

- ...your future
- ...your hopes

What do we give up?

- ...control
- ...the right to run our lives

What do we gain?

- ...the Kingdom of Heaven
- ...abundant life
- ...joy
- ...peace
- ...contentment

*The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and **sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field — and to get the treasure, too!** Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a pearl merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. When he discovered **a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it!** – Matthew 12:44-46 NLT*

- One sold everything that he had
- One sold everything that he owned
- Why? To get something of greater value!

“When I come to realize what God has done for me, who He is, and what He has prepared for me in this new life (that I cannot see), I eagerly abandon anything and everything to obtain this fabulous, rich, rewarding, eternal life He has offered.” – Chip Ingram, *Living On The Edge*

- Surrender is NOT about self-denial, but logic and common sense
- It is not about what you LOSE, but what you GAIN
- Why wouldn't you give up what you have to get what God offers?
- It is as if God is saying:

“Ken, I want to give you the very best; but you won't let me. As long as you maintain control of your life, you will always be destined to get only what you can provide for your life, not what I really want to give you.”

- **Surrender is the secret to God's best**
 - Surrender is the key to power
 - Surrender is the channel through which God's biggest blessing flow

NOTES

- Surrender is the greatest need in the body of Christ today

• **What does a surrendered life look like?**

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. – Romans 12:1 NIV

The Command: Offer your bodies as living sacrifices

- The verb tense tells us this take place at specific point in time
- Has nothing to do with salvation
- But it is a call to believers to say to God, “I’m all in!”
- This is what God called Abraham to do

Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will point out to you. – Genesis 22:2 NLT

- Isaac was the most important thing in Abraham’s life
- He was a promise from God
- All Abraham’s hopes for the future were relying on Isaac
- And God asked Him to sacrifice him – to give him up
- To surrender something of great value
- God was willing to give up something of great value for something of greater value

“Lay down the knife,” the angel said. “Do not hurt the boy in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld even your beloved son from me.” Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a bush. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering on the altar in place of his son. Abraham named the place “The LORD Will Provide.” – Genesis 22:12-14 NLT

God commanded that Abraham surrender the most precious thing in his life – not to take it away from him, but to make sure he got the very best. – Chip Ingram, *Living On The Edge*

The Motivation: The mercy of God

- Our motivation to surrender is NOT to earn anything
- It is not to gain brownie points
- It is a response to His mercy

NOTES

- It is thankfully giving God what He asks for – all of me!
- His mercy and grace convince us of His love for us
- We surrender all out of gratitude for all He has done

NOTES

The Reason: Our spiritual act of worship

- Surrender is a spiritual act of worship
- It is what God wants
- He doesn't want your money, your rule keeping, your church attendance, your morality or your religious activity
- He wants you – your total commitment to Him

spiritual – *logizomai* – that which is reasonable or logical

- Surrender is logical, reasonable, and smart in light what God has done for us in Christ

Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the priceless gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I may have Christ.
– Philippians 3:8 NLT

• **Are you all in?**

- Are you the hen or the pig today?
- Are you simply a contributor to the kingdom or a totally committed follower?

No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. – Matthew 6:24 NLT

- Are you all in?
- What are you willing to give up in order to gain all that God has in store for you?
- Do you value what He has given you more than anything else?
- What are you holding on to that you refuse to let go of?

*All to Jesus, I surrender;
All to Him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust Him,
In His presence daily live.*

*All to Jesus I surrender;
Humbly at His feet I bow,
Worldly pleasures all forsaken;
Take me, Jesus, take me now.*

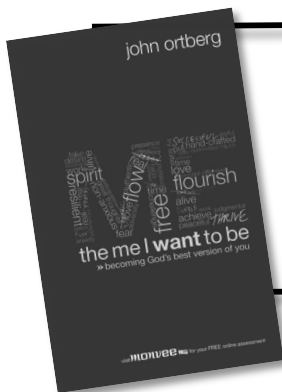
NEXT STEPS

WEEK 9

...keep your eye on what you're doing; accept the hard times along with the good;
keep the Message alive; do a thorough job as God's servant.

— 2 TIMOTHY 4:5 (MSG)

After two weeks talking about rest, we move on to the next step in our series of actions. This week we begin our discussion of surrender. I know this is kind of a taboo topic among many of us as believers. We wrestle with the idea of having to surrender to God. There are even those who doubt whether it is a biblical concept. But I think the reason many of us fail to live the lives we have been called to live is because we refuse to surrender our lives to God for Him to use us as He sees fit. Rather than our lives existing to serve Him, we believe God exists to serve us. So this week we want to begin to see what a life of surrender might look like and how we can begin to experience it.



1. READ PART TWO OF “THE ME I WANT TO BE” BY JOHN ORTBERG

We are reading part two of this new book by John Ortberg. In this section you'll find the chapter called “Surrender: The One Decision That Always Helps.” Pick up a copy of this great new book and read it along with us over the next few weeks and see what God has to say to you about surrender and how to grow as a believer.

2. FOR YOUR READING PLEASURE

This week we have five articles to choose from, or you can decide to read them all. Two are by Andrew Murray and are excerpted from his book, “Absolute Surrender.”

- *Impossible With God* by Andrew Murray
- *Absolute Surrender* by Andrew Murray
- *Successful Surrender* by Julie Bastuk
- *The Heart of Worship* by Rick Warren
- *Stress & Surrender* by M. A. Erickson

3. MEDITATE ON ROMANS 12:1

Spend some time this week reading and meditating on this very familiar verse. What do you think it is saying to you? What would it look like for you to offer your life as a living sacrifice to God each day of your life? How would that be an act of worship?

4. LISTEN TO OUR RESOURCE CDs

This week we have two CDs by Chip Ingram on the topic of surrender. These two messages go with his recent book called “Living On The Edge.” Chip unpacks Romans 12:1 and reveals the benefits of living a life of total commitment to God.



5. JOIN US ON THE QUEST

We are in the early chapters of the book of Exodus, so join us we read through the Old Testament. For a reading schedule go online to:
<http://www.ccbcfamily.org/ministries/quest/ot-scriptures>

IMPOSSIBLE WITH MAN, POSSIBLE WITH GOD

By Andrew Murray
Excerpted from "Absolute Surrender"

"And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:27).

Christ had said to the rich young ruler, "Sell all that thou hast ... and come, follow me." The young man went away sorrowful. Christ then turned to the disciples, and said: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" The disciples, we read, were greatly astonished, and answered: "If it is so difficult to enter the kingdom, who, then, can be saved?" And Christ gave this blessed answer:

"The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

The text contains two thoughts — that *in religion, in the question of salvation and of following Christ by a holy life, it is impossible for man to do it.* And then alongside that is the thought — *What is impossible with man is possible with God.*

The two thoughts mark the two great lessons that man has to learn in the religious life. It often takes a long time to learn the first lesson, that in religion man can do nothing, that salvation is impossible to man. And often a man learns that, and yet he does not learn the second lesson — what has been impossible to him is possible with God. Blessed is the man who learns both lessons! The learning of them marks stages in the Christian's life.

Man Cannot

The one stage is when a man is trying to do his utmost and fails, when a man tries to do better and fails again, when a man tries much more and always fails. And yet very often he does not even then learn the lesson: *With man it is impossible to serve God and Christ.* Peter spent three years in Christ's school, and he never learned that, *It is impossible*, until he had denied his Lord and went out and wept bitterly. Then he learned it.

Just look for a moment at a man who is learning this lesson. At first he fights against it; then he submits to it, but reluctantly and in despair; at last he accepts it willingly and rejoices in it. At the beginning of the Christian life the young convert has no conception of this truth. He has been converted, he has the joy of the Lord in his heart, he begins to run the race and fight the battle; he is sure he can conquer, for he is earnest and honest, and God will help him. Yet, somehow, very soon he fails where he did not expect it, and sin gets the better of him. He is disappointed; but he thinks: "I was not watchful enough, I did not make my resolutions strong enough." And again he vows, and again he prays, and yet he fails. He thought: "Am I not a regenerate man? Have I not the life of God within me?" And he thinks again: "Yes, and I have Christ to help me, I can live the holy life."

At a later period he comes to another state of mind. He begins to see such a life is impossible, but he does not accept it. There are multitudes of Christians who come to this point: "I cannot"; and then think God never expected them to do what they cannot do. If you tell them that God does expect it, it appears to them a mystery. A good many Christians are living a low life, a life of failure and of sin, instead of rest and victory, because they began to see: "I cannot, it is impossible." And yet they do not understand it fully, and so, under the impression, I cannot, they give way to despair. They will do their best, but they never expect to get on very far.

But God leads His children on to a third stage, when a man comes to take that, *It is impossible*, in its full truth, and yet at the same time says: "I must do it, and I will do it — it is impossible for man, and yet I must do it"; when the renewed will begins to exercise its whole power, and in intense longing and prayer begins to cry to God: "Lord, what is the meaning of this? — how am I to be freed from the power of sin?" It is the state of the regenerate man in Romans 7. There you will find the Christian man trying his very utmost to live a holy life. God's law has been revealed to him as reaching down into the very depth of the desires of the heart, and the man can dare to say:

“I delight in the law of God after the inward man. To will what is good is present with me. My heart loves the law of God, and my will has chosen that law.”

Can a man like that fail, with his heart full of delight in God’s law and with his will determined to do what is right? Yes. That is what Romans 7 teaches us. There is something more needed. Not only must I delight in the law of God after the inward man, and will what God wills, but I need a divine omnipotence to work it in me. And that is what the apostle Paul teaches in Philippians 2:13:

“It is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do.”

Note the contrast. In Romans 7, the regenerate man says: “To will is present with me, but to do — I find I cannot do. I will, but I cannot perform.” But in Philippians 2, you have a man who has been led on farther, a man who understands that when God has worked the renewed will, God will give the power to accomplish what that will desires. Let us receive this as the first great lesson in the spiritual life: “It is impossible for me, my God; let there be an end of the flesh and all its powers, an end of self, and let it be my glory to be helpless.”

Praise God for the divine teaching that makes us helpless!

When you thought of absolute surrender to God were you not brought to an end of yourself, and to feel that you could see how you actually could live as a man absolutely surrendered to God every moment of the day — at your table, in your house, in your business, in the midst of trials and temptations? I pray you learn the lesson now. If you felt you could not do it, you are on the right road, if you let yourselves be led. Accept that position, and maintain it before God: “My heart’s desire and delight, O God, is absolute surrender, but I cannot perform it. It is impossible for me to live that life. It is beyond me.” Fall down and learn that when you are utterly helpless, God will come to work in you not only to will, but also to do.

God Can

Now comes the second lesson. “The things which *are impossible with men are possible with God.*” I said a little while ago that there is many a man who has learned the lesson, *It is impossible with men*, and then he gives up in helpless despair, and lives a wretched Christian life, without joy, or strength, or victory. And why? Because he does not humble himself to learn that other lesson: *With God all things are possible.* Your religious life is every day to be a proof that God works impossibilities; your religious life is to be a series of impossibilities made possible and actual by God’s almighty power. That is what the Christian needs. He has an almighty God that he worships, and he must learn to understand that he does not need a little of God’s power, but he needs — with reverence be it said — the whole of God’s omnipotence to keep him right, and to live like a Christian.

The whole of Christianity is a work of God’s omnipotence. Look at the birth of Christ Jesus. That was a miracle of divine power, and it was said to Mary: “With God nothing shall be impossible.” It was the omnipotence of God. Look at Christ’s resurrection. We are taught that it was according to the exceeding greatness of His mighty power that God raised Christ from the dead.

Every tree must grow on the root from which it springs. An oak tree three hundred years old grows all the time on the one root from which it had its beginning. Christianity had its beginning in the omnipotence of God, and in every soul it must have its continuance in that omnipotence. All the possibilities of the higher Christian life have their origin in a new apprehension of Christ’s power to work all God’s will in us. I want to call upon you now to come and worship an almighty God. Have you learned to do it? Have you learned to deal so closely with an almighty God that you know omnipotence is working in you? In outward appearance there is often so little sign of it. The apostle Paul said: “I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and . . . my preaching was . . . in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” From the human side there was feebleness, from the divine side there was divine omnipotence. And that is true of every godly life; and if we would only learn that lesson better, and give a wholehearted, undivided surrender to it, we should learn what blessedness there is in dwelling every hour and every moment with an almighty God. Have you ever studied in the Bible the attribute of God’s omnipotence? You know that it

was God's omnipotence that created the world, and created light out of darkness, and created man. But have you studied God's omnipotence in the works of redemption?

Look at Abraham. When God called him to be the father of that people out of which Christ was to be born, God said to him: "I am God Almighty, walk before me and be thou perfect." And God trained Abraham to trust Him as the omnipotent One; and whether it was his going out to a land that he knew not, or his faith as a pilgrim midst the thousands of Canaanites — his faith said: This is my land — or whether it was his faith in waiting twenty-five years for a son in his old age, against all hope, or whether it was the raising up of Isaac from the dead on Mount Moriah when he was going to sacrifice him — Abraham believed God. He was strong in faith, giving glory to God, because he accounted Him who had promised able to perform. The cause of the weakness of your Christian life is that you want to work it out partly, and to let God help you. And that cannot be. You must come to be utterly helpless, to let God work, and God will work gloriously. It is this that we need if we are indeed to be workers for God. I could go through Scripture and prove to you how Moses, when he led Israel out of Egypt; how Joshua, when he brought them into the land of Canaan; how all God's servants in the Old Testament counted upon the omnipotence of God doing impossibilities. And this God lives today, and this God is the God of every child of His. And yet we are some of us wanting God to give us a little help while we do our best, instead of coming to understand what God wants, and to say: "I can do nothing. God must and will do all." Have you said: "In worship, in work, in sanctification, in obedience to God, I can do nothing of myself, and so my place is to worship the omnipotent God, and to believe that He will work in me every moment"? Oh, may God teach us this! Oh, that God would by His grace show you what a God you have, and to what a God you have entrusted yourself — an omnipotent God, willing with His whole omnipotence to place Himself at the disposal of every child of His! Shall we not take the lesson of the Lord Jesus and say: "Amen; the things which are impossible with men are possible with God"?

Remember what we have said about Peter, his self-confidence, self-power, self-will, and how he came to deny his Lord. You feel, "Ah! there is the self-life, there is the flesh-life that rules in me!" And now, have you believed that there is deliverance from that? Have you believed that Almighty God is able so to reveal Christ in your heart, so to let the Holy Spirit rule in you, that the self-life shall not have power or dominion over you? Have you coupled the two together, and with tears of penitence and with deep humiliation and febleness, cried out: "O God, it is impossible to me; man cannot do it, but, glory to Thy name, it is possible with God"? Have you claimed deliverance? Do it now. Put yourself afresh in absolute surrender into the hands of a God of infinite love; and as infinite as His love is His power to do it.

God Works in Man

But again, we came to the question of absolute surrender, and felt that that is the want in the Church of Christ, and that is why the Holy Ghost cannot fill us, and why we cannot live as people entirely separated unto the Holy Ghost; that is why the flesh and the self-life cannot be conquered. We have never understood what it is to be absolutely surrendered to God as Jesus was. I know that many a one earnestly and honestly says: "Amen, I accept the message of absolute surrender to God"; and yet thinks: "Will that ever be mine? Can I count upon God to make me one of whom it shall be said in Heaven and on earth and in Hell, he lives in absolute surrender to God?" Brother, sister, "the things which are impossible with men are possible with God." Do believe that when He takes charge of you in Christ, it is possible for God to make you a man of absolute surrender. And God is able to maintain that. He is able to let you rise from bed every morning of the week with that blessed thought directly or indirectly: "I am in God's charge. My God is working out my life for me."

Some are weary of thinking about sanctification. You pray, you have longed and cried for it, and yet it appeared so far off! The holiness and humility of Jesus — you are so conscious of how distant it is. Beloved friends, the one doctrine of sanctification that is scriptural and real and effectual is: "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." God can sanctify men, and by His almighty and sanctifying power every moment God can keep them. Oh, that we might get a step nearer to our God now! Oh, that the light of God might shine, and that we might know our God better!

I could go on to speak about the life of Christ in us — living like Christ, taking Christ as our Saviour from sin, and as our life and strength. It is God in Heaven who can reveal that in you. What does that prayer of

the apostle Paul say: “That he would grant you according to riches of his glory” — it is sure to be something very wonderful if it is according to the riches of His glory — “to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man”? Do you not see that it is an omnipotent God working by His omnipotence in the heart of His believing children, so that Christ can become an indwelling Saviour? You have tried to grasp it and to seize it, and you have tried to believe it, and it would not come. It was because you had not been brought to believe that “the things which are impossible with men are possible with God.” And so, I trust that the word spoken about love may have brought many to see that we must have an inflowing of love in quite a new way; our heart must be filled with life from above, from the Fountain of everlasting love, if it is going to overflow all the day; then it will be just as natural for us to love our fellowmen as it is natural for the lamb to be gentle and the wolf to be cruel. Until I am brought to such a state that the more a man hates and speaks evil of me, the more unlikable and unlovable a man is, I shall love him all the more; until I am brought to such a state that the more the obstacles and hatred and ingratitude, the more can the power of love triumph in me — until I am brought to see that, I am not saying: “It is impossible with men.” But if you have been led to say: “This message has spoken to me about a love utterly beyond my power; it is absolutely impossible” — then we can come to God and say: “It is possible with Thee.”

Some are crying to God for a great revival. I can say that that is the prayer of my heart unceasingly. Oh, if God would only revive His believing people! I cannot think in the first place of the unconverted formalists of the Church, or of the infidels and skeptics, or of all the wretched and perishing around me, my heart prays in the first place: “My God, revive Thy Church and people.” It is not for nothing that there are in thousands of hearts yearnings after holiness and consecration: it is a forerunner of God’s power. God works *to will* and then He works *to do*. These yearnings are a witness and a proof that God has worked *to will*. Oh, let us in faith believe that the omnipotent God will work *to do* among His people more than we can ask. “Unto him,” Paul said, “who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.... unto him be glory.” Let our hearts say that. Glory to God, the omnipotent One, who can do above what we dare to ask or think!

“The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.” All around you there is a world of sin and sorrow, and the Devil is there. But remember, Christ is on the throne, Christ is stronger, Christ has conquered, and Christ will conquer. But wait on God. My text casts us down: “The things which are *impossible with men*”; but it ultimately lifts us up high — “are *possible with God*.” Get linked to God. Adore and trust Him as the omnipotent One, not only for your own life, but for all the souls that are entrusted to you. Never pray without adoring His omnipotence, saying: “*Mighty God, I claim Thine almightiness.*” And the answer to the prayer will come, and like Abraham you will become strong in faith, giving glory to God, because you account Him who hath promised able to perform.

ABSOLUTE SURRENDER

By Andrew Murray

Excerpted from "Absolute Surrender"

"And Ben-hadad the king of Syria gathered all his host together: and there were thirty and two kings with him, and horses, and chariots: and he went up and besieged Samaria, and warred against it. And he sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel into the city, and said unto him, Thus saith Ben-hadad, Thy silver and thy gold is mine; thy wives also and thy children, even the goodliest, are mine. And the king of Israel answered and said, My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am thine and all that I have" (I Kings 20: 1-4).

What Ben Hadad asked was *absolute surrender*; and what Ahab gave was what was asked of him— *absolute surrender*. I want to use these words: "My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am thine, and all that I have," as the words of absolute surrender with which every child of God ought to yield himself to his Father. We have heard it before, but we need to hear it very definitely — the condition of God's blessing is absolute surrender of all into His hands. Praise God! If our hearts are willing for that, there is no end to what God will do for us, and to the blessing God will bestow.

Absolute surrender — let me tell you where I got those words. I used them myself often, and you have heard them numberless times. But in Scotland once I was in a company where we were talking about the condition of Christ's Church, and what the great need of the Church and of believers is; and there was in our company a godly worker who has much to do in training workers, and I asked him what he would say was the great need of the Church, and the message that ought to be preached. He answered very quietly and simply and determinedly:

"Absolute surrender to God is the one thing."

The words struck me as never before. And that man began to tell how, in the workers with whom he' had to deal, he finds that if they are sound on that point, even though they be backward, they are willing to be taught and helped, and they always improve; whereas others who are not sound there very often go back and leave the work. The condition for obtaining God's full blessing is *absolute surrender* to Him. And now, I desire by God's grace to give to you this message — that your God in Heaven answers the prayers which you have offered for blessing on yourselves and for blessing on those around you by this one demand: *Are you willing to surrender yourselves absolutely into His hands?* What is our answer to be? God knows there are hundreds of hearts who have said it, and there are hundreds more who long to say it but hardly dare to do so. And there are hearts who have said it, but who have yet miserably failed, and who feel themselves condemned because they did not find the secret of the power to live that life. May God have a word for all!

Let me say, first of all, that God claims it from us.

God Expects Your Surrender

Yes, it has its foundation in the very nature of God God cannot do otherwise. Who is God? He is the Fountain of life, the only Source of existence and power and goodness, and throughout the universe there is nothing good but what God works, God has created the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the flowers, and the trees, and the grass; and are they not all absolutely surrendered to God? Do they not allow God to work in them just what He pleases? When God clothes the lily with its beauty, is it not yielded up, surrendered, given over to God as He works in it its beauty? And God's redeemed children, oh, can you think that God can work His work if there is only half or a part of them surrendered? God cannot do it. God is life, and love, and blessing, and power, and infinite beauty, and God delights to communicate Himself to every child who is prepared to receive Him; but ah! this one lack of absolute surrender is just the thing that hinders God. And now He comes, and as God, He claims it.

You know in daily life what absolute surrender is. You know that everything has to be given up to its special, definite object and service. I have a pen in my pocket, and that pen is absolutely surrendered to the one work of writing, and that pen must be absolutely surrendered to my hand if I am to write properly with it. If another holds it partly, I cannot write properly. This coat is absolutely given up to me to, cover my body. This building is entirely given up to religious services. And now, do you expect that in your immortal being, in the divine nature that you have received by regeneration, God can work His work, every day and every hour, unless you are entirely given up to Him? God cannot. The Temple of Solomon was absolutely surrendered to God when it was dedicated to Him. And every one of us is a temple of God, in which God will dwell and work mightily on one condition — absolute surrender to Him. God claims it, God is worthy of it, and without it God cannot work His blessed work in us...

God not only claims it, but God will work it Himself.

God Accomplishes Your Surrender

I am sure there is many a heart that says: “Ah, but that absolute surrender implies so much!” Someone says: “Oh, I have passed through so much trial and suffering, and there is so much of the self-life still remaining, and I dare not face the entire giving of it up, because I know it will cause so much trouble and agony.” Alas! alas! that God’s children have such thoughts of Him, such cruel thoughts. Oh, I come to you with a message, fearful and anxious one. God does not ask you to give the perfect surrender in your strength, or by the power of your will; God is willing to work it in you. Do we not read: “It is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure”? And that is what we should seek for — to go on our faces before God, until our hearts learn to believe that the everlasting God Himself will come in to turn out what is wrong, to conquer what is evil, and to work what is well-pleasing in His blessed sight. God Himself will work it in you.

Look at the men in the Old Testament, like Abraham. Do you think it was by accident that God found that man, the father of the faithful and the Friend of God, and that it was Abraham himself, apart from God, who had such faith and such obedience and such devotion? You know it is not so. God raised him up and prepared him as an instrument for His glory.

Did not God say to Pharaoh: “For this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power”? And if God said that of him, will not God say it far more of every child of His?

Oh, I want to encourage you, and I want you to cast away every fear. Come with that feeble desire; and if there is the fear which says: “Oh, my desire is not strong enough, I am not willing for everything that may come, I do not feel bold enough to say I can conquer everything” — I pray you, learn to know and trust your God now. Say: “My God, I am willing that Thou shouldst make me willing.” If there is anything holding you back, or any sacrifice you are afraid of making, come to God now, and prove how gracious your God is, and be not afraid that He will command from you what He will not bestow.

God comes and offers to work this absolute surrender in you. All these searchings and hungerings and longings that are in your heart, I tell you they are the drawings of the divine magnet, Christ Jesus. He lived a life of absolute surrender, He has possession of you; He is living in your heart by His Holy Spirit. You have hindered and hindered Him terribly, but He desires to help you to get hold of Him entirely. And He comes and draws you now by His message and words. Will you not come and trust God to work in you that absolute surrender to Himself? Yes, blessed be God, He can do it, and He will do it.

God not only claims it and works it, but God accepts it when we bring it to Him.

God Accepts Your Surrender

God works it in the secret of our heart, God urges us by the hidden power of His Holy Spirit to come and speak it out, and we have to bring and to yield to Him that absolute surrender. But remember, when you come and bring God that absolute surrender, it may, as far as your feelings or your consciousness go, be a thing of great imperfection, and you may doubt and hesitate and say: “Is it absolute?”

But, oh, remember there was once a man to whom Christ had said: “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.”

And his heart was afraid, and he cried out: “Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.”

That was a faith that triumphed over the Devil, and the evil spirit was cast out. And if you come and say: “Lord, I yield myself in absolute surrender to my God,” even though it be with a trembling heart and with the consciousness: “I do not feel the power, I do not feel the determination, I do not feel the assurance,” it will succeed. Be not afraid, but come just as you are, and even in the midst of your trembling the power of the Holy Ghost will work.

Have you never yet learned the lesson that the Holy Ghost works with mighty power, while on the human side everything appears feeble? Look at the Lord Jesus Christ in Gethsemane. We read that He, “through the eternal Spirit,” offered Himself a sacrifice unto God. The Almighty Spirit of God was enabling Him to do it. And yet what agony and fear and exceeding sorrow came over Him, and how He prayed! Externally, you can see no sign of the mighty power of the Spirit, but the Spirit of God was there. And even so, while you are feeble and fighting and trembling, in faith in the hidden work of God’s Spirit do not fear, but yield yourself.

And when you do yield yourself in absolute surrender, let it be in the faith that God does now accept of it. That is the great point, and that is what we so often miss — that believers should be thus occupied with God in this matter of surrender. I pray you, be occupied with God. We want to get help, every one of us, so that in our daily life God shall be clearer to us, God shall have the right place, and be “all in all.” And if we are to have that through life, let us begin now and look away from ourselves, and look up to God. Let each believe — while I, a poor worm on earth and a trembling child of God, full of failure and sin and fear, bow here, and no one knows what passes through my heart, and while I in simplicity say, O God, I accept Thy terms; I have pleaded for blessing on myself and others, I have accepted Thy terms of absolute surrender — while your heart says that in deep silence, remember there is a God present that takes note of it, and writes it down in His book, and there is a God present who at that very moment takes possession of you. You may not feel it, you may not realize it, but God takes possession if you will trust Him...

God not only claims it, and works it, and accepts it when I bring it, but God maintains it.

God Maintains Your Surrender

That is the great difficulty with many. People say: “I have often been stirred at a meeting, or at a convention, and I have consecrated myself to God, but it has passed away. I know it may last for a week or for a month, but away it fades, and after a time it is all gone.”

But listen! It is because you do not believe what I am now going to tell you and remind you of. When God has begun the work of absolute surrender in you, and when God has accepted your surrender, then God holds Himself bound to care for it and to keep it. Will you believe that?

In this matter of surrender there are two: God and I — I a worm, God the everlasting and omnipotent Jehovah. Worm, will you be afraid to trust yourself to this mighty God now? God is willing. Do you not believe that He can keep you continually, day by day, and moment by moment?

Moment by moment I’m kept in His love;
Moment by moment I’ve life from above.

If God allows the sun to shine upon you moment by moment, without intermission, will not God let His life shine upon you every moment? And why have you not experienced it? Because you have not trusted God for it, and you do not surrender yourself absolutely to God in that trust.

A life of absolute surrender has its difficulties. I do not deny that. Yes, it has something far more than difficulties: it is a life that with men is absolutely impossible. But by the grace of God, by the power of

God, by the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, it is a life to which we are destined, and a life that is possible for us, praise God! Let us believe that God will maintain it.

Some of you have read the words of that aged saint who, on his ninetieth birthday, told of all God's goodness to him — I mean George Muller. What did he say he believed to be the secret of his happiness, and of all the blessing which God had given him? He said he believed there were two reasons. The one was that he had been enabled by grace to maintain a good conscience before God day by day; the other was, that he was a lover of God's Word. Ah, yes, a good conscience is complete obedience to God day by day, and fellowship with God every day in His Word, and prayer — that is a life of absolute surrender...

Such a life has two sides — on the one side, *absolute surrender to work what God wants you to do; on the other side, to let God work what He wants to do.*

First, *to do what God wants you to do.*

Give up yourselves absolutely to the will of God. You know something of that will; not enough, far from all. But say absolutely to the Lord God: "By Thy grace I desire to do Thy will in everything, every moment of every day." Say: "Lord God, not a word upon my tongue but for Thy glory, not a movement of my temper but for Thy glory, not an affection of love or hate in my heart but for Thy glory, and according to Thy blessed will."

Someone says: "Do you think that possible?"

I ask, What has God promised you, and what can God do to fill a vessel absolutely surrendered to Him? Oh, God wants to bless you in a way beyond what you expect. From the beginning, ear hath not heard, neither hath the eye seen, what God hath prepared for them that wait for Him. God has prepared unheard-of-things, blessings much more wonderful than you can imagine, more mighty than you can conceive. They are divine blessings. Oh, say now: "I give myself absolutely to God, to His will, to do only what God wants."

It is God who will enable you to carry out the surrender.

And, on the other side, come and say: "I give myself absolutely to God, *to let Him work in me to will and to do of His good pleasure*, as He has promised to do."

Yes, the living God wants to work in His children in a way that we cannot understand, but that God's Word has revealed, and He wants to work in us every moment of the day. God is willing to maintain our life. Only let our absolute surrender be one of simple, childlike, and unbounded trust.

God Blesses When You Surrender

This absolute surrender to God will wonderfully bless.

What Ahab said to his enemy, King Ben-hadad — "My lord, O king, according to thy word I am thine, and all that I have" — shall we not say to our God and loving Father? If we do say it, God's blessing will come upon us. God wants us to be separate from the world; we are called to come out from the world that hates God. Come out for God, and say: "Lord, anything for Thee." If you say that with prayer, and speak that into God's ear, He will accept it, and He will teach you what it means.

I say again, God will bless you. You have been praying for blessing. But do remember, there must be absolute surrender. At every tea-table you see it. Why is tea poured into that cup? Because it is empty, and given up for the tea. But put ink, or vinegar, or wine into it, and will they pour the tea into the vessel? And can God fill you, can God bless you if you are not absolutely surrendered to Him? He cannot. Let us believe God has wonderful blessings for us, if we will but stand up for God, and say, be it with a trembling will, yet with a believing heart:

“O God, I accept Thy demands. I am thine and all that I have. Absolute surrender is what my soul yields to Thee by divine grace.”

You may not have such strong and clear feelings of deliverances as you would desire to have, but humble yourselves in His sight, and acknowledge that you have grieved the Holy Spirit by your self-will, self-confidence, and self-effort. Bow humbly before him in the confession of that, and ask him to break the heart and to bring you into the dust before Him. Then, as you bow before Him, just accept God’s teaching that in your flesh “there dwelleth no good thing,” and that nothing will help you except another life which must come in. You must deny self once for all. Denying self must every moment be the power of your life, and then Christ will come in and take possession of you.

When was Peter delivered? When was the change accomplished? The change began with Peter weeping, and the Holy Ghost came down and filled his heart.

God the Father loves to give us the power of the Spirit. We have the Spirit of God dwelling within us. We come to God confessing that, and praising God for it, and yet confessing how we have grieved the Spirit. And then we bow our knees to the Father to ask that He would strengthen us with all might by the Spirit in the inner man, and that He would fill us with His mighty power. And as the Spirit reveals Christ to us, Christ comes to live in our hearts forever, and the self-life is cast out.

Let us bow before God in humility, and in that humility confess before Him the state of the whole Church. No words can tell the sad state of the Church of Christ on earth. I wish I had words to speak what I sometimes feel about it. just think of the Christians around you. I do not speak of nominal Christians, or of professing Christians, but I speak of hundreds and thousands of honest, earnest Christians who are not living a life in the power of God or to His glory. So little power, so little devotion or consecration to God, so little perception of the truth that a Christian is a man utterly surrendered to God’s will! Oh, we want to confess the sins of God’s people around us, and to humble ourselves. We are members of that sickly body, and the sickliness of the body will hinder us, and break us down, unless we come to God, and in confession separate ourselves from partnership with worldliness, with coldness toward each other, unless we give up ourselves to be entirely and wholly for God.

How much Christian work is being done in the spirit of the flesh and in the power of self! How much work, day by day, in which human energy — our will and our thoughts about the work — is continually manifested, and in which there is but little of waiting upon God, and upon the power of the Holy Ghost! Let us make confession. But as we confess the state of the Church and the feebleness and sinfulness of work for God among us, let us come back to ourselves. Who is there who truly longs to be delivered from the power of the self-life, who truly acknowledges that it is the power of self and the flesh, and who is willing to cast all at the feet of Christ? There is deliverance.

I heard of one who had been an earnest Christian, and who spoke about the “cruel” thought of separation and death. But you do not think that, do you? What are we to think of separation and death? This: death was the path to glory for Christ. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross. The cross was the birthplace of His everlasting glory. Do you love Christ? Do you long to be in Christ, and not like Him? Let death be to you the most desirable thing on earth — death to self, and fellowship with Christ. Separation — do you think it a hard thing to be called to be entirely free from the world, and by that separation to be united to God and His love, by separation to become prepared for living and walking with God every day? Surely one ought to say: “Anything to bring me to separation, to death, for a life of full fellowship with God and Christ.”

Come and cast this self-life and flesh-life at the feet of Jesus. Then trust Him. Do not worry yourselves with trying to understand all about it, but come in the living faith that Christ will come into you with the power of His death and the power of His life; and then the Holy Spirit will bring the whole Christ — Christ crucified and risen and living in glory — into your heart.

Successful Surrender

By Julie Bastuk

When I was growing up, I dreamed of serving as a lifelong missionary in some remote area of South America or Africa. Later, in college, I tweaked those dreams to include other vocational fields in my mission endeavors, such as medicine or agriculture. I truly believed at the time that it was the path God was leading me down, and when I envisioned my future I could see success as a servant of God.

Now, after almost 10 years have passed, I am farther away from those dreams than ever. Rather than living in a village in Africa, I live in a middle class suburban neighborhood in Denver. I don't currently utilize my education on a daily basis by working—instead, I spend the majority of my time at home, raising my family. Not long ago, I would look at where I thought my life would lead and where it currently is, and be tempted to label myself as anything but successful. I found it difficult to believe that, because I live a normal ordinary life, I am just as successful in God's eyes as those He has called to do great things. Over time, God began teaching me what He really asks of each of us. Thankfully, He doesn't judge us or our successes as the world does.

So, what does make each of us successful in God's eyes? Is it the number of people we lead to Christ? Is it the number of third-world citizens we tirelessly serve? Is our success wrapped up in our declining tendencies toward sin? All of these are good, but ultimately God seeks something very simple, something deeper than what we *do*—He wants surrender.

We women often put the cart before the horse. We believe if we are perfect mothers and wives, superstars in our jobs, and perform countless charitable works, God will be pleased with us. However, God is not nearly as concerned with these things as He is with our relationships with Him.

Success in the Surrender

The keys to finding success in our lives are present throughout the Bible, but are compacted in two different Scriptures. In the first verse, Jesus echoes the words of Moses.

“The most important [commandment],” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength’” (Mark 12:28-30). God's great desire for us is that we give all we have to Him and love Him passionately and with abandon. Jesus said that loving God is the greatest commandment—it is more important than the things we do, the knowledge we gain, or the people we influence—it is paramount. In Micah 6:8, God tells us very simply what He expects of us, and what will please Him. “He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” Walking humbly with God is equivalent to surrendering to Him. Our success comes through surrender. When we spend time in relationship with Him and give Him every area of our lives, simply doing what He asks of us, mundane or magnificent, we are doing what we were created to do. We may never be well known, hold prestigious positions, or serve God in exotic places, but we will be fulfilled. And this fulfillment will spill over into every relationship and area of our lives.

Our Significance in Christ

Before we can surrender completely to God we must understand the significance of who we are in Christ. Through Christ we have been justified completely and are spotless before God. He accepts us because each of us is the workmanship of Christ. Because of this truth, constantly doing good deeds or performing to win God's approval is in vain. We already possess his love, affection, and approval. Opportunities that we are handed in life or gifts that God gives us have nothing to do with our inherent worth. He doesn't give or take based on what we deserve, but rather what will bring Him the most glory. This means freedom for us—no more striving for the unattainable, trying to be what others want us to be, and most importantly, no more guilt over our imperfections and repeated failures.

We often allow society and our own beliefs about success to place heavy burdens on our shoulders that we can't and weren't meant to carry. Why not allow God to gently remove those burdens, and take up His definition of success?

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The Heart of Worship

By Rick Warren

Excerpted from The Purpose Driven Life

Give yourselves to God.... Surrender your whole being to him to be used for righteous purposes.

Romans 6:13 (TEV)

The heart of worship is surrender.

Surrender is an unpopular word, disliked almost as much as the word *submission*. It implies losing, and no one wants to be a *loser*. *Surrender* evokes the unpleasant images of admitting defeat in battle, forfeiting a game, or yielding to a stronger opponent. The word is almost always used in a negative context. Captured criminals *surrender* to authorities.

In today's competitive culture we are taught to never give up and never give in-so we don't hear much about surrendering. If winning is everything, surrendering is *unthinkable*. We would rather talk about winning, succeeding, overcoming, and conquering than yielding, submitting, obeying, and surrendering. But surrendering to God is the heart of worship. It is the natural response to God's amazing love and mercy. We give ourselves to him, not out of fear or duty, but in love, "*because he first loved us.*"

Offering yourself to God is what worship is all about.

After spending eleven chapters of the book of Romans explaining God's incredible grace to us, Paul urges us to fully surrender our lives to God in worship: "*So then, my friends, because of God's great mercy to us ... offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer.*"

True worship-bringing God pleasure-happens when you give yourself completely to God. Notice the first and last words of that verse are the same: *offer*.

Offering yourself to God is what worship is all about.

This act of personal surrender is called many things: consecration, making Jesus your Lord, taking up your cross, dying to self, yielding to the Spirit. What matters is that you do it, not what you call it. God wants your life-all of it. Ninety-five percent is not enough.

There are three barriers that block our total surrender to God: fear, pride, and confusion. We don't realize how much God loves us, we want to control our own lives, and we misunderstand the meaning of surrender.

Can I trust God? Trust is an essential ingredient to surrender. You won't surrender to God unless you trust him, but you can't trust him until you know him better. Fear keeps us from surrendering, but *love casts out all fear*. The more you realize how much God loves you, the easier surrender becomes.

How do you know God loves you? He gives you many evidences: God says he loves you; you're never out of his sight; he cares about every detail of your life; he gave you the capacity to enjoy all kinds of pleasure; he has good plans for your life; he forgives you; and he is lovingly patient with you. God loves you infinitely more than you can imagine.

The greatest expression of this is the sacrifice of God's Son for you. "*God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.*" If you want to know how much you matter to God, look at Christ with his arms outstretched on the cross, saying, "I love you this much! I'd rather die than live without you."

God is not a cruel slave driver or a bully who uses brute force to coerce us into submission. He doesn't try to break our will, but woos us to himself so that we might offer ourselves freely to him. God is a lover and a liberator, and surrendering to him brings freedom, not bondage. When we completely surrender ourselves to Jesus, we discover that he is not a tyrant, but a savior; not a boss, but a brother; not a dictator, but a friend.

Admitting our limitations. A second barrier to total surrender is our pride. We don't want to admit that we're just creatures and not in charge of everything. It is the oldest temptation: "*You'll be like God!*" That desire-to have complete control-is the cause of so much stress in our lives. Life is a struggle, but what most people don't realize is that our struggle, like Jacob's, is really a struggle with God! We want to be God, and there's no way we are going to win that struggle.

A. W. Tozer said, "The reason why many are still troubled, still seeking, still making little forward progress is because they haven't yet come to the end of themselves. We're still trying to give orders, and interfering with God's work within us."

We aren't God and *never* will be. We are humans. It is when we try to be God that we end up most like Satan, who desired the same thing.

We accept our humanity intellectually, but not emotionally. When faced with our own limitations, we react with irritation, anger, and resentment. We want to be taller (or shorter), smarter, stronger, more talented, more beautiful, and wealthier. We want to have it all and do it all, and we become upset when it doesn't happen. Then when we notice that God gave others characteristics we don't have, we respond with envy, jealousy, and self-pity.

What it means to surrender. Surrendering to God is not passive resignation, fatalism, or an excuse for laziness. It is not accepting the status quo. It may mean the exact opposite: sacrificing your life or suffering in order to change what needs to be changed. God often calls surrendered people to do battle on his behalf. Surrendering is not for cowards or doormats. Likewise, it does not mean giving up rational thinking. God would not waste the mind he gave you! God does not want robots to serve him.

Surrendering is not repressing your personality. God wants to use your unique personality. Rather than its being diminished, surrendering enhances it. C. S. Lewis observed, "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 up myself to His personality, that I first begin to have a real personality of my own."

Surrendering is best demonstrated in obedience. You say "*yes, Lord*" to whatever he asks of you. To say "*no, Lord*" is to speak a contradiction. You can't call Jesus your Lord when you refuse to obey him. After a night of failed fishing, Simon modeled surrender when Jesus told him to try again: "*Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.*" Surrendered people obey God's word, even if it doesn't make sense.

Another aspect of a fully surrendered life is trust. Abraham followed God's leading without knowing *where* it would take him. Hannah waited for God's perfect timing without knowing *when*. Mary expected a miracle without knowing *how*. Joseph trusted God's purpose without knowing *why* circumstances happened the way they did. Each of these people were fully surrendered to God.

You know you're surrendered to God when you rely on God to work, things out instead of trying to manipulate others, force your agenda, and control the situation. You let go and let God work. You don't have to always be "in charge." The Bible says, "*Surrender yourself to the Lord, and wait patiently for him.*"

Instead of trying harder, you trust more. You also know you're surrendered when you don't react to criticism and rush to defend yourself. Surrendered hearts show up best in relationships. You don't edge others out, you don't demand your rights, and you aren't self-serving when you're surrendered.

The most difficult area to surrender for many people is their money. Many have thought, "I want to live for God but I also want to earn enough money to live comfortably and retire someday." Retirement is not the goal of a surrendered life, because it competes with God for the primary attention of our lives. Jesus said, "*You cannot serve both God and money*" and "*Wherever your treasure is, your heart will be also.*"

The supreme example of self-surrender is Jesus. The night before his crucifixion Jesus surrendered himself to God's plan. He prayed, "*Father, everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will, not mine.*"

Jesus didn't pray, "God, if you're *able* to take away this pain, please do so." He had already affirmed that God can do anything! Instead he prayed, "God, if it is in *your* best interest to remove this suffering, please do so. *But* if it fulfills *your* purpose, that's what I want, too."

Genuine surrender says, "Father, if this problem, pain, sickness, or circumstance is needed to fulfill your purpose and glory in my life or in another's, please *don't* take it away." This level of maturity does not come easy. In Jesus' case, he agonized so much over God's plan that he sweat drops of blood. Surrender is hard work. In our case, it is intense warfare against our self-centered nature.

The blessing of surrender. The Bible is crystal clear about how you benefit when you fully surrender your life to God. First, you experience peace: "*Stop quarreling with God! If you agree with him, you will have peace at last, and things will go well for you.*" Next, you experience freedom: "*Offer yourselves to the ways of God and the freedom never quits.... [his] commands set you free to live openly in his freedom!*"¹⁸ Third, you experience God's power in your life. Stubborn temptations and overwhelming problems can be defeated by Christ when given to him.

As Joshua approached the biggest battle of his life, he encountered God, fell in worship before him, and surrendered his plans. That surrender led to a stunning victory at Jericho. This is the paradox: Victory comes through surrender. Surrender doesn't weaken you; it strengthens you. Surrendered to God, you don't have to fear or surrender to anything else. William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, said, "The greatness of a man's power is in the measure of his surrender."

Surrendered people are the ones God uses. God chose Mary to be the mother of Jesus, not because she was talented or wealthy or beautiful, but because she was totally surrendered to him. When the angel explained God's improbable plan, she calmly responded, "*I am the Lord's servant, and I am willing to accept whatever he wants.*" Nothing is more powerful than a surrendered life in the hands of God. "*So give yourselves completely to God.*"

The best way to live. Everybody eventually surrenders to something or someone. If not to God, you will surrender to the opinions or expectations of others, to money, to resentment, to fear, or to your own pride, lusts, or ego. You were designed to worship God-and if you fail to worship him, you will create other things (idols) to give your life to. You are free to choose what you surrender to, but you are not free from the consequences of that choice. E. Stanley Jones said, "If you don't surrender to Christ, you surrender to chaos."

Surrender is not the *best* way to live; it is the *only* way to live. Nothing else works. All other approaches lead to frustration, disappointment, and self-destruction. The King James Version calls surrender "your *reasonable* service." Another version translates it "the most *sensible* way to serve God." Surrendering your life is not a foolish emotional impulse but a rational, intelligent act, the most responsible and sensible thing you can do with your life. That is why Paul said, "*So we make it our goal to please him.*" Your wisest moments will be those when you say yes to God.

Sometimes it takes years, but eventually you discover that the greatest hindrance to God's blessing in your life is not others, it is yourself-your self-will, stubborn pride, and personal ambition. You cannot fulfill God's purposes for your life while focusing on your own plans.

If God is going to do his deepest work in you, it will begin with this. So give it all to God: your past regrets, your present problems, your future ambitions, your fears, dreams, weaknesses, habits, hurts, and hang-ups. Put Jesus Christ in the driver's seat of your life and take your hands off the steering wheel. Don't be afraid; nothing under his control can ever be out of control. Mastered by Christ, you can handle anything. You will be like Paul: *"I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him who infuses inner strength into me, that is, I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency."*

Paul's moment of surrender occurred on the Damascus road after he was knocked down by a blinding light. For others, God gets our attention with less drastic methods. Regardless, surrendering is never just a one-time event. Paul said, "I die *daily*." There is a *moment* of surrender, and there is the *practice* of surrender, which is moment-by-moment and lifelong. The problem with a *living* sacrifice is that it can crawl off the altar, so you may have to surrender your life fifty times a day. You must make it a daily habit. Jesus said, *"If people want to follow me, they must give up the things they want. They must be willing to give up their lives daily to follow me."*

Surrender is not the best way to live; it is the only way to live. Nothing else works.

Let me warn you: When you decide to live a totally surrendered life, that decision will be tested. Sometimes it will mean doing inconvenient, unpopular, costly, or seemingly impossible tasks. It will often mean doing the opposite of what you feel like doing.

One of the great Christian leaders of the twentieth century was Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. Through Crusade staff around the world, the Four Spiritual Laws tract, and the *Jesus* film (seen by over four billion people), more than 150 million people have come to Christ and will spend eternity in heaven.

I once asked Bill, "Why did God use and bless your life so much?" He said, "When I was a young man, I made a contract with God. I literally wrote it out and signed my name at the bottom. It said, 'From this day forward, I am a slave of Jesus Christ.'"

Have you ever signed a contract like that with God? Or are you still arguing and struggling with God over his right to do with your life as he pleases? Now is your time to surrender-to God's grace, love, and wisdom.

THINKING ABOUT MY PURPOSE

Point to Ponder: The heart of worship is surrender.

Verse to Remember: *"Surrender your whole being to him to be used for righteous purposes."*
Romans 6:13b (TEV)

Question to Consider: What area of my life am I holding back from God?

Stress and Surrender

By M.A. Erickson

Many people are under stress and pressure in our culture today. Financial stresses, relationship stresses, job related stress, health issues, emotional stress - the list goes on and on. The tensions of life have been tough on many people. The tensions of life have led to breakdown, strain, a lack of peace, and health problems.

But there is a way to come out from under the effects of stress: stress and the pressures of life can be released through surrender. "Letting go" is one of the most healthy things you can do. It leads to an inner peace, a release of pressure, a new freedom. "Letting go" ultimately leads to a peace and freedom beyond anything that you or I have yet experienced.

There is a great release in realizing that you do not have to "hold your life together." There is a great release in realizing that you do not have to scheme and strive and pull strings to keep your life manageable. There is a great release in realizing that the universe does not revolve around you or I. You do not have to hold the universe (or even your own life) together. The universe does not revolve around you or I, and so it would be unnatural, unhealthy, for you to try to run the universe or even your own life.

The problem is that many people live as if life revolved around them - their ideas, plans, or needs. Unknowingly, they fall into a trap, because if a person lives as if life and the universe revolves around himself or herself, then "self" will be at the center. When "self" is ruling a person's life, that person will find that happiness and peace escapes him.

This explains why so many rich and famous people cannot find happiness through money, power, fame or fortune. Because "self" is at the center of their life, they cannot find true happiness or peace - only temporary pleasures that lead to dead-ends, dissatisfaction or addiction.

Average people face the same issue of "self," but often it is the problems and difficulties of life that keep a person struggling to stay in control, to stay "in charge," and live life by one's own strength.

But there is a much greater strength, the Strength of Another - the one who truly does run the universe. The loving God who holds the universe together has a personal concern for you, and He alone has the power and love to manage and guide your life. The loving God alone has the power and wisdom to guide your life and bring you into peace.

This God of love comes to you in the person of Jesus Christ. So the only safe and right surrender is to surrender your problems to the One who gave His life for you: the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only true image of God, who has come to us in the flesh. He gave His life for you on the cross to cleanse you, and to lead you to the true center: the heavenly Father who truly does love you and rule over all things. Jesus said it clearly: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through Me." (John 14:6).

There are ultimately two great pulls in the universe; one is the pulling force of self: this is a life that revolves around self in it's various forms. A life that revolves around self includes a life that is centered on selfish pleasures; but it can also include someone who is struggling to stay "on top of things," trying to stay in control, in this difficult and unpredictable world. We just weren't meant to be "in charge" of things here.

The other great pull is the God of love who created the universe, the living God who became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. God came to us to reveal Himself to us. He revealed Himself as a loving and compassionate Savior. Only He is qualified to guide our lives. Only He is qualified to reign in our hearts. He leads us away from the reign of "self," and into the rule of love.

If you look to religious people for clues about a God-centered life, you will find some disappointments. Just because a person is "religious" doesn't mean that their life is truly centered on the God of love. Some

people remain at the center of their own life, while they talk of God or religion. If a person has obvious moral flaws or wrong behavior, or distorted concepts of God, that person has not come to a true surrender to the God of love. Religious people who still have "self" at the center of their life actually turn many people away from the loving God of heaven.

Therefore, rather than looking to people and their failures, look to Jesus Christ. He died for us, not when we were good and noble, but while we were still trapped under the rule of "self." He died for us to cleanse us and forgive us and heal us. He did this while we were still preoccupied with "self," and sin. (All types of sin are just the expression of selfishness, in one form or another- so Jesus died to cleanse us from all forms of selfishness, and to restore our focus on the love of the Father). Believe in Jesus and allow Him to restore you to a life centered on love for God, and a genuine love for people.

"Letting go" is healthy, because it is based on the truth: God is the one running the universe, not you or I. "Letting go" is when you allow God to be at the center of your life, rather than yourself. Letting go is also when you allow Him to be in control, in all the specific areas of your life. This takes your focus off of yourself, and places it on the God of love and compassion.

You and I were not meant to be at the center of the universe, or even to be at the center of our own lives. We were meant to have the loving God at the center of our lives. When He is truly at the center, everything else takes its rightful place in our lives. Then we love God, and we love people, each in their rightful place and way.

ULTIMATE SURRENDER AND DAILY SURRENDER

The ultimate surrender is when you surrender your life fully to God. He becomes the center of your life, and you love people and use your talents and abilities for the glory of God. This is a once - and - for - all decision. Even after you make that decision, however, there are the many daily surrenders, where you turn your problems and burdens and concerns over to God, to let Him handle them. There are many daily reminders that God should be the one running the universe, not you or I. Surrendering, "letting go," allows the peace of God to rule in your heart during the daily challenges.

A comparison can be made with marriage: at the altar a man and woman exchange vows, and give their lives to one another. That is a decision, a commitment, a surrender of two people's lives to one another. But in marriage there are also many daily surrenders, when a man and woman seek to please each other, and set aside any selfishness.

So it is with our relationship with the God of love. There is the initial surrender of your life to Him. Then there is the daily surrender, where you learn to walk with God and allow Him to guide your life. In this relationship of love God works with you and through you, to bring His love to people around you.

Talking with the God of Love

In your relationship with the God of love, it is crucial that you allow Him to be at the center of your life, guiding and directing you. This happens as you allow Him to rule and reign in specific situations. Praying includes asking Him into each situation, to guide and direct you. It also includes asking for wisdom, and believing that God will impart wisdom to you.

Growth as a Person

As you grow in a true relationship with the Lord, He will call you away from the path of self-centeredness, and He will call you into the path of genuine love: using your gifts and giving your life to serve others.

Releasing stress to God is one of the great privileges of the God-centered life. "Letting go" and letting God have control is simply the recognition of the truth - the truth that God is ultimately in control. And He has promised to guide and direct those who let Him have control of their lives. Not only that, but He has

promised to take the burdens and cares of His people upon His own shoulders. Scripture says, "Cast your burdens upon Him, for He cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7).

God comes to fill you with His presence, His precious Holy Spirit. This leads you away from self, and to the outflow of genuine love. The selfishness that is prevalent in the human race is obvious, and is the source of our problems. God changes this by giving you a new nature when you surrender your life to Jesus Christ.

He then comes and fills you with His Holy Spirit, to lead you away from the trap of "self," into an outflowing of love from your heart. This outflow of love and compassion is one of the sure signs of a child of God, who has been filled with God's love. 1 John 4:19 says, "We love because He first loved us." And in 1 John 4:7 it says, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God." You must follow Christ, down the path of genuine love.

The Apostle John goes on to say, "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested to us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the payment for our sins."

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit."

"And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him." (1st John 4:8-16).

The following prayer is an example of a prayer of surrender. The important thing is to pray from your heart, in a genuine surrender. Talk to the Lord until you are sure you have surrendered your heart to him.

A Prayer of Surrender:

I receive you, Lord Jesus, as the Lord and Savior of my life. I ask you to rule in my heart and life from now on.

I ask you to fill me with your loving presence, and guard me with your divine protection.

I ask you to strengthen me, and help me to live for you from now on. I ask you to fill me with love so that I can love other people with a pure love. And fill me with love so that I can love you, with all of my heart. Lord Jesus, please fill me with your love, and wash away all my sins. I surrender my heart and life to you. I ask you to receive me and make me whole.

Thank you for dying on the cross for me, to cleanse me and forgive me. Thank you for dying for me, to make me a child of God. I turn away from my sins, with all my heart.

I surrender my worries and my fears, and my problems to you. I ask you to guide my life and provide for me. Help me to honor you always. Guide me in your ways. Amen.

The peace of God will come into your heart in an awesome way, as you let God guide and direct your life.

May God give you His strength always.

