Whole-Life Worship

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[0:00] Well, good evening. It's a joy and privilege to get to open God's Word with you guys and to! understand what it says. I want to introduce our study this evening by talking about a typical character.

So how many of you guys have been to a gym before? Right? Yeah. So there's a there's there's kind of a stereotype of a person that pretty much we all know. Right? Everyone basically agrees that if you want to get stronger and build more muscle, you need to lift weights. And oftentimes the goal is not to just look good, but you want your body to be strong so you can help in a crisis or help other people and do some other things.
And lots of people after going to the gym for a few months, they they see their strength increase. That's a good thing. But there are also people who everybody knows skip leg day. Right?
In other words, they're all about the bench. They're all about the curls. They're all about the the skull crushers, or at least that's what they were called when I was growing up. But when it comes to time to work their legs, they'll skip. And they may intend to make their body strong, but they fail to consider the strength of their whole body and just focus on one area.
Their arms may even be stronger than their legs, and they'll call themselves strong. Now, it can be easy to see those things at the gym, but I fear that we take our Christian life that way sometimes.
[1:29] Our temptation is to compartmentalize our faith. Right? We know we need to be the Christian and honor Jesus when we're at church or when we're around other Christians, but sometimes that's all we focus on.

Practically, we keep our holiness and pursuit of Jesus to only certain areas of our lives. And others around us don't always notice that. I'm thinking about Jesus when I'm around other Christians at church, but what about when I'm not?
What about other areas of my life? In our text this evening, my goal is that you would see that the Bible calls us to live every area of our lives for God's glory.
That's what true worship for the Christian is. So what we're going to do, if you want to turn with me to Romans chapter 12, if you're not already there, we're going to read the text, then we're going to define worship biblically, and then think through three main things as we work through it.
And then hopefully at the end, we'll have some areas of implication of our lives where we can apply biblical whole life worship. So let me read our text this evening, and we'll start in Romans chapter 12.
[2:46] Paul writes in Romans chapter 12, verse 1, I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Verse 2, Paul begins our text this evening by saying, I appeal to you, therefore, brothers.
Paul is urging us, or sometimes we would say exhorting us, to do something, right? Then he says, I appeal to you, therefore. And just like any good Bible reader, we say this all the time, whenever you're reading your Bible, and you see the word therefore, it's helpful to ask the question, what's it there for, right?
Why did this person say the word therefore, right? What is Paul building from? What makes him say therefore? And really, it's the previous 11 chapters of the book, right?
If you'll look back with me just at verses 33 through 36 of chapter 11. Paul says this in chapter 11, Oh, the depths of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!
[4:13] How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things.

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To him be glory forever. Amen. Amen. So Paul is capping off all of this theology he's talked about up to the book with a song of praise, right?
And I want to talk about Paul's basic letter structure. If you are reading a letter by the Apostle Paul, it typically follows this format. If it's to a church or to a group of Christians.
He will start and cover roughly the first half of the letter and talk about theology, right? Things we learn about God. Things that we know about him. Who he is.
And what he's done for us. And in us. And through us. Right? And then he'll spend roughly the last half of the letter, in most cases, talking about what we should do in light of those truths that we learn about God.
[5:16] And in Romans, it's a little bit lopsided, right? He spends 11 chapters of the 16 talking about theology. He says he spends 11 full chapters of beautiful theology.

But he doesn't end the letter there, even though he could have. Paul spends the last five chapters of Romans showing us how this theology is lived out. Right? So he appeals to us, therefore.
Because of who God is and what he's done for us in Christ, therefore, Paul wants us to do something. Now, when it comes to knowledge and action, there are plenty of people who don't connect right knowledge with right action.
Look no further than Judas. He knew who Jesus was, and he even heard his teaching. He was in those intimate teaching sessions. However, that knowledge didn't get to his heart.
So his actions never changed. Maybe even you know somebody who's pretty smart when it comes to Bible things, right? They may know what year this book was written, and maybe they could cite an Old Testament timeline.
[6:20] But they don't obey what it says. Paul is connecting right knowledge with right action. What is the knowledge? Well, God has done the most amazing thing in all of history.

He has brought life to you and I who were dead. Because he loves us, he sent his only son, the only perfect person to ever live, to take our sins on himself.
Jesus paid our sin debt so we could live. And Paul impacts all that theology in the beginning and first half of the book of Romans. But now it's time to consider another thing.
What do we do in light of that? Because of all this, Paul appeals to us. As I said before, in light of who God is and what he's done for us, Paul is urging us to some kind of action.
Right? And what I want to do for everything to line up in a way that's hopefully helpful, is I want to zoom in to worship first and then unpack three parts of us that this whole life worship applies to.
[7:27] So I want to zoom in on worship first. Paul says, this is your spiritual worship. Now, if you're reading the ESV or some other translations, it probably says this is your spiritual worship.

Well, that phrase spiritual worship could also be translated reasonable service. Now, I'll give you an example. If we went back to June of last year, right, when the clock ran out on game seven of the NBA finals, the only reasonable response for us in Oklahoma was shouting and cheering.
Right? Now, if you went to the parade after that game and booed the team, right, that would be unreasonable. That wouldn't make any sense because thunder up, baby.
Right? Paul is saying that in light of what God has done for us, there's really only one reasonable response. There's only one reasonable action we can do in light of this truth.
So Paul says that this is our spiritual worship. Well, it can be translated either service or worship. And one dictionary defines worship this way.
[8:36] It says this, to adore, to pay divine honors to, to reverence with supreme respect and veneration. One theologian defined worship this way.

He says, it is seeing and savoring the worthiness of God and responding as he deserves. It's seeing and savoring the worthiness of God and responding as he deserves.
The same theologian also in talking about worship said this, worship will only be as genuinely high as your knowledge of God is deep. That's exactly what Paul is getting at.
Our lives of worship and what we know about God are interconnected. What we believe and how we live are bound together. What you believe about God will be reflected in how you live, whether you're a Christian or not.
Right? So, as we kind of think of putting all of that together, I want to think of a practical definition for worship. And the way I like to think about it is this way. Worship, you could also say worth-ship.
[9:43] You could put it in one word. Right? But worth-ship. When someone is worshiping, right, they are ascribing worth to God.

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They are ascribing worth to God, talking about how worthy he is. Now, this can be done in a variety of ways, as we'll look at this evening.
And the kind of worship that Paul is talking about here in our text is both public and private. It's not just how we live on Sundays and Wednesdays.
But let's back up. So, first we're going to look at worshiping with our bodies. So, Paul says, I appeal to you, brothers, by the mercies of God, by what God has done for us in Jesus, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice.
What are we presenting? Well, first, to present means to offer. Right? A presentation is something put before someone else's eyes. How do we respond to God's grace in our lives?
[10:46] Well, we put something before him. And as Paul says, that something we present is our body. And in contrast to Old Testament offerings that would be killed and burned on the altar, Paul calls this offering a living sacrifice.

And when Paul says that we present our bodies, just like I mentioned earlier, he's talking about our entire lives. Right? Our whole lives.
Not just my arm or my leg or my finger. Every part of our lives is in this deal. Now, our bodies as a living sacrifice involves what we do.
Now, and Paul refers to this offering of worship as a sacrifice. And there are some similarities to Old Testament sacrifice that I think are helpful to point out. So, when we think about sacrifices given in the Old Testament, you'll probably hear some similar words, as Paul says in Romans chapter 12, but there are some characteristics.
One characteristic of an Old Testament sacrifice is that, ideally, it came from someone's own possessions. Right? It was sacrificial in the sense that it comes at your own cost.
[11:59] Right? A person making an offering in the Old Testament would bring part of what God had already provided for them to the altar. Secondly, as Paul says here, it's holy and acceptable.

To be holy means that those sacrifices were without spot or blemish. Right? They offered God their very best. And the purity of the offering was crucial. As a matter of fact, the purity of the offering symbolized the purity of heart of the person offering it.
Then he says, or then another thing is that it was acceptable. It meets specifications. Right? There are certain specifications given for the offerings that those Israelites could present.
And in order to be acceptable, right, it had to meet those specifications. Right? Most of the time, it was the firstborn of the flock, the first fruits of the harvest, and it came with faith.
Because this was the first and best of their harvest or their flock, and they were trusting God to provide for them. And this transitions us into the three elements of our sacrifice that Paul talks about us giving.
[13:05] And the three elements of our sacrifice is first, that it's living. The sacrifice we offer is living. And I think that's important because while we will all eventually die, Paul is not saying that the offering that we give is just our own death.

But it's our entire life. It involves spending years of your life preaching Christ to your family that they would be converted. It's spending your entire life fighting sin every day you wake up.
It's dealing with persecution from unbelievers. Matter of fact, lots of us have probably lost friendships. We've sacrificed time, money, and relationships all for Jesus.
Now, none of us can probably count how many times we've said no to sin. The Christian life takes a lot to live. But praise the Lord that he strengthens us to do it.
Living for Christ also doesn't just happen by accident. It's not something you just wake up and it lands in your lap. But it takes effort to fight sin and chase after Jesus in our daily lives.
[14:10] God calls us to obedience. And while Christian parents and a biblical preaching church help point us in that direction, as we'll look at here shortly, your obedience can only come from your heart.

So, Paul says that the sacrifice that we offer to God as a result of the gospel is living. And he says it's holy. It means to be pure.
It means to be set apart. Dedicated to God. Another definition that I really love is it says that it's worthy of God. In order to be holy, something needs to be worthy of God.
So, going back to my practical definition, our worth-ship of God should be worthy of God. Paul is telling us how we present our lives to God.

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It's through a pursuit of holiness. The implication is that we're fighting sin. The offering of our lives should not contain any allowed sin in our lives.
[15:10] That would render it unholy. Now, we still stumble into sin. That's a reality. But the Christian life is marked by repentance, not sin.

Our aim is not sin, but holiness. So, the sacrifice we offer is living. Then he says it's holy. Lastly, it's acceptable.
And acceptable means to be pleasing or well-pleasing. I'll illustrate it this way. You have an English paper due, and when you go to turn it in, instead of turning in a paper you wrote, you instead present your teacher with a pizza from Domino's.
That would be unacceptable. That would may be pleasing for the stomach, but it would not be pleasing for the assignment. There is worship that is unacceptable to God as well. And the interesting thing is that it may even look like acceptable worship.
The reality is, friends, that lots of people go to church, talk about Jesus, and give all the markers of a living sacrifice, but it's really dead. And why? We'll look at it soon, but consider false teachers for a moment.
[16:19] Now, if you've read your New Testament for very long, you see lots of, or really the New Testament letters and on, you see lots of warnings about false teachers, how dangerous they are, run from them, call them out, mark them out, and avoid them.

They're dangerous, I promise, right? And the question is why? Well, it's because their works look alive. The sacrifice, quote-unquote, that they offer looks living, right?
But it's really dead. The offering they give isn't holy and acceptable to God. Consider the words of Psalm 51, verses 16 and 17, really quickly.
So, just a little bit of context. This psalm was written. David wrote this right after he had fallen into sin with Bathsheba. And I want you to listen to what he says about his relationship with God.
He says this, verse 16. For you, God, will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it. You will not be pleased with a burnt offering.
[17:14] The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart. Oh, God, you will not despise. David understands that God's primary concern is the heart.

What makes an offering acceptable to God is a humble heart of praise, not how much money he spent on the offering. And I'll show it to you this way.
How many of you guys have ever done macaroni art? Is that still a thing? Yeah? How many of you guys, like, you present this macaroni art to your parents, and they're like, let's put this on the fridge! And you just, like, overjoyed. Right? Just me? Okay. But your parents put that on the fridge, not because it was of the same class and skill as Michelangelo, but it's because your work came from your heart.
God is the same way. Our best works to God could be considered like that macaroni art. But what makes it beautiful and acceptable to God is the heart to please Him, not how pretty it looks.
[18:20] And that's what it means for our bodies to be presented as worship to God. Right? Then Paul goes on to give us some more insight into what whole life worship looks like in referring to our minds.

I'll read verse 2 one more time. It says this, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, that is good, acceptable, and perfect.
It says, do not be conformed. To be conformed is to literally change the outward shape. And this has to do with the outside. Conformity is mostly changing outward actions, what it looks like.
So you can think of a square peg in a round hole. If you take a square peg and jam it enough times at this round hole, you'll probably get it to fit. But it won't be a round peg.
It still won't possess the internal quality of a round peg. And when Paul uses this phrase world, he's talking about the age that we live in. This is the period of time distinguished from others.
[19:30] The also translated world to indicate the period of time we live and that it's tempting us to sin. Now, there are pressures and temptations that we have to sin in dealing with this world, but Christians don't conform.

We don't change our actions to fit more with that, what the culture says we should be. And then he says we don't be conformed, but we be transformed. Now, conformed means to change the outward shape, but this word for transform means to change the inside.

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The Greek word is metamorpho. It's where we get the word metamorphosis from. It literally means to be changed. So it's like whenever you first saw a caterpillar turn into a butterfly, and then the first time someone told you that that butterfly was once a caterpillar, you probably didn't believe it because it changed so much that it didn't resemble what it once was, right?
And metamorphosis is transformation in that way. And the difference between confirmation and transformation is once again that confirmation deals with the outside, transformation comes from the inside.
I had a pastor one time, he would always tell the story of this little girl. She was in school, she was about four or five years old, and she was known for standing up and talking in class, right?
[20:49] And the teacher would get onto her, and she would stand up, the teacher would say, sit, and she would sit down for a sec, and then she would talk some more. The teacher would say, sit down and be quiet, and she said, or she would sit down.

Then like the final time, she tells her to sit down, she sits down, grumbles, and then says, in my heart, I'm standing, right? So, she's conforming, but she's not transformed, right?
In her heart, she's still standing. Worship is not just outward actions. So, as Christians, we want any sin in our hearts to be changed, to be in line with God.
How are we transformed? Well, Paul says that it's by renewing the mind, to make our minds new. And also, notice the way Paul uses this. This renewing is a continual process.
If we desire to participate in this whole life worship, the way we do it is by constantly renewing our minds. And what do we renew our minds on?
[21:48] Well, consider the words of Psalm 1. It says this, Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers, but his delight is in the law of the Lord.

And on his law, he meditates day and night. He's like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers. What do we renew our minds on? God's Word. That blessed man renews his mind on God's Word. And we see that as a result, he continues to bear fruit.
He's like a tree planted by streams of water. So whatever happens on the outside, his leaf's not going to wither. He's going to continue to bear fruit. He's not going to be shaken. Worship of God doesn't just involve our actions, but our thoughts as well, in our minds.
Paul says that if you want to have godly thoughts, keep God's Word in your mind. Have it regularly in front of you. As the Psalm says, delight in it, and it will continue to make you holier.
[22:56] Thirdly, Paul references the will. That by testing, as we meditate on God's Word, we may know what the will of God is, what is good and acceptable or perfect.

Paul describes God's will as that which is good, that which is acceptable, or some translations say pleasing and perfect. Christians want to know God's will in every area of our lives.
And we also want to understand what his will is by his Word. And not only do Christians want to understand what God's will is, but we want our wills to match up with his.
And this worship that Paul is talking about involves godly actions with our bodies, involves godly thoughts with our minds, and even godly desires with our wills.
One theologian put it this way. He said, only the mind that is constantly being renewed by God's Spirit, working through God's Word, is pleasing to God.
[23:58] If you want to worship God in a way that is holy and acceptable, this is how you do it. Be found in His Word. And let it transform those things in your life.

So, I want to think of a few areas of our lives in which we need to apply this principle of whole-life worship. And hopefully it's helpful for us this evening.
Some areas of our lives to consider. The first one will be personal devotion. You can also call it your quiet time, but your personal devotion to God.
As we've defined, biblical worship is to show God's worth. The aim is to show that God is worthy of all of our praise and all the honor, and that begins with our personal devotion.
Now, we'll come back to this reality as we consider more areas, but as Christians, when we share the Gospel, we're trying to convince others that Jesus is worthy of their entire life commitment.
[25:02] So, how often do you read His Word? How often do you pray? I'm not putting a number or time on anything, but if you ask yourself genuinely, is Jesus worthy by how I seek Him personally?

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Do my prayers and reading and my personal devotion to Him show that He's important in my life? Or does He just get the leftovers of my time each day or at the end of the week?
It starts with our personal devotion to God. Secondly, church and church activities. This whole life worship applies to church and church activities.
This includes all services on Sundays and Wednesdays and even camps and all that stuff. And it can be easy for us to profess Jesus and say He's most important in our lives, but you may know some people who say that but are never in church.
How do you feel about being around God's people? Does it excite you? Do you look forward to being around other Christians and learning about God? Or is church just another box to check?
[26:11] Do you enjoy singing songs about the Gospel? Do you enjoy gathering and fellowshipping with God's people? Remember the heart as well. It's also possible for someone to have perfect church attendance but not out of a heart of worship just to check a box.

God calls us to participate in whole life worship and that involves being around God's people. A third area of our life that I believe this applies to broadly is work or our jobs.
Some of you already are working a regular job and that's awesome. As a matter of fact, that job will teach you things and sanctify you in a lot of ways. There are also some temptations that come here.
What does worshiping the Lord at work look like? Let's think about that for a sec. Consider how we put it so far. How can I show God's worth at my job?
Now personally, it wasn't until the first time I worked around non-Christians that I learned how influential they can be. It can be easy at a job to let your fellow co-workers determine your standard.
[27:23] If nobody else cleans that spot, I won't either. If everybody cuts this corner, what's the problem if I do too? Everyone at work uses this kind of language.

They crack these kind of jokes. So why is it wrong for me too? But the Bible doesn't tell us co-workers are the standard for our work and actions. Listen to the words from Colossians 3.
Paul says this in Colossians 3. Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord, not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward.
You are serving the Lord Christ. Now in context, he's speaking about slaves, bond servants at the home. He tells them, whatever you do, work heartily.
At your job, the Bible commands us to work heartily. And it can be tough, especially around unbelievers, but let your standard at your job be Christ, not anyone else.
[28:24] Jesus is worthy of your best work and your best behavior. So, next, let's talk about home. The fourth area of our lives we'll look at is the home.

home. And this one can be difficult because home is likely the place for the most sanctification for you. I say this in my experience as well. I was a Christian teenager and there was a lot of sanctification that happened with me at home.
I've heard it said that family are the people that you can't get rid of and I learned that growing up. No matter how mad my brothers made me, every time I woke up they were still there. learning to honor your parents is hard.
This is because everyone sins, even parents and children. Siblings steal from each other, they fight with each other, parents can lose their temper, someone can just not be in a good mood and you bother them at the wrong time, and many other things.
Home is also the place with the least social pressure. My friends aren't around so they won't know how I act at home. I can treat my siblings this way, speak to my parents this way, and leave this mess right here, and do other things.
[29:38] But God calls us to our very best at home as well. How do we show Jesus' worth at home? Well, first and foremost, by honoring your parents. And not just obedience, but honor.

And this is any parental figure in your home. Honor them. And honor is not just what you do for your parents, but also how do you speak to them? How do you speak about them?
Are you thankful to God for them? One preacher, I was at a conference one time and he illustrated this principle of honoring this way. He said, is their name safe in your mouth?
In other words, when their name comes out of your mouth, is it safe? Are the words that follow that in a way to bring down their character?
Right? But is it safe? So, honor your parents at home and everywhere. And yes, even when they sin against you, forgive them as Jesus did you.

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[30:41] And show that God is worthy of your best at home. And the last one I want to talk about is school. This is probably where a majority of you spend a majority of your time.

That's where a majority of the grind is. one here because I think this is the area that is often the most tempting to neglect. Now, there's usually a disconnect between home and school.
Most often, people at school don't know how you are at home. People at home don't know how you are at school. Someone can be in absolute terror at home but have the best grades in the class.
And vice versa, somebody could be the most well-behaved at home and be into all sorts of trouble and secret sins at school. But just like work, though, it can be tempting to lower our standard to what others around us are doing.
So I want to tell you a story and hopefully it's insightful to illustrate this point. And this is a real story, just to clarify. I was a junior in high school and I was in a world geography class.
[31:50] Now, those of you guys who know me, world geography, geography is my worst subject. Two of my biggest enemies in life are where I currently am located and where I'm going. If I don't have Apple Maps, I'm done.

But I'm in this world geography class and the teacher was a basketball coach and really, he was a coach that was forced to teach. He did not want to teach at all.
So, majority of the time, he would, like there were no lectures, he spoke maybe for a total of five minutes that semester. He would just have our assignments on the board and then he'd leave to go to his office across campus.
And, when the teacher leaves the classroom, right, everyone is taking a test and he doesn't care. He just leaves the classroom. Everyone's taking a test and he leaves the answer key on his desk, right?
All the answers to this test are right there. Now, everyone else is passing. I want you to put yourself in that position. Everyone else is passing this answer key around. You may not feel super confident about that test.
[32:54] Do you cheat like everyone else? You people will even find out if you do. He's gone for 40 minutes. Trust me, he was, right? So, what do you do? No one will find out.

You'll probably get it and be able to pass it around and it'll be in someone else's hand by the time you get, or by the time he gets back. Now, if your standard is the people around you, you're probably going to cheat.
However, if you want Jesus to be shown as worthy at school, his standard is what you'll follow. Remember Colossians 3. Now, notice that the concern in pleasing God isn't about a specific outcome.
When it comes to school, oftentimes, you're measured by your grades and usually it's just a letter, right? A single letter grade or a single digit can determine tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of dollars in difference, right?
A 3.9 versus a 4.0, right? But, and it can be easy for us in school to think like, man, everything is measured by this letter grade. But understand, God isn't as concerned about a letter grade or a GPA as he is with your effort.
[34:04] The truth is, you may try your hardest, study super hard, and a B is the best you can manage. and that's okay. God's concern is your heart.

So, is Christ worthy of your best effort at school? Hopefully, the answer is yes and I would agree that that's what Paul is arguing in Romans 12 and Colossians 3.
So, how can we pursue worshiping the Lord at school? Well, I think that there's some questions you might ask yourself when it comes to an assignment. Did I put my best work out there?
Even when I had all the time to do it, did I really try on that assignment? Trust me, Jesus is worthy of your very best in all areas of your life.
With your body, with your mind, with your will. And I want to leave you with one last encouragement. If you're a Christian today, remember that God is working in you to do this very thing.
[35:11] We've been in the book of Philippians on Sunday mornings and it is just packed full of encouragement for you. Right? We just finished Philippians 2, verse 13, and it says, after the command to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, Paul says, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

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So, when you look at this command in Romans 12 to present your entire body, your whole life, as an offering of worship to the Lord, understand that you can do that because God is working in you. So, ask for his help. Seek his word. Right? Be transformed, as Paul says, by the renewal of your mind. Right? Consider his word. Delight in it.
Meditate on it. And let it guide your way. Let it transform your actions. Let it transform your desires. Let it transform your choices. Right? And, understand that encouragement.
That there are commands in Scripture that are difficult. But understand that by God's help, by his Spirit, you are able to do those.
[36:25] So, hopefully, that's been a helpful consideration this evening. Let me pray for us and we will go to small groups. Father, I thank you for this day. Lord, I thank you for your grace.

Lord, I thank you for your word. I ask, Lord, that as we consider how to live our entire lives as an act of worship to you, Lord, I ask that you would strengthen us to do that.
You would show us areas in which we can improve. Lord, that we can offer every single part of us in every area of our lives as an act of worship to you because you're worthy, Lord, for who you are and what you've done for us in sending Christ to die for us.
Lord, I ask that you would be with these students in their small group time. Lord, that their conversations will be fruitful and helpful. Lord, that you would just make us more like Jesus as we seek to glorify you in all that we do.
It's in Christ's name I pray. Amen.

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