

Teacher's Guide for Living Holy Theme: Holiness in Our Wills

Life Application:

Consecrating ourselves to God and His service, and submitting to His will for our lives.

Key Verse for Meditation:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. – Romans 12:1

Focus Scriptures:

Psalms 40:8; 143:10; Matthew 6:10; 26:36-46; John 4:34; 5:30; Galatians 2:20

Lesson Key:

If we truly wish to consecrate our wills to God and be fully devoted to Him, then we must trust that God's view of life is higher than our own. Rather than using circumstances as the "lens" through which we view life and making our own judgments and decisions, we surrender our limited view and seek to be led by the One who governs and directs the events of time, and has a specific plan and purpose for our lives.

Introduction:

Each of us must decide personally what place God will hold in our lives. Will we allow Him to fully control us? Will we follow Him unreservedly and devote ourselves completely to His direction? Will we give Him our wills?

Some people cling to "ownership" of their wills, though they attempt to "rent" themselves to Jesus Christ. When they need help, they want to be able to look to God. They want to enjoy His blessings on their lives. However, they still want to retain control in a portion of their lives, so they do not make a full surrender. We need to let God own us! When He does, we let go of our own plans, wishes, and ambitions, and we surrender ourselves to the sovereign will of God.

Surrender is a state of the heart which must be actively cultivated by the one who seeks to live a holy, consecrated life. There is a *moment* of surrender, but there is also the *practice* of surrender. The problem with a "living sacrifice" might be that it can remove itself from the altar! Paul said, "I die daily," and that must be our purpose also—to daily allow God to control our wills and to be the Lord and Master of our lives.

Opener Ideas/Activities:

Show a set of keys to your class. Tell your students you are going to read them a short story about a very important key—the key to the will. Then read the F.B. Meyer story (provided in the teacher helps material for this lesson) about how he gave God the key to his will. Use this story as a springboard to your lesson.

The downloadable video clip "God-o-Matic" is quite thought-provoking and could be a good starting point for your class time. Search for the words "absolute surrender" at <http://sermoncentral.sermonspice.com>.

Bring a container of water, a chunk of dry ice, and a hot plate to class. Point out that water yields to the cold and turns into ice at 32 degrees Fahrenheit. At 212 degrees Fahrenheit, water yields to heat and begins to boil. Explain that just as water can transition to different physical states, our spiritual state

can also change, and the degree to which we yield ourselves to God can be raised or lowered. It is up to us how much we yield ourselves to God. God is gracious to fill us with His living water, but it is up to us to keep that river flowing and not let it become “iced over.” God is willing to “ignite” our lives with the power of His Spirit, but it is up to us to consistently yield our wills to Him in order to be readily ignited.

Questions from Student Handout:

1. Our key verse, Romans 12:1, tells us that we are to present our bodies a “living sacrifice.” What does this mean, and why is it to be considered a “reasonable service”?

A living sacrifice is the yielding of our lives to God. We must be willing to follow God’s leading each and every day. A sacrifice is killed; so we are to be dead to ourselves (something that is only accomplished through the Lord’s help). While this might seem to us like heroic service, it is reasonable when we consider the price Jesus paid to redeem us.

2. We consecrate our lives to God as we seek and receive the experiences of salvation, sanctification, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Why, then, is it necessary to continue to consecrate on a daily basis? James 4:7; Revelation 22:14

Submission to God is what helps us keep our connection with Him and overcome the devil (James 4:7). Continued consecration keeps the offering fresh in our minds and hearts, and on the altar. It helps us keep our wills surrendered. As we draw closer to God, He will show us new aspects in the consecrations. Daily consecration also helps us keep our final goal in sight (Revelation 22:14).

3. Jesus is our Perfect Example of consecration of the will (see Matthew 26:39). What does it take to be able to say, “Thy will be done,” as Jesus did?

Class discussion will likely bring out that it takes trust in God’s plans, prayer, and obedience each step of the way. Jesus modeled all of those for us in the Garden when He faced the cup of suffering and separation from His Father.

4. What are some areas of our lives where the surrender of our wills might be difficult?

Any area we want to control—time, money, entertainment, friends, future spouse, etc. Maybe the answer should be in every area!

Note that the areas of difficulty will depend on the person; each of us has our own areas where consecration is a challenge.

Theologian and author F. B. Meyer told of a time in his early Christian life when he struggled with making a complete consecration to God. He envisioned his life as a home with many rooms. In prayer, he promised God the key to every room except for one small closet that he wished to keep for himself. God let him know that He would not accept such an arrangement—it was all or nothing. Eventually, Meyer realized the critical nature of the crossroads at which he found himself, and he told the Lord, “I am not willing, but I am willing to be made willing!” In a moment, he broke through to victory.

5. Might the devil tempt us to consecrate something foolish or detrimental? How can we discern if it is God or the devil talking to us?

This would be a good opportunity to talk to your class about being cautious in making vows to God. Sometimes the devil would like us to make a foolish vow that would be extremely difficult to keep. Also, the enemy might try to get us to do something foolish to prove that we are consecrated.

Consecration, however, is an open-ended willingness to do whatever God wants, and there is great safety and value in this. There is nothing in our lives that we should not consecrate to God, for we want Him to have full control. Sometimes this has been compared to signing a blank check—we let God fill it in.

Regarding discerning whether it is God or the devil talking to us, the Bible says to “try the spirits” to see if they are from God. The devil harasses; God corrects and is clear, usually only addressing one point. We can ask ourselves, Will the consecration draw us closer to God?

6. What are the benefits of having a life and will completely consecrated to God? See Psalm 40:8; James 1:25, Revelation 22:14

Discussion of the question should bring out that some of the benefits are that we will be completely satisfied (Psalm 40:8), we will have God’s blessing (James 1:25), and we will obtain eternal life (Revelation 22:14).

Broaden the discussion by encouraging your students to suggest other benefits. Some thoughts that might be suggested are:

- *God will have free access to use us for His glory*
- *We will have a clear conscience*
- *God will work things out for good in our lives*
- *We will get past spiritual roadblocks*
- *God’s Spirit can flow freely through us*
- *We enjoy an intimate relationship with God*
- *We will have God’s direction in details*

Additional Questions:

What is Satan’s perspective of a life that is absolutely surrendered to God?

Satan knows that total commitment to Christ means NO commitment to him, so a war will take place. Sometimes we experience this conflict when we are attempting to draw nearer to God, or make a specific consecration. It can be a real battle!

What are some of the arguments Satan might use to try to dissuade us from making a consecration?

Some of the enemy’s arguments might include:

- *It is not necessary.*
- *No one else is doing it.*
- *Everyone will think you are crazy, or radical, or holier-than-thou.*
- *This is just your own idea, not God’s.*
- *Think about it tomorrow . . . or next week . . . at camp meeting . . . after you are married, etc.*

What will attack or tear down our consecrations?

Consecrations can be torn down by getting lax in our spiritual lives; ignoring a check of the Spirit; closely associating with those who might not have the same goals/desires, etc.

Sometimes when we are making consecrations, the devil tries to overwhelm us by telling us that the Lord is asking us to do all the things we are scared to do. How can we defeat the threats of the devil when we are seeking to draw closer to God?

We can rest in the promise that God will not ask anything of us unless there is a good reason. Consequently, there will be no need to be scared of consecrating to do anything for the Lord. If we are not scared to obey the Lord, the devil will have no place to threaten us.

When we are sanctified, God removes our sinful nature and our motives are purely to please God. Why, then, does pleasing God still require a degree of personal discipline? For example, consider the discipline necessary to consistently do our daily devotions, witness to others, seek deeper experiences, etc.

We need discipline to overcome our human nature, because the human nature is not eradicated

when we are sanctified. Despite the pure heart that wants to obey God, our human nature still wants to sleep instead of do devotions, is scared of being embarrassed by testifying, is too lazy or overwhelmed to put effort into seeking God, etc. “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41).

Should a Christian always have to know the reason God does what He does? Why or why not?

It is natural to desire an answer, but we will not always receive one. That is where faith comes in. The point should be made that although we may not understand an event or circumstance, if we are to gain rather than become embittered and confused over the lack of an explanation, we must choose to believe that the divine hand of God has permitted it. Acceptance can lead to spiritual growth instead of despair, to blessing instead of bitterness.

What attitudes or characteristics in our lives might make a full consecration of our wills to God difficult?

If we overly pamper ourselves in any area, it will become easier and easier to serve ourselves and more and more difficult to serve God. Diligence helps with the Christian walk, so carelessness, procrastination, etc., are harmful.

It might be beneficial to make two lists of attitudes and characteristics on the board under Helpful and Hindrance.

What is the opposite of surrender?

Resistance, pride, unyieldingness, defiance, rebellion. None of these attitudes should have any part in the life of a believer.

Give examples of Bible characters who displayed a surrendered spirit.

Some thoughts may include:

- Job—Job 1:21
- Mary—Luke 1:38
- Jesus—Matthew 26:39

Word Search:

In Greek, the meaning of the word *Lord* is, “one with authority; an owner.” In order for us to rightly call Jesus the “One with authority” in our lives, we must have submitted ourselves to Him. In order for us to call Jesus the “One who owns” our lives, we must have placed our lives in His hands.

Some people attempt to “rent” themselves to Jesus Christ. When they need help, they want to be able to look to God. They want to enjoy His blessings on their lives. However, they still want to retain control in a portion of their lives, so they do not make a full surrender to God. We do not want to rent ourselves to Jesus; we need to let Him own us. When He owns us, we let go of our own plans, wishes, and ambitions, and we seek for the sovereign will of our Lord. – *From a sermon by Duane Ross*

Supplemental Resources:

“Parable of the Potter” by Rich Barrett, *Higher Way* Vol.92-1

“A Total Commitment” by Ivon Wilson, *Higher Way* Vol.91-5

“Jesus: Is He Really Lord?” by Bill McKibben, *Higher Way* Vol.98-2

“Every Heartbeat” by Trina Paulsen, *Higher Way* Vol.92-5

“Conquering Through Crucifixion” by Dwight Baltzell, *Higher Way* Vol.89-4

“Consecration” – Tract #46

F. B. Meyer Story of Yielding His Will