



Surrender



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“He went a little farther and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, ‘O my father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.’” Matthew 26:39

There are several passages that demonstrate Jesus’ full surrender to God the Father, but none of them are more incisive and final than the one as he prays in the Garden of Gethsemane. In Samaria Jesus replies to the disciples as they urge him to eat, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to finish his work” (Jn. 4:34). This is still some time before Jesus faces the cross. It is another occasion when Jesus demonstrates his surrender to the will of God the Father; however, at this time it is just a meal that Jesus was missing. There is still time to make a different choice and missing a meal is not as final as facing the cross.

Jesus repeatedly tells the disciples that he is surrendered to the Father’s will. He says to them on another occasion, “For I have come down from heaven, not to my own will, but the will of him who sent me” (Jn. 6:38). Jesus is completely surrendered to God the Father. He may have opportunities to do his own will, but he constantly submits willingly to the Father.

When Satan tempts Jesus to take a short cut and make things work out according to Jesus’ own desires, Jesus answers every assault with the word of God:

“It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’” (Matt. 4:4).

“Jesus said to him, ‘It is written again, “You shall not tempt the Lord your God”’ (Matt. 4:7).

“Then Jesus said to him, ‘Away with you, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord

” (Philippians 2:5). By making Jesus our model, we will develop more character and beneficial influence than if we focused only on ourselves (“my” bucket list).

When I’m gone, what will others say about me? I frankly doubt that anyone will speak of my travels (a relatively meager list), my wealth (nothing substantial), or my intelligence (no comments, please!). I would, however, like for others to say what was said about Jesus: “... who went about doing good” (Acts 10:38).

No, I’ll never come close to what Jesus was as He lived on earth. But to the extent I’m able, let me be more like Him every day that I live. Is that at the top of my list?

Timothy D. Hall

"LightGrams" June 4, 2015

By making Jesus our model, we will develop more character and beneficial influence than if we focused only on ourselves .

“But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus; that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”

Ephesians 4:20-24



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Bucket Lists

Everyone, it seems, has a bucket list. If you're not familiar with the idea, it was made popular by a 2007 movie, "The Bucket List". Two men had been told they were dying from terminal illnesses. Before they "kicked the bucket", they set out with a list of certain things they wanted to do or see. The concept resonated with millions.

I haven't made such a list yet, but I could spout off a few things I'd like to see or do in my lifetime: Visit the Rocky Mountains, tour Italy, master the Spanish language, and read more of the classic novels. You likely have such a list, too, whether it has been placed on paper or not. We could do these things, given time, effort, and money.

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An article in the New York Times on April 11, 2015 puts a different face on this idea. Instead of focusing on things we desire, author David Brooks asks us to consider "The Moral Bucket List". Certain traits, he argues, make us better people, but are only attained by deliberate effort. He mentions humili-

ty, interdependency, love, and conscience. These are not glamorous or trendy, but each will lead to a character that others admire. Maybe our goal should be to develop some of these traits.

Christians have been taught from the beginning to focus on holiness and wholeness.

Making a list that makes us better or more helpful, not just happier - that's a theme that comes straight from God's word.

Christians have been taught from the beginning to focus on holiness and wholeness. Here's a good statement of that ideal: "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3,4).

Such thinking is uncommon in this world. Unselfishness? Lowliness of mind? Thinking others are better than ourselves? How could we ever attain such attitudes?

Paul gives the answer immediately: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Je-

your God, and him only you shall serve" (Matt. 4:10).

It is evident that Jesus is fully surrendered to do God's will and not his own. How about us? Will we follow the Lord's example, or will we forge our own course? We often sing the words: "All to Jesus I surrender,/ All to Him I freely give;/ I will ever love and trust Him,/ In His presence daily live." There is a great desire and longing within us to fulfill the sentiments of this song. However, we often fall short of full surrender. There are times when God may have to force us into submission. It is hard to deny self and take up our cross and follow Jesus.

There is a great desire and longing within us to fulfill the sentiments of this song.

There is a difference between surrender and submission. The one is a choice that we freely make; the other is a choice that is forced upon us. The one is born through our desire to follow God's word and be pleasing to him; the other is born through God's reproof. The one is a result of self-denial; the other is the result of God's discipline of the self. There is an article in Wikipedia that is insightful on this subject:

To surrender in spirituality and religion means that a believer completely gives up his own will and subjects his thoughts, ideas, and deeds to the will and teachings of a higher power. It may also be contrasted with Submission. Surrender is willful acceptance and yielding to a dominating force and their will.

In Christianity, the first main principle of surrender is "Dying to Self", or the "emptying of self" to allow Christ to live through the believer, illustrated in the following passages:

If any [man] come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. — Luk 14:26

For to me to live [is] Christ, and to die [is] gain. — Phl 1:21

For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. — Col 3:3

The second issue of surrender in Christianity is allowing Christ to "take our place" through the believer, in other words,

the emptying of self so that God may live through the believer as evidenced in Phl 1:21.

Another principle central to the Christian concept of surrender is the concept of surrender to God's Will. Surrendering to God's will entails both the "surrender of our will to His in macrocosm", in which His plan prevails over man's and the adversary, and secondarily to the surrender of one's will for individual life to "His will for our personal lives in microcosm." This is done through the emptying or dying of self, the "putting self aside" in favor of divine influence. This includes the idea of surrendering to a call. The corollary of this personal surrender is obedience, and obedience to God is denoted as bringing about His will, having lasting effects, and often associated with earthly and divine blessings.

The supreme act of surrender which the believer is called to emulate is the surrender of Christ first as coming into the world as God incarnate and then the surrender to the Cross in the act of sacrificial atonement, breaking the curse of sin and death

from the Fall.

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. — Phl 2:7-8

Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. — Luk 22:42

Surrender is also noted in Christian doctrine as one of the three columns of victorious living, or Christian victory: the Blood of the Lamb [Christ], their Testimony of the Word of God [Scriptures] and their lives, and Loving not their lives to death.

The Christian Flag, which represents all of Christendom, has a white field, with a red Latin cross inside a blue canton. In conventional vexillology, a white flag is linked to surrender, a reference to the Biblical description of Jesus' non-violence and surrender to God's will. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surrender_\(religion\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surrender_(religion))

light. God's Holy Spirit calls and forms this people. God means to do something with us, and he means to do it in community. We are in on what God is doing, and we are in on it together.

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And here is how we are in on it: We become present to what God intends to do with and for us through worship, become present to the God who is present to us. The operating biblical metaphor regarding worship is sacrifice — we bring ourselves to the altar and let God do with us what he will. We bring ourselves to the Eucharistic table and enter into that grand four-fold shape of the liturgy that shapes us: taking, blessing, breaking, giving — the life of Jesus taken and blessed, broken and distributed. That Eucharistic life now shapes our lives as we give ourselves, Christ in us, to be taken, blessed, broken and distributed in lives of witness and service, justice and healing.

The Perfect Church

*I think that I shall never see
A church that's all it ought to be;*

*A church whose members never
stray
Beyond the straight and narrow
way;*

*A church that has no empty pews
Whose preacher never has the
blues;*

*A church whose deacons always
"deak"
And none is proud and all are
meek,*

*Where gossips never peddle lies
Or make complaints or criticize;*

*Where all are always sweet and
kind
And all to others' faults are blind.*

*Such perfect churches there may
be,
But none of them are known to
me.*

*But still we'll work and pray and
plan
To make this one the best we can.*

location for getting this way and truth and life of Jesus believed and embodied in the places, and among the people, with whom we most have to do day in and day out. There is more to the church than this local congregation. There is the church continuous through the centuries, our fathers and mothers who continue to influence and teach us. There is the church spread throughout the world, communities that we are in touch with

But the local congregation is the place where we get all of this integrated and practiced...

through prayer and suffering and mission. There is the church invisible, dimensions and instances of the Spirit's work that we know nothing about. There is the church triumphant, that "great cloud of witnesses" who continue to surround us (Heb. 12:1). But the local congregation is the place where we get all of this integrated and practiced in the immediate circumstances and among the men, women and children we live with. This is where it becomes local and personal.

The local congregation is the place and community for listening to and obeying Christ's commands, for inviting people to consider and respond to Jesus' invitation, "Follow me," a place

and community for worshipping God. It is the place and community where we are baptized into a Trinitarian identity and go on to mature "to the measure of the full stature of Christ" (Eph. 4:13), where we can be taught the Scriptures and learn to discern the ways that we follow Jesus, the Way.

The local congregation is the primary place for dealing with the particulars and people we live with. As created and sustained by the Holy Spirit, it is insistently local and personal. Unfortunately, the more popular American church strategies in respect to congregation are not friendly to the local and the personal. The American way, with its penchant for catchy slogans and stirring visions, denigrates the local, and its programmatic ways of dealing with people erode the personal, replacing intimacies with functions. The North American church at present is conspicuous for replacing the Jesus way with the American way. For Christians who are serious about following Jesus by understanding and pursuing the ways that Jesus is the way, this deconstruction of the Christian congregation is particularly distressing and a looming distraction from the way of Jesus.

A Christian congregation is a company of praying men and women who gather, usually on Sundays, for worship, who then go into the world as salt and

The Bible teaches us that our faith must lead us to humility. This humility is demonstrated through our self-denial, our striving to put others before self. We use the word "striving" because self-denial is not a destination at which we one day arrive, where we sit down and relax with our journey done. Self-denial is a mode of traveling through this world. It is not an easy road to navigate. There are curves and hills and valleys and detours all along the way. We must be fully committed to traveling this road or we will surely decide to turn back and take a different route.

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James describe this journey in James 4:1-10. He begins by asking the question, "Where do wars and fights come from among you?" Then he proceeds to answer the question immediately and directly, "Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?" James talks about our struggle with the lust of our flesh and concludes that friendship with the world is enmity with God. He states very clearly, "Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes him-

self an enemy of God." Jesus states the same principle in these words, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24).

How can we win this struggle and stay on the right path? James answers, "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you... humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he will lift you up" (Jas. 4:7-10).

We must arm ourselves as Jesus was armed when Satan tempted him—with the word of God. We must arise daily seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness. We must surrender our wills to the will of God. We must take up our cross daily and follow him (Lk.9:23).

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Excerpt from The Jesus Way

“The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; not as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”

1 Peter 5:1-4

These few verses from the pen of the Apostle Paul are full of useful and helpful admonition to those who would serve as good Elders/Shepherds of the Lord's flock. It begins with this simple fact: the flock belongs to God and to no one else. It is the 'flock of God' which we may just happen to be among. It is not my church and it is not my flock. It belongs to God. That is a point at which any good and successful shepherding must begin.

Those who would be good Shepherds of God's flock must take the oversight not for money or any other personal gain, but with

eagerness and a willingness to invest your time and energy in being helpful to people. As a Shepherd we are called to encourage, comfort, correct and enable God's children to be all that God wants them to be. A Godly Shepherd is not a man striding behind the flock with a whip, but he is leading the way in the front of the flock, demonstrating by a Godly example the way the flock should go. A Godly Shepherd knows that the real reward is the crown of glory that does not fade away and he is doing his best to not only attain that end himself but also to take as many sheep who will follow him to the same reward.

It is not my church and it is not my flock. It belongs to God.

There is an excerpt from a book by Eugen H. Peterson that might be helpful for many churches to consider. In 1962, Peterson was a founding pastor of Christ Our King Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) in Bel Air, Maryland, where he served for 29 years before retiring in 1991. He was Professor of Spiritual Theology at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia until retiring in 2006. He now lives in Montana. Peterson is probably best known for *The Message: The Bible in*

Contemporary Language. Although The Message has received criticism from some bible scholars, many people read Peterson's paraphrased Bible because they find it accessible. The stated goal of The Message was to make the original meaning more understandable and accessible to the modern reader. Like many one-man paraphrases, it probably goes beyond simple translation and turns into commentary at times.

The publishing of this excerpt from Peterson's book is in no way an endorsement of everything that he believes or writes. It is not likely that very many of us agree one hundred percent on various issues and ideas. However, what Peterson has written in this excerpt does encourage us to examine ourselves. It is in hopes that it will cause us to consider our beliefs and practices in light of God's word that the excerpt is presented. (lsg)

The Jesus Way vs. The American Way

In this short excerpt from his book *The Jesus Way*, Eugene Peterson encourages Christians to attend not only to the "the truth" and "the life" of Jesus, but also to "the way" of Jesus — and he explains why he believes that the way often followed by North American Christianity and its consumer-driven churches is not the Jesus way at all.

Here is a text, words spoken by Jesus, that keeps this in clear focus: "I am the way, the truth and the life." (John 14:6) The Jesus way wedded to the Jesus truth brings about the Jesus life. We can't proclaim the Jesus truth but then do it any old way we like. Nor can we follow the Jesus way without speaking the Jesus truth.

...the way often followed by North American Christianity and its consumer-driven churches is not the Jesus way at all.

But Jesus as the truth gets far more attention than Jesus as the way. Jesus as the way is the most frequently evaded metaphor among the Christians with whom I have worked for 50 years as a North American pastor. In the text that Jesus sets before us so clearly and definitively, way comes first. We cannot skip the way of Jesus in our hurry to get to the truth of Jesus as he is worshiped and proclaimed. The way of Jesus is the way that we practice and come to understand the truth of Jesus, living Jesus in our homes and workplaces, with our friends and family.

A Christian congregation, the church in your neighborhood, has always been the primary