the worship service; through song, dance, reading the Scripture, meditating, giving of the offering, memorizing Scripture, participating when the ordinances are observed, and so forth. Often we mistake the weekly “worship service” as our only time of “worship.” In reality, corporate worship prepares us for the worship of giving of ourselves in service to God and in service to others after the worship service. How can we worship God by serving others? Paul answered that question in Romans 12: “Be devoted to one another…above yourselves….Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality” (verses 10, 12-13). It is clear from our Scripture text that Paul was explaining to his readers how they are to worship. Since it was because Jesus died on the Cross for our sins, we must be thankful for every opportunity to worship God. Show your gratitude to God in worship by giving of yourself in service to others. In sum, worshipping God is not about
you—neither is it about what makes you comfortable. When you offer true worship to God, you will be grateful to God for the chance to serve others.

**Personal Daily Prayer Devotional Guidance**

Hebrews 10:19-22a reads as follows: “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith.” In the space below, answer the following questions. You will not be asked to share your responses. These questions are to be answered during your private time you have set aside in devotion to God for worship.

1. The writer of the book of Hebrews told us that we are to come to God with confidence and assurance. Sin blocks that access and will keep us from having confident access to God. Have you identified and repented of your sin, including forgiving others? Why or why not?

___________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________

2. Read Hebrews 10:19-22 and select a verse that has personal application in your life. How does it apply to you?

___________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________

3. Write a prayer asking God to continue His work in you.

___________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________

**Today’s Small Group Prayer Guide/Activity**

1. Participants are encouraged to share with one another what decisions they have made (e.g., turn away from a specific sin, or do something new that will result in their worship being more intentional, real, and
genuine, etc.). Making these commitments shows that participants are responding to God’s Word in their lives.

2. Participants are asked to share any personal needs or needs of family and friends; identify any ministries or mission groups that have specific needs.

3. After everyone has been allowed the opportunity to share (without manipulation), the group leader will ask everyone to form a circle together, holding hands for a time of intercessory prayer.

**Suggested Prayer:**

_O God, we gather together to pray for young people everywhere. We pray for young people who have given their all to God in service to God and others. We specifically pray for the young people who have responded to the voice of God today and have made a commitment to make a change in their lives to the glory of God. We also pray for those local ministries and mission groups near and far, and we pray that all of their needs will be met. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen._

**Service Project: Give as an Act of Christian Service**

Participants are asked to perform an act of service for someone in need this week. Your act of service may include running an errand for an elderly person or visiting the sick. Acts of Christian service provide chances to worship God through service to others, and even provide opportunities for evangelism.
Today's Lesson Objective: Participants will learn that people's living holy lives and giving themselves to God means that they will not conform to the world's standards but will allow themselves to be transformed into Christ's likeness.

Bible Study Title: Giving God Our All: Is My Worship True and Pleasing?

Scripture Reading: Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)

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.

2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Bible Exposition

The Bible Study focus today is Romans 12:2a. Paul instructed believers to refrain from conforming to the world's value system. Even though we live in an ungodly world, the Bible warns believers neither to walk in the counsel of the ungodly (Psalm 1:1) nor to have the same kind of thinking as the world. Instead, God wants every believer to be transformed by the renewing of their minds (verse 2). The word transformation means “to change.” One of the marks of the believer whose life has been transformed is a life that evidences the presence of Jesus. The believer is transformed from the inside out. In other words, once a person accepts Christ into his/her life there should be a noticeable/visible change. A spiritually transformed person in Christ thinks, talks, and behaves differently—thus the renewing. A believer cannot accept Christ into his/her life and then continue behaving in the same way and participating in the same ungodly activities that he/she engaged in prior to his/her salvation. A spiritually transformed person refuses to conform to the world's standards. Transformation literally changes people's perspective on life, how they treat others, and even how they respond to situations. The spiritually transformed person is more interested in pleasing God. A spiritually transformed person is also occupied in learning more about God. Therefore, they will fill their minds with God's Word. Transforming to the likeness of Christ can be accomplished by doing the following: (1) studying the character of Jesus. Jesus was all about loving, forgiving, serving, and giving. If believers want to be Christ-like, they will cease doing anything that brings God displeasure (e.g., gossiping, lying, and any other form of sin) and seek to do God's will; in addition, (2) as believers grow in the grace and knowledge of God (see 2 Peter 3:18), they will begin transforming into Christlikeness. When a person first receives Christ as Savior, he/she begins as “a babe in Christ” (see 1 Peter 2:2). But as new believers crave the pure spiritual milk of God's Word, they will begin growing up
in their salvation. As that new believer grows in wisdom and knowledge—and the more that believer experiences God’s grace, love, and mercy—this brings about spiritual growth. In sum, it is God’s desire that every believer forsake following the world’s value system and be continuously transformed into Christlikeness as his or her mind and heart are renewed.

**Personal Daily Prayer Devotional Guidance**

Select a quiet place for your personal private devotion. Read the Scriptures below. As you are reading God’s Word, your heart will start responding to God’s Word and you will begin to praise God. As you read each Scripture, slowly you will be surprised as your heart will continue to praise God. After you have praised God and prayed, sit quietly and meditate on what you have read and experienced. Remain quiet for a time and listen as God speaks to your heart.

1. **Scriptures:** Proverbs 4:23; 23:7; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 3:16.

2. **Prayer:** God, continue to transform my heart and mind to think on those things that are pleasing to You. As I am continually conformed to the image of Your Son, help me to grow in prayer and remember others around the world in prayer. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

3. **Personal Worship:** Worship God in your spirit as you recite God’s Word back to God.

4. **Meditation:** Through meditation, God’s Word will begin to dwell in you and become a resource of wisdom in your heart and mind.

Write down your thoughts below, in the space entitled, “My Personal Prayer Journal.”

**My Personal Prayer Journal:***

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________
**Today's Small Group Prayer Guide/Activity**

The group leader will lead you in a roundtable discussion on the following questions:

1. Read 1 Corinthians 6:19. What does it mean to you to be bought with a price?
2. What can young people do to enjoy a more intimate relationship with God?
3. What is the danger of living for the moment without regard for the consequences?
4. How can young people help each other fight against sin?
5. How can you encourage a Christian peer to be a nonconformist to the world’s ways?
6. Does failing to conform to the world bring hostility from peers and others? Why or why not?
7. Can one person in your friendship circle who chooses to conform to the world’s ways infect the entire group? Why or why not?

After discussion, and with the goal of developing a real community of prayer, each participant will be asked to share any personal prayer requests that relate specifically to the lesson. The group leader will then ask volunteers to pray. Remember that the purpose of this time of prayer is to invite God’s supernatural intervention into the lives of the group members and to request God’s answers to the prayers.

**Service Project: Give by Showing God’s Grace in Action**

Paul taught that one’s belief should impact his/her walk. Therefore, you are challenged to be different and become an active disciple of Christ. This week, you are challenged to worship God by seeking out a ministry opportunity to volunteer and assist with a project that will show God’s grace in action!
Today’s Lesson Objective: Participants will leave understanding that God’s good, pleasing, and perfect will is done when they have allowed God to totally saturate their minds and beings, and when they have fully surrendered themselves to God.

NOTE: Materials Needed for the Small Group Prayer Guide/Activity: White card stock for each person, coloring markers or coloring pencils and scissors.

Bible Study Title: Giving God Our All: I Want to Do God’s Perfect Will

Scripture Reading: Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)

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.
2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Bible Exposition

Today, we will examine Paul’s final admonition in Romans 12:2b. Paul was teaching that if a believer submits to the transformation process by the renewing of his/her mind, then he/she will be able to approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing, and perfect will. To approve means “to establish, to test or to try.” A believer will never know God’s will for his/her life until he/she yields his/her all to God and by doing the will of God from his/her heart. (See Ephesians 6:6.) It is impractical to believe that God will reveal His plan to a disobedient heart—to a believer who refuses to obey God by failing to yield his/her all to God. This is a very important principle for believers to grasp. When believers constantly disobey God—giving in to fleshly desires and other sins—God will not reveal His will to those who refuse to surrender their all to God. As believers obey God, God’s plan and purpose may be revealed to them. If believers are not sure what God’s will is for their lives, they are invited to ask, seek, and knock (see Matthew 7:7-11). Even as young people, God wants to unfold His will to you. Believers must understand that God loves us and God has great possibilities for us as His children. Jeremiah 29:11 serves as a reminder of God’s divine plan for His children: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’ God’s divine plan for you is only for you! Acknowledge God in all of your ways (see Proverbs 3:5-6). While another person’s purpose and plan may be different from yours, God does have specific plans and a will for your life. In the meantime, you are challenged to
continue reading God’s Word daily and allow God’s Word to minister to your heart. Serve God as you serve others (e.g., being a friend, using your God-given gifts and talents to bless the lives of others, volunteering in your community, and so forth). Also, allow the Holy Spirit to do His continuing transforming work in your life. Finally, as you meditate on God’s Word daily, obey the instructions given in Romans 12:1-2 and you will be able to test the will of God for your life as you strive to be a living sacrifice for Jesus Christ.

**Personal Daily Prayer Devotional Guidance**

God wants not only your body but also your mind and heart. In your personal devotional/worship time, you are asked to review the questions below, read the Scriptures, and answer the questions honestly. Afterwards, pray as God speaks to your heart.

1. Is there anything keeping you from completely serving God? (See Romans 6:12-13; 8:11-13.)

   ___________________________________________________________________________________

   ___________________________________________________________________________________

2. Have you committed to worshipping God by presenting yourself to God as a “living sacrifice?” (See Romans 12:1.) If not, why not?

   ___________________________________________________________________________________

   ___________________________________________________________________________________

3. Are there prayer requests you have presented to God but God still has not revealed His “perfect will” to you? If yes, is there anything that is hindering God from answering your prayer (e.g., un-confessed sin, un-forgiveness, doubt, etc.)? If so, repent and then wait on God for an answer. (See Psalm 37:3; 2 Timothy 1:7; and 1 John 1:9.)

   ___________________________________________________________________________________

   ___________________________________________________________________________________

4. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. What does this verse say to you about being transformed from worldliness to becoming a true follower of Christ? How does following the instructions in this verse help you to “test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will”? (See Romans 12:2b.)

   ___________________________________________________________________________________

   ___________________________________________________________________________________
Today's Small Group Prayer Guide/Activity

Each participant will receive a sheet of white card stock in order to create a “mask.” Cut out a life-sized shape of a face (including eyes and mouth; decorate it, if you wish). One side represents what you think people see, know, or believe about you (e.g., on the outside). The other side represents what you feel about yourself (e.g., things that are going on inside of you; what other people necessarily do not know about you or see). Each young person is asked to share his/her mask with the following verse as the guiding Scripture:

_Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will._—Romans 12:2 (NIV)

Next, join hands in a circle. Each participant will articulate in one word what he/she will affirm as an aspect that he/she will transform in his/her life (e.g., giving, service, worship, devotion, loving, and so forth). Each participant will pray a prayer aloud, rededicating himself/herself to God. The group leader will close the session with a prayer for all young people locally, nationally, and globally who are rededicating themselves to living lives that are pleasing to God.

_Service Project: Give by Sharing Your Talents_

Sharing your God-given talents with others is an excellent way of doing God’s will. Examine your life and your talents. Whatever you are good at doing, use those skills to bless someone else. As you give of yourself in the service of God and others, you will be greatly blessed.

The writer of this year’s Bible studies is Rev. Judith T. Lester. Rev. Lester is an instructor for the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., Sunday School Publishing Board’s Annual Conference. She is also a certified instructor for the Wisconsin General Baptist State Convention Congress of Christian Education.