

As Yourself

Week 6 • Put Your Whole Self In

Sep 23, 2026 • Romans 12:1–2 • John 6:51 • Dr. Geoffrey D. Lentz

Print reading: Chapter Nine, Put Your Whole Self In, pp. 157–172

Tonight's rhythm: Opening prayer & Scripture 5 min • Teaching 30 min • Table time 20 min • Practice & closing 5 min

Teaching Block 1 • When the Whole Self Goes In (10 min)

The Hokey Pokey has one line more profound than it has any right to be: “You put your whole self in.” Faith may begin in pieces, but grace keeps widening the invitation. The book describes a ministry experiment that began with the phrase, “Give it all away.” Before a sermon, prayer, meeting, funeral, or pastoral conversation, the challenge was to stop holding part of yourself at a distance and become fully present. The preparation might be the same; the person was different. Often other people became more present too. That is the “magic”: not a technique, but participation. “There must be a self before the self can become a gift.” (pp. 157–160)

Romans 12:1 begins with “therefore” and appeals to us “by the mercies of God.” Grace comes before offering. We do not give ourselves in order to become beloved; self-offering is a response to love already given. And an offering must be free enough to be a gift. Love may call for a generous yes, a truthful no, or the humility to receive. (p. 161)

Modern psychology calls one version of this experience flow: action and awareness move together, attention concentrates, and anxious self-monitoring recedes. A musician enters the music; a teacher becomes wholly present to the room; a writer stops watching the writer and begins to write. Flow is not holiness, but it gives us a glimpse of an integrated self. The self is not erased; it is gathered in the act. Augustine says, “My weight is my love”; Kierkegaard says, “Purity of heart is to will one thing.” Putting the whole self in does not mean oversharing or waiting until we are perfectly healed. It means bringing the actual person grace is gathering. (pp. 162–163)

Table Time 1 • 6 min

Choose one question. Make room for each voice; anyone may pass.

**Where in your life do you know the difference between going through the motions and putting your whole self in?
What helps you cross that line?**

When have you experienced something like flow—a moment when you were so present that action and awareness seemed to come together?

Teaching Block 2 • The Sacramental “Magic” of the Table (10 min)

Christian worship teaches the whole self how to enter the life of God. We stand, sing, confess, listen, taste, receive, and are sent. The ancient image of the labyrinth helps: Christ does not shout directions from outside human fear and death. The Word becomes flesh, enters the maze, and opens a path into life. Liturgy lets us practice that path. (pp. 163–164)

At the center is the Eucharistic pattern: taken, blessed, broken, and given. God receives what is actually there—ordinary bread, wine, and people. What Christ takes, Christ blesses. The breaking does not glorify harm; it serves the giving. Grace received becomes grace shared. At the table we offer ourselves “in union with Christ’s offering for us.” (pp. 164–166)

Here is the sacramental “magic”: not that our effort makes Christ appear, but that when we bring our whole selves into Christ’s self-giving, Christ meets us there. We put in ordinary selves and receive more than we brought—more communion, freedom, courage, and love. This is the deep logic of sacrament: ordinary things become means of grace. Bread and wine are offered; Christ gives himself. We bring our scattered lives; at the table we are gathered into one body. We come to receive Christ and discover that Christ is also making us into Christ’s gift for the world. The table teaches resurrection: what is given in love is gathered and returned as new life. (pp. 166–168)

Table Time 2 • 6 min

Choose one question. Listen for experience as well as ideas.

Where have you put your whole self into something for love and discovered that, somehow, you received more life than you gave?

What keeps whole-self offering from becoming self-erasure? What difference do freedom, boundaries, and receiving make?

Teaching Block 3 • The Dance Already Moving (10 min)

The dance reaches its deepest meaning in the Trinity. Perichoresis names the mutual indwelling of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The image of dance works because a dance requires both distinction and relation. The divine Persons give and receive without disappearing into one another: communion without collapse. No Person becomes less by loving; love is the fullness of divine life. That is why Christian self-giving can be more than depletion. We are invited into a love that precedes us, sustains us, and gives us back to ourselves in communion. The dance is already moving before we enter it. (pp. 168–169)

Jesus says, “The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh” (John 6:51). Romans 12 does not leave the living sacrifice on the altar either. The offering becomes affection, hospitality, generosity, patience, shared joy and grief, and overcoming evil with good. Whole-self offering becomes a lifetime of ordinary love. (p. 169)

The chapter gathers the book into one movement: the self God creates is not hated; the self sin wounds is not abandoned; the self grace heals is not hoarded. Salvation is the healing of the self into love. The surprise is that giving the self in love does not necessarily leave us with less self. The book looks back on those moments of full presence and says they were not always less tiring, more successful, or more praised—but they were more alive. Resurrection is the giving back of the self that love has taught to give away. Grace invites the actual person to become fully alive, fully present, and available in love: “Put your whole self in.” (pp. 169–170)

Table Time 3 • 8 min

Begin with the first question, then move to the second if time allows.

Where is God inviting you to become more present rather than merely more productive?

What would putting your whole self in look like this week—in one relationship, task, act of service, or moment of joy?

Practice & Closing • Put Your Whole Self In

1. Taken. Open your hands. Name the actual life you bring—body, history, gifts, limits, joys, and fears. Pray: “God, receive the person I am.”
2. Blessed. Name something in you that needs to be received as a gift rather than hidden. Pray: “Bless what you have made; heal what has been wounded.”
3. Broken Open. Notice where fear has kept some gift, truth, tenderness, creativity, or calling sealed. Do not call wounds holy; ask what can become shareable without abandoning wisdom or boundaries. Pray: “God, open what love is ready to share.”
4. Given. Name one actual place where you can become more fully present—a task, conversation, relationship, or act of service. Pray: “In union with Christ, make my life available in love.”
5. Gathered Again. Release the result you are trying to control. Pray: “God of resurrection, receive what I give and return me more alive in love.” (pp. 171–172)

Closing Prayer: Merciful God, gather our scattered lives. Receive us, bless us, heal us, and make us available in love. In union with Christ, teach us to put our whole selves into grace. When we fear love will leave us empty, teach us resurrection. Make us fully alive for the life of the world. Amen.