

Delighting in the Almighty

A Practical Guide to Primitive Godliness

Seminar Workbook: **Basic**



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Review

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Love for God is the first and great commandment. Such love transforms the Christian life into “get-to” joy, rather than “have-to” drudgery. But where does this love come from? It comes from God. It *can* only come from Him.

But if love for God, comes only from God, why did I fail to grow in love over the first four decades of my sincere Christian life? Why did I fail to enjoy prayer? Why did I find myself looking for excuses to shorten or skip my devotional time?

Prayer, Bible study, and witnessing are the keys to growing in love for God. They are like the sunshine, water, and nutrient-rich soil that a plant needs to grow. But the plant of love will fail to grow—even in a perfect growing environment—if the seed is missing.



The plant of love needs a seed. And that seed was missing for much of my Christian life. The Rich, Young Ruler had the same problem. According to Jesus, he “lacked one thing” (Mark 10:21). “Only one thing he lacked, but that was a vital principle. **He needed the love of God in the soul.** This lack, unless supplied, would prove fatal to him; his whole nature would become corrupted. By indulgence, selfishness would strengthen. That he might receive the love of God, his supreme love of **self must be surrendered**” (Desire of Ages, p. 519).

The seed of love is the surrender of self. If I desire to love God with all of my heart, all of my mind, all of my soul, and all of my strength, then I must give God all of my heart, all of my mind, all of my soul, and all of my strength.

When we throw our “gold in the dust, And the gold of Ophir among the stones of the brooks, Then the Almighty will be [our] gold And choice silver to [us]. For then [we] will delight in the Almighty And lift up [our] face to God” (Job. 22:23-26).

Jesus is a gift to mankind. He is a priceless gift. And He gives Himself to us freely. But He is a gift that costs everything to receive. “He is a gift, but only to those who give themselves, soul, body, and spirit, to Him without reserve...When we thus give ourselves wholly to Him, Christ, with all the treasures of heaven, gives Himself to us. We obtain the pearl of great price” (COL, p.116).

Love for Christ cannot grow in our hearts until we are ready to receive Him. That is why the seed of love is the surrender of self.



Key phrase: The seed of love is the surrender of self. If I want to love God with all my heart, and all my mind, and all my soul, and all my strength, I must give God all my heart, all my mind, all my soul, and all my strength.

Jacob's love for Rachel made his 7 years of hard labor seem "to him but a few days because of his love for her" (Genesis 29:20).

"and you shall 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 12:30).

The first fruit of the Spirit is love and the second is joy. No wonder we should be asking ourselves the question, "How can I enjoy God?"

"If Christ be in us the hope of glory, we shall discover such matchless charms in him that the soul will be enamored...**But a profession without this deep love, is mere talk, dry formality, and heavy drudgery**" (Spiritual Gifts 2, p.263).

"If we love Jesus, we shall love to live for Him, to present our thank offerings to Him, to labor for Him. The very labor will be light. For His sake we shall covet pain and toil and sacrifice. We shall sympathize with His longing for the salvation of men. We shall feel the same tender craving for souls that He has felt. This is the religion of Christ" (Christ Object Lessons, p. 49-50).

But love for Jesus is not under our direct control. We cannot turn up the heat of our passion for the Lord like a burner on a stove.

Love FOR God comes only FROM God: "...for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7).

Most of my Christian life my love for God has been tepid at best. This was especially evident in my prayer life. I did not enjoy it very much and often looked for excuses to skip or shorten my devotional time.

If we say that we love someone, but then find ourselves looking for excuses to avoid them, we may need to re-evaluate our love relationship. That was certainly the case in my life.

What was my problem? What should I have done during all those years of my life to increase my love for God?

The stock answer is: pray more, meditate on scripture, and get involved in outreach. But that did not work for me, and it did not work for the Pharisees. They were avid prayers, assiduous Bible students, and they travelled, "over land and sea to win a single convert." Prayer, Bible study, and outreach can be powerful blessings but they are not, in themselves, the answer.

Prayer, Bible study, and outreach are often compared to water, sunshine, and fertile soil. All of these ingredients are necessary for the plant to grow. But one other thing is also required: the seed.

What, then, is the seed to a passionate love relationship with Jesus? It is found in the story of the Rich, Young Ruler.

"...Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, 'One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me'" (Mark 10:21).

“Christ read the ruler's heart. Only one thing he lacked, but that was a vital principle. **He needed the love of God in the soul.** This lack, unless supplied, would prove fatal to him; his whole nature would become corrupted. By indulgence, selfishness would strengthen. **That he might receive the love of God, his supreme love of self must be surrendered**” (Desire of Ages, p. 519).

The seed of love is the surrender of self - If we wish to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, then we must GIVE God all our heart, mind, soul, and strength

Jesus told the Rich, Young Ruler to go away. He did not say, “Go and love me more.” That would have been impossible. Instead Jesus said, in essence, “Go and get rid of everything that is keeping you from loving me only.”

“you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” (Mark 10:21). Like the Rich, Young Ruler, we need to transfer our gold from earth to heaven.



“If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored; If you remove unrighteousness far from your tent, And place your gold in the dust, And the gold of Ophir among the stones of the brooks, Then the **Almighty will be your gold** And choice silver to you. For then you will delight in the Almighty And lift up your face to God” (Job. 22:23-26).

If Jesus had allowed the Rich, Young Ruler to follow Him without making that all-important transfer of affections, He would have had another Judas on His hands.

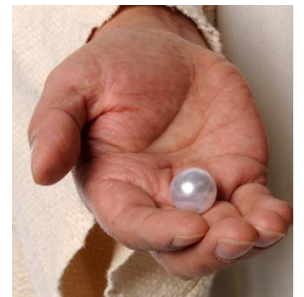
Judas also “...loved the Great Teacher, and desired to be with Him. He felt a desire to be changed in character and life, and he hoped to experience this through connecting himself with Jesus. The Saviour did not repulse Judas. “He gave him a place among the twelve. He trusted him to do the work of an evangelist. He endowed him with power to heal the sick and to cast out devils. **But Judas did not come to the point of surrendering himself fully to Christ**” (Desire of Ages, p. 716).

The Rich, Young Ruler, “...wanted the heavenly treasure, but he wanted also the temporal advantages his riches would bring him. He was sorry that such conditions existed; he desired eternal life, but he was not willing to make the sacrifice. **The cost of eternal life** seemed too great, and he went away sorrowful; ‘for he had great possessions’” (DA, p. 520).

The cost of eternal life? I thought salvation was free. “For the wages of sin is death, but the **free gift** of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

But “when he had found one pearl of great price, [he] went and **sold all that he had**, and bought it” (Matthew 13:46).

Jesus did not ask the Rich, Young Ruler to do anything that He is not asking each one of us to do. Everyone who would obtain the “pearl of great price” must pay the same price—everything.



“In the parable the pearl is not represented as a gift. The merchantman bought it at the price of all that he had. Many question the meaning of this, since Christ is represented in the Scriptures as a gift. **He is a gift, but only to those who give themselves, soul, body, and spirit, to Him without reserve**...We are to give ourselves to Christ, to live a life of willing obedience to all His requirements. All that we are, all the talents and capabilities we possess, are the Lord's, to be consecrated to His service. **When we thus give ourselves wholly to Him, Christ, with all the treasures of heaven, gives Himself to us.** We obtain the pearl of great price” (COL, p.116).

Jesus is an incredible gift. A love relationship with Him is a treasure above all other treasures. But not just anyone can receive that gift. He can only be given to those who are able to receive Him.

1. Summarize the chapter in your own words

2. What key concepts from the chapter do you want to apply to your life? How will you accomplish this?

Points to Ponder

3. Read through the Ponder section prayerfully. Pick one or two Bible verses or EGW statements to memorize, or review often. List the references here, and write the quotations on 3x5 cards.

1.

2.

Interact

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1. Rewrite Job 22:23-26 in your own words and in terms of your own life. What, if anything, needs to change in your life in order to enjoy the promise of this passage?

2. How would you explain to a friend how the **free** gift of eternal life costs us everything?



3. Why is it so wonderful (and important) to love Jesus with all of our heart, all of our mind, all of our soul, and all of our strength?
4. Ellen White tells us that “Self-surrender is the substance of the teachings of Christ” (DA p. 523). If that is true, then why do you suppose it took me over thirty years after my baptism to learn the truth about surrender? What can we do to teach this fundamental truth to others more effectively?

Note

Review

Enjoying God to the Fullest

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“...you shall 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 12:30). According to Jesus, “This is the great and foremost commandment” (Matthew 22:38).

And rightly so. Such love transforms the Christian life. It gives us a relish for God—and for His ways. With this love, our relationship with Jesus becomes a “get-to” joy. But this commandment to love God with every bit of our being is impossible for us to obey directly. Only God can give us such love.

And the seed of that love is the surrender of self. Only when we give God all of our heart, all of our mind, all of our soul, and all of our strength, can we love Him with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength. Only when we throw our “gold in the dust, And the gold of Ophir among the stones of the brooks,” will the Almighty be our “gold And choice silver” to us. For then we “will delight in the Almighty And lift up [our] face to God.” (Job. 22:23-26).

That sounds good, but how does it work in my day-to-day experience? How, in practical terms, can I leave my worldly gold in the dust, and store up treasure in heaven? The key is in my daily choices.

Choices are some of our greatest possessions. To many, they are the “gold of Ophir” that we find so difficult to relinquish. Letting God choose His choices over our own can be excruciatingly difficult. But His choices are good. Every one of His commands is a gift, wrapped in love and tied with a bow of grace. There is no downside to obeying Him.

Every one of God’s choices is good. It is good for us, and it is good for others. When we choose God’s good choices, blessings result. Although these blessings are not always easy or comfortable or pleasurable, they do always bring true joy, peace, and satisfaction.

But, it is important for every Christian to remember that our obedience does not purchase God’s blessings. We do not convince God to be good to us by obeying Him. Obedience is not WHY God blesses me, it is HOW He blesses me. There is a simple cause and effect relationship between going God’s way and reaping blessed results.

Those blessings include temporal physical, mental, social, and moral health. But even greater than these temporal blessings are the spiritual good things that come through obeying God. These include enhanced prayer, growing faith—and most wonderful of all—a flourishing love for Jesus. “If you keep My commandments,” Jesus proclaims, “you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love” (John 15:10).

Enjoying God is like drinking orange juice. Depending on what we eat before it, the juice can be delightfully sweet, or it can be distastefully sour. In the same way, by our choices we get to choose how sweet Jesus is to us.

Key Phrase: Obedience is not **WHY** God blesses me. It is **HOW** He blesses me. By my choices I get to choose how sweet Jesus is to me.

“If salvation is a free gift of God, and does not come by works, then **why does God require obedience?**”



Some of the 1,050 New Testament commands

Love your enemies (Matthew 5:44)

Be glad in persecution (Matthew 5:12)

Be content with your wages (Luke 3:14)

Do all to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:13)

Endure hardship (2 Timothy 4:5)

Give cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Be patient toward all people (1 Thess. 5:14)

Keep yourself pure (1 Timothy 5:22)

Flee hurtful lusts (1 Timothy 6:9-11)

Deny yourself (Matthew 6:24)

Our obedience is clearly important to God. But why?

“We hear a great deal about faith, but we need to hear a great deal more about works” (1SM, p. 382).

When God loaded down ancient Israel with commandments and laws, He didn’t do it TO them. He did it FOR them.

“All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 28:2).

Read Deuteronomy 28:1-14. First half of the chapter contains the blessings of obedience. Last half of the chapter has the curses of disobedience.

“Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, **that it may be well** with them and with their sons forever!” (Deuteronomy 5:29).

“Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will **enjoy** the fruit of their deeds” (Isaiah 3:10).

“...he who finds me [wisdom] finds life and obtains favor from the Lord. But he who sins against me **injures himself...**” (Proverbs 8:35-36).

“If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them” (John 13:17).



“The human family is suffering because of transgression of the laws of God. The Lord desires that men shall be led to understand the cause of their suffering and the only way to find relief. He desires them to see that their well-being, physical, mental, and moral, depends upon their obedience to His law” (Councils on Health p. 206). We sometimes let the devil give obedience a bad name. Christmas analogy – “Aww, do I really have to go downstairs and open my presents?”

Obedience is not **WHY** God blesses me. It is **HOW** He blesses me.

Definition of disobedience: Disobedience is choosing choices that we know are not God’s choices. “Therefore, to one who **knows** the right thing to do and does not do it, **to him it is sin**” (James 4:17).

Can I say, "Thanks, but no thanks" to God? Can I refuse a blessing of obedience if I am willing to accept the consequences?

Ice cream sundae illustration – I want it. I accept the consequences. Is it okay to eat it?

Sometimes we are too nonchalant in our decision making. Why wouldn't we want to align ourselves as closely as possible to God's perfect will? Everything He wants for us is good. There is no downside to Spirit-inspired, love-motivated, careful obedience.

Sierra Leone illustration. Why do we eat something that has unwanted calories and fat and that we know is unhealthy? The answer should not be, "because it tastes good." God has given us many healthy things that taste good.

Obedience is God's gift to mankind. Every command is a good thing for us. Obedience is:

- a temporal blessing (healthy physically, socially, emotionally, and mentally)
- faith enhancing

"Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and **as a result of the works**, faith was perfected..." (James 2:21-22).

- prayer enhancing

"Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:21-22).

- **love enhancing**

"If you keep My commandments, you will **abide** in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love" (John 15:10).

"To know God is...to be one with Him in heart and mind, having an experimental knowledge of Him, holding reverential communion with Him as the Redeemer. **Only through sincere obedience can this communion be obtained**" (R&H, June 30, 1910).

By my choices, I get to choose how sweet Jesus is to me.



Disobedience is love inhibiting

"Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short That it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull That it cannot hear. But **your iniquities have made a separation** between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2).

God does not turn His back on us. We turn our backs on Him. When Adam and Eve sinned, who hid from Whom? And Who came running to help?

"If you keep My commandments, you will **abide in My Love**; ...These things I have spoken to you so that My **joy** may be in you, and that **your joy may be made full**" (John 15:10-11).

Reflect

1. Summarize the chapter in your own words
2. What key concepts from the chapter do you want to apply to your life? How will you accomplish this?

Points to Ponder

3. Read through the Ponder section prayerfully. Pick one or two Bible verses or EGW statements to memorize, or review often. List the references here, and write the quotations on 3x5 cards.
 - 1.
 - 2.

Interact

Enjoying God to the Fullest

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1. Do you think that we, as modern-day Christians, take our power of choice for granted? Can you think of any such choices in your own life? What can you do to start taking your power of choice more seriously?



2. In your own words, how would you respond to the question, "If salvation is a free gift of God, and does not come by works, then why does God require obedience?"

3. What does it mean that "by our choices we get to choose how sweet Jesus is to us?"

4. Why do you think we obey God so reluctantly? Why do we grudgingly receive God's magnificent gifts?

Note

Review

The Root of the Problem

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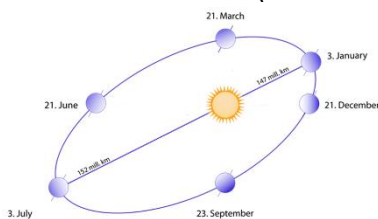
The only thing better than living the Christian life is enjoying it. God desires that we relish our life with Him here on earth. In good times and in bad, we rejoice in Him uninterruptedly. “If Christ be in us the hope of glory, we shall discover such matchless charms in Him that the soul will be enamored. It will cleave to Him, choose to love Him, and in admiration of Him, self will be forgotten. Jesus will be magnified and adored, and self abased and humbled. But a profession, without this deep love, is mere talk, dry formality, and heavy drudgery” (1T p. 162).

In order to love God whole-heartedly we must surrender to Him—unreservedly, unresistingly, and unrelentingly. That sounds good, but what does it mean in practical life? It means joyfully giving God our choices.

God’s choices are all good. Every one of His commands is a gift; an invitation to be blessed. Obedience is not WHY God blesses me, it is HOW He does it.

Why, then, would we ever choose anything but God’s good way? Why do we find it so difficult to obey Him and choose His choices? The answer is found in our human nature.

When God created Adam and Eve, they naturally obeyed God and enjoyed it. They loved obeying God. They relished pleasing Him and reaping the benefits of His good choices. But when Adam sinned, he single-handedly broke the human nature (Romans 5:14, 17).



You and I were born with a nature that fights God. We are hostile to Him.

Rather than naturally choosing His good way, we, by nature, crave the unhealthy path.

Our nature is bent and broken. It naturally tilts away from the Son of Righteousness.

And the result is a built-in spiritual winter.

This natural hostility to God, and craving for our own way is called “self.” And it is this “self” that is our greatest enemy. Ellen White tells us that “Under the general heading of selfishness came every other sin.” (ChS p. 87). “Self is the enemy we most need to fear...No other victory we can gain will be so precious as the victory gained over self” (Ministry of Healing, p. 485). “We have no enemy without [outside of ourselves] that we need to fear. Our great conflict is with unconsecrated self. When we conquer self, we are more than conquerors through Him who has loved us...” (R. & H., March 5, 1908).

Self fights God as He battles to bless us—and, if we let it, self wins. Self must go. Whatever it takes, self must be defeated. Are we willing to let God do whatever it takes to conquer self in us? Are we willing to be as radical as Aron Ralston when he cut away the flesh that pinned him to this earth?

We, too, can be free of self. But, because of our free will, we must choose this freedom. We must be willing to let God do whatever it takes to free us. The process will be difficult, and it will be painful. But God can get us through it. If we let Him.

Ponder

The Root of the Problem

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Key Phrase: My natural self fights God. Self is the enemy I most need to fear.

Humans weigh 180 pounds, and can run 20 m.p.h. for short distances. Bulls weigh 1,300 pounds and can run twice that speed. Bulls are faster, heavier, and more powerful. And yet, in a bullfight, they almost always lose. Why is that? Part of the answer is that they are distracted from the true enemy by the red cape. The bull wastes time and energy fighting an enemy that cannot be hurt.

“It is only labor in vain to pick leaves off a living tree...The ax must be laid at the root of the tree and then the leaves will fall off, never to return” (Evangelism p. 272).

The devil is an enemy, but he is too strong for us...and he is already a defeated foe

“our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12).

Jesus came and died so “that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14).

We are, by nature, enemies of God

“For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin” (Romans 7:14).

“...the mind set on the flesh is **hostile** toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:8).

“The Lord says, ‘I will put enmity between thee and the woman.’ The enmity does not exist as a natural fact. As soon as Adam sinned, he was in harmony with the first great apostate and **at war with God**” (Youth Instructor, October 11, 1894).

What is God’s battle with us?

“Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you...How blessed are all those who long for Him” (Isaiah 30:18).

God fights to bless us. By nature, we resist His blessings. Two reasons why:

1. Not all of God’s blessings are attractive to us (eg. tribulation, self-denial, self-sacrifice).
2. We are not always willing to pay the price—even for the naturally attractive blessings.

We are, by nature, unwilling to be blessed. We WANT to be blessed, but we are not always WILLING.

- McDonalds health survey illustration
- We want health, but are not always willing to eat healthfully
- We desire physical energy, but are not always willing to exercise
- We want healthy friendships, but may be unwilling to deny ourselves juicy gossip
- We value being debt-free, but may find it difficult to resist spending



This is very true in the Spiritual realm as well. We long for the Holy Spirit, for example, but may not be willing to pay the price. “If all were willing, all would be filled with the Spirit” (Acts of the Apostles, p. 50).

- Like the Rich, Young Ruler, we desire eternal life, but may be unwilling to make the radical sacrifice
- We may wish to spend more time devotionally each day, but be unwilling to go to bed earlier
- We may desire to enjoy Scripture, but be unwilling to deny ourselves the stimulating worldly entertainment that makes the Bible seem bland by comparison
- We may long to soar with God on the heights, but be unwilling to remove every worldly weight
- We may truly desire to be on fire for God, but be unwilling to let Him turn off the cold water faucet of worldliness in our lives.

“For thus the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, has said, ‘In repentance and rest you will be saved, In quietness and trust is your strength.’ But **you were not willing**,” (Isaiah 30:15). “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, ... How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and **you were unwilling**” (Matthew 23:37).

Self is the enemy

“**Self is the enemy** we most need to fear...No other victory we can gain will be so precious as the victory gained over self” (Help in Daily Living, p. 25).



“We have no enemy without that we need to fear. Our **great conflict** is with unconsecrated self. When we conquer self, we are more than conquerors through Him who has loved us...” (R&H., Mar. 5, 1908).

“Another book was opened, wherein were recorded the sins of those **who profess the truth**. Under the general heading of selfishness came **every other sin**...” (The Faith I Live By, p. 214).

God is a gentle God, Who will not force His will upon the weakest human—even for their own good.

“What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce worthless ones?” (Isaiah 5:4).

“Behold, my servant whom I have chosen; my beloved in whom my soul is well-pleased; ...He will not quarrel, nor cry out;...A battered reed He will not break off, and a smoldering wick He will not put out, until He leads justice to victory” (Matthew 12:18-20).

“The tempted one needs to understand the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man-- the power of decision, of choice. **Everything depends on the right action of the will**. Desires for goodness and purity are right, as far as they go; but if we stop here, they avail nothing. Many will go down to ruin while hoping and desiring to overcome their evil propensities. They do not yield the will to God” (MH, p.176).

“I saw that many had so much rubbish piled up at the door of their heart that they could not get the door open. Some have difficulties between themselves and their brethren to remove. Others have evil tempers, selfish covetousness, to remove, before they can open the door. Others have rolled the world before the door of their heart, which bars the door. All this rubbish must be taken away from the door, and then can they open the door, and welcome the Saviour in” (Testimonies, vol. 1 p. 143).

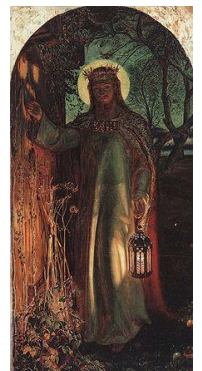
Our natural inclination is to fight God and His goodness. Self is our enemy. It must be conquered. Because of our power of choice, when we fight God, we win. Self must go!

Interact

The Root of the Problem

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1. Ellen White writes that “It is only labor in vain to pick leaves off a living tree...The ax must be laid at the root of the tree and then the leaves will fall off, never to return” (Evangelism p. 272). What does this statement mean in terms of your life today?
2. In what ways do you see yourself naturally fighting (tilted away from) God?
3. What is the difference between “wanting” to be blessed and “willing” to be blessed? Do you see this problem in your own life? What can you do about it?
4. What does it mean that we have a “knocking” God?



Note

The Root of the Problem

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Review

The Greatest Unused Power

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“Self is the enemy we most need to fear...No other victory we can gain will be so precious as the victory gained over self” (Ministry of Healing, p. 485). Self separates us from God. It fights God. Self supplants God. When emptied of our self, we can be filled with His self. Whatever it takes, whatever the cost, self must go.

The bad news is that self is too strong for us. We cannot empty ourselves of self. Self is intertwined around every fiber of our being. We enjoy self-ish choices. We crave self-ish ways. We are addicted to self—by nature.

The good news is that there is Someone Who can deliver us from self—supernaturally. This transformation comes through a new birth—a spiritual birth. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). Only the indwelling Holy Spirit can work in us both to will and to do His good way. Trying to free ourselves from self is like a caterpillar trying to fly by flapping its legs—it won’t happen. It can’t happen. But if the caterpillar is born again and becomes a butterfly, flying will come naturally.

This self-defeating new birth is the direct result of surrender. Only when we commit ourselves wholly to Him, can the Holy God dwell and work in us without stepping on our free will. Before surrender, the Holy Spirit merely works ON our hearts and minds. After surrender, He dwells IN us. The difference is transformational. We have the privilege of getting out of God’s way, and allowing the Almighty God to dwell in us, working His will in every aspect of our lives.



We all know that we need the Holy Spirit. We pray for the Holy Spirit. But few receive Holy Spirit power. Why is that? What must I do in order to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

The Bible clearly answers this question for us: “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Repentance is the catalyst for this process. This sincere sorrow for sin and desire to be free from it makes it possible for us to accept the next step: death.

Baptism symbolizes three very important spiritual concepts. The first is death, crucifixion with Christ (Galatians 2:20). Only as we are willing to be buried in Him can we receive the cleansing of Christ’s blood, and the resurrection to newness of life in Him. Only those who have died can receive resurrection power.

Repentance leads to surrender (crucifixion with Christ). Surrender leads to justification (cleansed by Christ’s blood). Together, surrender and justification lead to the indwelling Holy Spirit and conversion. The result of receiving the Spirit is love, obedience, and sanctification. These are the seven foundational elements of the Christian life, and they can only be had by grace through faith. Only God can do “it,” only I can let Him.

The Greatest Unused Power

Key Phrase: Only God can do it, only I can let Him.

“Everyone who enters the pearly gates of the city of God will enter there as a conqueror, and his greatest conquest will have been the conquest of self” (God’s Amazing Grace, p. 31).

Nicodemus, like the Rich, Young Ruler, had a “self” problem that would keep him out of heaven. That is why Jesus told him, “You must be born again” (John 3:7).

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6).

“An American told his English friend that the Niagara Falls was the greatest unused power in the world. His friend contradicted him, saying, ‘Not so, my friend, the greatest unused power in the world is the Holy Spirit of the living God’” (A.J. Gordon from Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations, #2232).



Trying to be a Christian without being “born of the Spirit” is like attempting to start a lawn mower without fuel. It is like a caterpillar struggling to be a butterfly while keeping its old way of life. The caterpillar must die.

“At the very outset of the Christian life every believer should be taught its **foundation principles**. He should be taught that he is not merely to be saved by Christ’s sacrifice, but that he is to make the life of Christ his life and the character of Christ his character” (Christ Object Lessons, p. 57-58).

The first foundation principle is **repentance**. “Then,” God proclaims to Israel, “you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations” (Ezekiel 36:31). This is a hard, but healthy, Godly self-loathing.

This loathing of sin—and the self-ishness that caused it—leads to **surrender**. Surrender is giving up on any hope of solving our self problem in our own power, and letting God have unhindered access to every choice in our lives, so that He can be Almighty in us.

“God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place” (Selected Messages Vol. 1, p. 366). Whole-hearted surrender means that we are not *knowingly* holding back even the smallest choice from God.

A house emptied by surrender and purified through justification becomes a temple in which the **Holy Spirit** can dwell. “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and YOU WILL RECEIVE the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). The result of that infilling Spirit is conversion. “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26).

The first fruit of the Spirit is **love**. “But to know Jesus requires a change of heart. No unconverted person, in his natural state of depravity, loves Christ. A love of Jesus is the first result of conversion” (DG. P. 241).

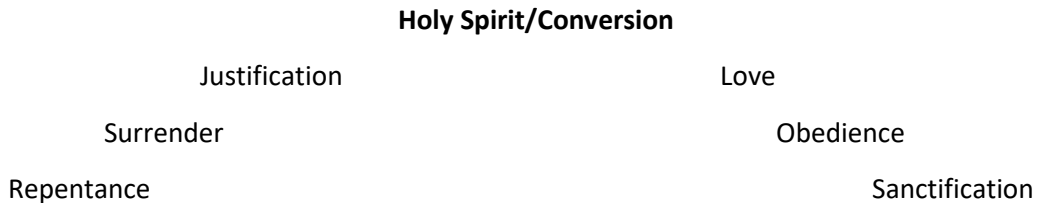
That love is the great motivator for **obedience**. With love like that we can be joyfully yoked to Christ and say, like David, “I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart” (Psalms 40:8).

And what does obedience do for us? It leads to **sanctification**. “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?” (Romans 6:16).

“Good works cost us a sacrifice...These obligations bring us into conflict with natural feelings and propensities, and in fulfilling them we gain victory after victory over the objectionable traits of our characters” (In Heavenly Places, p. 324).

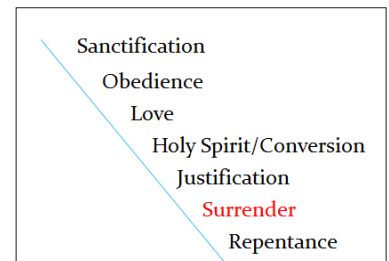
“Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, a day, but of a lifetime. It is not gained by a happy flight of feeling, but is the result of constantly dying to sin, and constantly living for Christ. Wrongs cannot be righted nor reformations wrought in the character by feeble, intermittent efforts. It is only by long, persevering effort, sore discipline, and stern conflict, that we shall overcome...Sanctification is the result of lifelong obedience” (Acts of the Apostles p. 560).

These foundation principles of the Christian life form a chiasm centered on the Holy Spirit:

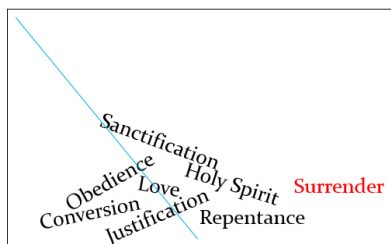


But notice the importance of surrender? Surrender is the first place in this progression where our power of choice is required. If the devil can derail us here, the whole Christian life falls apart.

“All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us” (Desire of Ages p. 668).



The problem is that this Holy Spirit infilling and conversion is rare



“The new birth is a rare experience in this age of the world. This is the reason why there are so many perplexities in the churches. Many, so many, who assume the name of Christ are unsanctified and unholy. They have been baptized, but they were **buried alive**. Self did not die, and therefore they did not rise to newness of life in Christ” (Manuscript Release 148, 1897).

“The Father ‘giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him.’ So with the followers of Christ. We can receive of heaven's light only as we are willing to be

emptied of self. We cannot discern the character of God, or accept Christ by faith, unless we consent to the bringing into captivity of every thought to the obedience of Christ. *To all who do this the Holy Spirit is given **without measure***” (Desire of Ages, p. 181).

“If all were willing, all would be filled with the Spirit” (Acts of the Apostles, p. 50).

“Many who speak to others of the need of a new heart do not themselves know what is meant by these words. The youth especially stumble over this phrase, ‘a new heart.’ They do not know what it means. They look for a special change to take place in their feelings. This they term conversion. Over this error thousands have stumbled to ruin, not understanding the expression, ‘Ye must be born again’” (MYP, p. 71).

“Satan leads people to think that because they have felt a rapture of feeling, they are converted. But their experience does not change. Their actions are the same as before. Their lives show no good fruit. They pray often and long and are constantly referring to the feelings they had at such a time. But they do not live the new life. They are deceived. Their experience goes no deeper than feeling. They build upon the sand, and when adverse winds come, their house is swept away” (Youth Instructor, Sept. 26, 1901).

Interact

The Greatest Unused Power

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1. **“Only God can DO IT”** List other areas of your life that only God can do. Focus especially on the current challenges in your life.

Examples:

Only God can motivate me

Only God can help me use my time effectively

2. **“Only I can let Him”** Write a prayer of consecration to God inviting Him to have your life so that He can do IT. Then thank God for doing it.

3. If your friend asked you how they could receive the Holy Spirit, what would you tell him or her?

4. In your own words, describe how obedience to God leads to sanctification.

Note

The Greatest Unused Power

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Drowning in the Will of the Almighty



Surrender can be difficult to understand. What, exactly is it? What does it look like in practical terms? How do we become surrendered, know that we are surrendered, and stay surrendered?

Surrender can be defined in many ways. It is getting whole-heartedly out of God's way so that He can be Almighty God in us. It is drowning in the will of God—dying in the arms of Jesus. Perhaps one of the best, more formal, definitions is that surrender is a Spirit-inspired, Spirit-enabled, settled commitment to give God every choice, in every area of my life, all the time.

One reason that surrender can be difficult to understand is that it is both an event and a process. It is an event in that there comes a point in our lives where we make the momentous decision to die in the arms of Jesus.

But surrender does not stop at the decision. Since dying to self goes against the grain of our nature, it must be constantly reaffirmed. Like Paul, we must die daily. That is the process of surrender. Daily we must recommit ourselves unreservedly, unresistingly, and unrelentingly to Christ. Daily we must learn at the feet of Jesus new areas in our lives that need to be submitted. Daily, by God's power and grace, we must live the life of commitment that we accepted at the event of surrender.

Surrender can be compared to marriage. The event of marriage is the altar where we commit ourselves 100% to each other. But everyone who has tried it knows that the event of marriage does not a marriage make. After the commitment comes the learning. Learning to please each other and to work together effectively. Growing in love. Leaving ourselves behind in favor of each other. That is a growing process that continues throughout our lives together.

But surrender, like marriage, is not a process in the sense that we commit adultery less and less. Surrender is not a process of giving God more and more of our known bad choices. Like the parable of the city gates, we recognize that God cannot make much headway in our lives until all the city gates (even the "little" ones) are shut to the devil. If the devil can find even the smallest crack to slither through, he will. And he will undo much of the good that Christ is trying to do in our lives. Every city gate must be closed to the devil, in every area of our lives, all the time. That is the requirement of surrender, and that is the promise of surrender.



"When the soul surrenders itself to Christ, a new power takes possession of the new heart. A change is wrought which man can never accomplish for himself. It is a supernatural work, bringing a supernatural element into human nature. The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own. A soul thus kept in possession by the heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan. But unless we do yield ourselves to the control of Christ, we shall be dominated by the wicked one" (Desire of Ages, p. 324).

Drowning in the Will of the Almighty

Key Phrase: Surrender is drowning in the will of the Almighty. It is a Spirit-inspired, Spirit-enabled, settled commitment, to give God every choice, in every area of my life, all the time.

“In the beginning there was only one will - God’s
Then Satan fell and there became two wills
Then God created man with free wills
In the end, after Satan is destroyed, there will again be only one will,
but not like God’s will in the beginning, for it will be
God’s will and man’s will perfectly blended into one will.”

Watchman Nee - paraphrased

Defining surrender

- Charles Finney story – lawyer with stop-claim deed to himself
- Drowning in the will of the Almighty
- Getting out of God’s way so that He can be Almighty in and through me
- Spirit-inspired, Spirit-enabled, settled commitment to give God all my choices, in every area of my life, all the time



Surrender is both an event and a process (like a marriage)

Event of surrender (wedding ceremony) – hard-won decision to commit all our choices to God

This event is not best accomplished during an emotionally-charged spiritual high. Rather it should happen when we are stone-cold sober emotionally, and recognize the full consequences of this life-changing choice.

Process of surrender (learning to live and work together) – daily living that commitment and learning new areas to surrender

“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me” (Luke 9:23).

Surrender, like marriage, is not a process of committing adultery less and less. It is a 100% commitment from the start.

“Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. **Cease** to do evil, **Learn** to do good;...” (Isaiah 1:16-17).

“At every stage of development our life may be perfect; yet if God’s purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be continual advancement” (Christ Object Lessons, p.65).

Parable of the city gates – Not even the smallest gate at the back of the city can be left open. These gates represent our choices. We cannot hold back even the smallest choice from God, because the devil will use that opening to slither in and undo God’s great work of transformation in our lives.

Surrender is all-or-nothing (Kings of Israel example)

“The sons of Israel did things secretly which were not right against the Lord their God. Moreover, they built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city” (2 Kings 17:9).



- “Jehoshaphat ...walked in all the way of Asa his father; he did not turn aside from it, doing right in the sight of the LORD. **However**, the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burnt incense on the high places” (1 Kings 22:42-43).
- “Jehoash **did right** in the sight of the LORD...**Only** the high places were not taken away;...” (2 Kings 12:2-3).
- “Azariah...**did right** in the sight of the LORD...**Only** the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places” (2 Kings 14:29 - 15:4).
- “Jotham...**did what was right** in the sight of the LORD; ...**Only** the high places were not taken away; ...” (2Ki. 15:32-35).
- “Amaziah **did right** in the sight of the LORD,...**Only** the high places were not taken away;...” (2 Kings 14:1-4).

“Asa did **good** and **right** in the sight of the Lord his God, for he **removed** the foreign altars and high places, **tore down** the sacred pillars, **cut down** the Asherim, and commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers and to observe the law and the commandment. He also **removed the high places** and the incense altars from all the cities of Judah. And the kingdom was **undisturbed** under him” (2 Chronicles 14:2-5).

“For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him” (2 Chronicles 16:9).

“Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth?” (Psalms 73:25).

Startlingly obvious statement: “Large chasms are not crossed by a series of small jumps.” This is true of surrender as well.

“There are some who seem to be always seeking for the heavenly pearl. But they do not make an entire surrender of their wrong habits. They do not die to self that Christ may live in them. Therefore they do not find the precious pearl. They have not overcome unholy ambition and their love for worldly attractions. They do not take up the cross and follow Christ in the path of self-denial and sacrifice. Almost Christians, yet not fully Christians, they seem near the kingdom of heaven, but they cannot enter there. **Almost but not wholly saved, means to be not almost but wholly lost**” (COL 118).



Surrender includes caring about the “little” things

Space shuttle Columbia illustration. It was just a “little” hole in the wing that brought down Columbia and killed its entire crew. That hole exposed the internal structure of the wing, and the heat from reentry melted it.

“Normalization of deviance” by NASA brought down both the Columbia and Challenger space shuttles. Deviation from the best choices became “normal.” And this led to catastrophic failures that could have been avoided.

Lukewarm, Laodicean Christianity also has a “normalization of deviance” problem. We make choices lightly that we know are not our best choices. But we do them anyway, because it’s just a “little” thing, and besides, everyone else is doing it.

“We do not belong to Christ unless we are His wholly” (Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 50).

“Let none deceive themselves with the belief that they can become holy while willfully violating one of God’s requirements. The commission of **a known sin silences** the witnessing voice of the Spirit and **separates** the soul from God” (The Great Controversy, p. 472).

“One wrong trait of character, one sinful desire cherished, will eventually neutralize all the power of the gospel...” (Testimonies for the Church. Vol. 5, p. 53).

Interact

Drowning in the Will of the Almighty

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1. Write a stop-claim deed for your own life. Include in it the major and minor aspects of your daily existence, especially the things you find most difficult to surrender.



2. God will not allow us to relinquish our power of choice. So how can we—in essence—give Him our power of choice each day?

3. A friend of yours has just heard the parable of the city gates, but he doesn't get it. How would you explain the main point of the parable to him? (Hint: What do the gates represent?)



4. We know how bad the “big” bad choices are, but why must the “little” bad choices also be surrendered all-or-nothing, and all-at-once?

Note

Review

My Story

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For most of my Christian life I misunderstood surrender. I thought it meant that I would give God my one or two worst problem areas, and when He had given me victory over those, we would move on to other bad choices. I believed that it was normal, and even expected, to make some known bad choices. “After all,” I would say, “it’s just a little thing. And besides God isn’t finished with me yet.”

And it was true, God was not finished with me yet. In fact, I had hardly let Him get started. I failed to understand the parable of the City Gates. If I leave even the smallest crack open to the devil, he will slither into my life and undo much of the good work that God is trying to accomplish in me.



For most of my Christian life I failed miserably to resist temptation. My resolutions were as “ropes of sand” (CH, p. 439). I would plead for God to give me victory, but the devil would laugh in my face, and keep pounding away until I gave in. I remember thinking, “Why do I even try?” The wonderful promise, “...resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7) did not work for me.

At the age of around 44, I suddenly realized that I had been sincerely serving an all-powerful God for over four decades, and yet I was worse off, in many ways, than when I started. Not only had I failed to receive victory over my old “big” sins, but I had picked up new sins along the way.

And so I gave up on God. I said, “God, if you exist, I have no proof of it. I have sincerely followed you all my life, and I have seen little of the promised victory. I don’t know what more that I can do. If there is a heaven, I won’t be there unless you perform a supernatural miracle in my life to prove yourself to me.”

God did perform that miracle. He taught me surrender. He showed me how I had been holding back “little” areas of my life—open gates—that had prevented Him from being Almighty God in me. He worked in me both to “will and to do” surrender—unreservedly, unresistingly, and unrelentingly.

By the grace and power of God He finally got me to the place where I was truly willing and able to commit my choices to Him—all of them, in every area of my existence, all the time. That miracle transformed my life. The wonderful promise in James 4:7 started working, because now I understood the whole verse: “submit therefore to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” I had tried the resisting, but it doesn’t work without the submitting. Only by giving the Almighty God my choices can He perform the miracle of victory in my life.



I can’t do it. Only He can. But I must let Him. And, because of the power of choice, that is something I can do. In the next chapter we will see how that works in practical terms.

Ponder

My Story

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Key Phrase: “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

Parable of Rich, the Poor Man – His bucket was too full of worthless rocks to make room for gold.



The Good

I am a fourth-generation Seventh-day Adventist. I lived in a good, Christian home. I attended Seventh-day Adventist schools from first grade through graduate school. I served as a missionary overseas and an ordained elder in my church.

The Bad

I had addictions, bad habits, and known sin, over which I could not get victory. After four decades of serving the Almighty God, I had not only failed to get victory over my old sins, but I had picked up new ones along the way.

I claimed the promise “...resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7), but it never seemed to work. The devil would laugh in my face when I tried to resist him, and he would redouble his efforts. He kept pounding away at me until I gave in. I remember thinking, “Why do I even try?”

The Desert

There came a point in my life that I felt that God had failed me. Although I had sincerely tried to follow Him to the best of my ability, claiming His power for victory, I had failed of achieving it. I blamed God. I did not know what else to do. What more could I do than what I had done?



The Key

Visiting my mom at Wisconsin Campmeeting, I heard a sermon on surrender. I don’t remember much of the content of that sermon, but I do remember thinking, “I wonder if this is the key. Perhaps I never succeeded at surrendering my life unreservedly, unresistingly, and unrelentingly to God.”

I had often prayed the surrender prayer and sincerely sung, “All to Jesus I surrender,” but had I ever made the life-changing commitment?

The Search

I did not jump into this surrender thing right away. But I decided to learn more about surrender. What it was, how it worked, how to become surrendered, how to stay surrendered, and how to know if I had succeeded.

That’s when I discovered something that Ellen White already knew, “**Self-surrender is the substance of the teachings of Christ**” (Desire of Ages, p. 523).

Surrender is a prominent theme throughout scripture from Genesis to Revelation.

I had misunderstood that “Many...look for a special change to take place in their feelings. This they term conversion. Over this error thousands have stumbled to ruin, not understanding the expression, ‘Ye must be born again’” (Messages to Young People, p. 71).

The Costs

As I studied surrender, I found that counting the costs is a very important part of becoming surrendered. One of the major costs for me was movies. I loved to watch movies. And yet I had long known that they are not true or pure or lovely (Philippians 4:8). I knew that most movies promote worldly values and ideas. I knew that they played with my emotions. I knew that I found it difficult not to snack while watching movies and that they took up a lot of my free time. Most tragically, movies made the Bible seem bland by comparison. In terms of movies, I grew up normalizing deviance. “They’re just a little thing,” I said, “And besides, God isn’t finished with me yet.”

I often tried to give up movies, but my resolutions were as “ropes of sand” (2MCP p. 737).

One reason I found giving up movies so difficult was that I travelled quite a bit for work, and could not imagine sitting for 8-10 hours while crossing the Atlantic without watching a movie—or three.

The Miracle

In the middle of a heavy travel schedule God miraculously succeeded in getting me to the place where I was ready and willing to give Him every choice...in every area of my life...all the time.

I woke up one morning and realized that it was time. I wanted to do it. By God’s grace, I could do it. And, by God’s grace, I did it. I made the choice to give up my choices.

Almost immediately my love for prayer blossomed. Whereas before my surrender I found it difficult to enjoy prayer and to pray for any length of time, now I could pray for an hour and truly enjoy it. That, to me, has been one of the most visible and powerful miracles that I have ever experienced.

I also found that I could now “resist the devil” and he fled! That was a brand new experience for me. I could consistently get victory over sin. What I had just learned by experience is that the full text of James 4:7 says, “**Submit** therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” Without the “submit,” there is no “flee.” The order, here, is important; “submit” must come first. But once I made that all-or-nothing commitment to submit, the devil lost his power over me.

That does not mean that I was instantly perfect. I still made mistakes, lacked understanding of God’s will, and had serious character flaws. The difference was that now, by God’s incredible power, I gained victory over the known bad choices.

The Fear

For several weeks after my surrender, I had spiritual panic attacks. What had I done! Were movies and other “little” pleasures no longer an option for me—forever? Could I live such a life? Did I really want to live such a life? Would I fail like I always had in the past? During this time I had almost overwhelming bouts of dread. But God got me through them one day at a time, and they soon went away.

The Fortress

“When the soul surrenders itself to Christ, a **new power** takes possession of the new heart. A change is wrought which man can never accomplish for himself. It is a **supernatural work**, bringing a supernatural element into human nature.” The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes **His own fortress**, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own. A soul thus kept in possession by the heavenly agencies is **impregnable to the assaults of Satan**. *But unless we do yield ourselves to the control of Christ, we shall be dominated by the wicked one*” (Desire of Ages p. 324).

The Ticket



Like the woman who was kicked out of Coach Class, only to be given a Business Class seat, I have been clutching my Coach Class Christian experience. God has finally released my grip on worldliness and has replaced it with a First Class love relationship with Him. Now I am living the good life in First Class, and I never want to go back.

Reflect

My Story

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1. Summarize the chapter in your own words



2. What key concepts from the chapter do you want to apply to your life? How will you accomplish this?

Points to Ponder

3. Read through the Ponder section prayerfully. Pick one or two Bible verses or EGW statements to memorize, or review often. List the references here, and write the quotations on 3x5 cards.
 - 1.
 - 2.

Interact

My Story

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1. How would you summarize the Christian implications of the “Rich, the Poor Man” parable in one or two sentences?
2. We all have areas of our lives that seem especially difficult to surrender. For me it was movies and unhealthy food. Others may laugh at my difficulties and say, “I have no problem surrendering those areas to the Lord.” What areas of your life do you find difficult to surrender?
3. Why didn’t the promise in James 4:7 “...resist the devil, and he will flee from you” work for me?

LET GOD

4. Many sincere people feel that some movies are okay to watch. Why is Hollywood entertainment so dangerous?
5. Why do we so naturally clutch our coach-class Christian experience and make it so difficult for the Lord to move us into a first-class love relationship with Him?

Note

Review

How to Die and Do It Right

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God is the atomic bomb in our lives. He is the source of unimaginable power, and He longs to unleash that power to transform us. But He will not do it unless we are willing and able to accept the consequences. God will do it, but we must flip the switch.

Surrendering to God is conceptually very easy: we simply ask God to accomplish it. The problem is that when we ask, we must really want it. And that is not in us to do.

For that reason, God must bring us to the point where we are willing and able to let God do it. This process may take weeks or even months, and there are things that we can do to co-operate with Him in the process. “As the will of man co-operates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent” (Christ Object Lessons, p. 333).

In this chapter we discuss seven tools in our surrender toolbox. The first is repentance: loathing ourselves (Ezekiel 36:31) because of our sins and sinfulness. This difficult, but healthy loathing helps motivate us to make the radical commitment of surrender.

Learning about surrender is the second tool. Since “self-surrender is the substance of the teachings of Christ” (Desire of Ages, p. 253), we can learn a great deal about surrender from the scriptures.

The third tool is to ask relentlessly. This asking does not convince God to help us surrender, it allows Him to do it. As we plead with God, He works to get us to the point where we want it badly enough that we will let Him do it.

Counting the costs is the fourth tool. This means looking at our lives to try and see the consequences of this radical choice to commit all our choices to God. We must go into surrender with our eyes open, recognizing, at least to some extent, what we are getting into.

The fifth tool is to be willing to be made willing. Our power of choice is not strong enough to enable us to be fully willing to die to self. But we can choose to let God make us willing-unreservedly, unresistingly, and unrelentingly.

Embracing change is the sixth tool. This helps us recognize that change is good, important, and inevitable. Sanctification is the process of God changing us. Unless we are willing to accept radical change, God can’t work it in us.

The last tool is to focus on Jesus. All the other tools are about focusing on Jesus as well, but it doesn’t hurt to reemphasize the importance of spending time enjoying Christ’s life, His words, His actions, and His sacrifice. Only Christ can work this miracle in our lives.

These tools do not accomplish our surrender. It is impossible for us to accomplish our own surrender. But we can, with these tools, co-operate with God in the process so that we can joyfully flip the switch that unleashes the almighty power of God in our lives.



How to Die and Do It Right

Key Phrase: “As the will of man co-operates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent” (COL p. 333).



“The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God...is not an easy attainment. And yet it is [our] privilege and [our] duty to be a perfect overcomer here” (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 3, p. 106, 107).

Our power of choice is not strong enough to fight ourselves. We cannot make the weapons or the ammunition. Only God can. But, by His grace and our power of choice, we can pull the trigger.

“As the will of man co-operates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent” (Christ Object Lessons, p. 333).

We struggle, but we do it with God’s power: “To this end I labor, struggling with all **his energy**, which so powerfully works in me” (Colossians 1:29).

“No outward observances can take the place of simple faith and entire renunciation of self. But no man can empty himself of self. **We can only consent for Christ to accomplish the work.** Then the language of the soul will be, Lord, take my heart; for I cannot give it. It is Thy property. Keep it pure, for I cannot keep it for Thee. Save me in spite of myself, my weak, unchristlike self” (Christ Object Lessons, p.159).

Surrender Toolbox – Things that we can do to collaborate with God in the process of dying to self

1. **Repent** (Message of John the Baptist and Jesus: Matthew 3:1-2, Mark 1:14-15)

“Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations” (Ezekiel 36:31).

“Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. We shall not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness; until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life” (Steps to Christ, p. 23).

“The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’” (Luke 18:11-13).

The honest little girl in our story didn’t want to ask forgiveness for her sins because she felt “they are rather nice.” We, too, naturally feel this way about some of our sins.

2. **Learn about surrender**

“Self-surrender is the substance of the teachings of Christ” (Desire of Ages, p. 523).

“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32, NIV) “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6).

3. **Ask relentlessly**

This asking is angel-wrestling prayer; Unrelentingly pleading with God until He blesses us. “Prayer is heaven’s ordained means of success in the conflict with sin and the development of Christian character. The divine influences that come in answer to the prayer of faith will accomplish in the soul of the suppliant **ALL FOR WHICH HE PLEADS**” (Acts of the Apostles, p. 564).

We ask relentlessly, not in order to convince God to help us, but in order to increase our desire for what we ask. When God gets us to the point that we are truly willing to let Him answer our prayer, at that point, miracles happen.

4. Count the costs

Jesus comes to us at the edge of surrender and proposes marriage: an eternal commitment to each other. We joyfully accept, but that does not mean that we are immediately ready for the altar. We need to prayerfully consider what it will mean to be joined to Christ, “until [eternity] do us part.” What will life be like? Are we willing to live that life? What practical changes will such a commitment bring to our daily choices?

“For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace” (Luke 14:28-32).

“Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple” (the verse before, v. 27).

“So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions” (the verse after, v. 33).

“But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have COUNTED as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I COUNT all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and COUNT them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,” (Philippians 3:7-8).

5. Be willing to be made willing

We are not naturally willing to live the surrendered life. Only God can make us willing. “for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13).

We cannot, by our power of choice say, “Lord, I am willing to surrender.” But we can say, “Lord, I am not willing, I don’t want to lose my life. But I am willing to be made willing.”

6. Embrace change

Christians, like computer programmers, must be “agile.” We must realize that some change is inevitable and good—and we must embrace it wholeheartedly. Conversion and sanctification result in major changes in our lives. We must accept that change, and embrace it. Sanctification means that God is constantly pushing us to new heights of good choices. “every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit” (John 15:2).

7. Focus on Jesus

All of the previous tools in our surrender toolbox are Christ-focusing. But it doesn’t hurt to emphasize this critical thing that we can do to collaborate with Jesus in our surrender.

John focused on Jesus. He “...beheld the tenderness and forbearance of Jesus, and heard His lessons of humility and patience. Day by day his heart was drawn out to Christ, until he **lost sight of self in love for his Master**. The power and tenderness, the majesty and meekness, the strength and patience, that he saw in the daily life of the Son of God, filled his soul with admiration. He yielded his resentful, ambitious temper to the molding power of Christ, and divine love wrought in him a transformation of character” (AA p. 557).



“The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God...is not an easy attainment. And yet it is [our] privilege and [our] duty to be a perfect overcomer here” (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 3, p. 106, 107).

Reflect

How to Die and Do it Right

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1. Summarize the chapter in your own words



2. What key concepts from the chapter do you want to apply to your life? How will you accomplish this?

Points to Ponder

3. Read through the Ponder section prayerfully. Pick one or two Bible verses or EGW statements to memorize, or review often. List the references here, and write the quotations on 3x5 cards.

1.

2.

Interact

How to Die and Do it Right

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1. Rewrite Luke 14:26-27 and Luke 14:33 in your own words—applying them to your life, personally.
2. Only God can bring us to the point where we are willing and able to surrender our lives wholly to Him. But that does not mean that we have nothing to do in the process. What part do we play?
3. How can self-loathing for our sins and sinfulness (Ezekiel 36:31) be healthy for a Christian? How could the devil sabotage it to make it be unhealthy?
4. Christianity is all about Christ and our relationship with Him. What role does knowledge play in that relationship?
5. Sanctification means to be set apart as holy to the Lord. How would you describe the process of sanctification to a new Christian?



Note

Sometimes it seems that one of the most difficult challenges of the Christian life is knowing God's will. Why should it be so difficult? Why should I struggle so much to recognize God's will from my own preconceived ideas, or even from the devil's insinuations?

There are three things that every follower of Christ should know about God's will:



1. **God has to guide us.** Without His guidance we are hopelessly lost. We simply do not have sufficient data to make good decisions.
2. **God longs to guide us.** God earnestly desires that we enjoy the fullness of His good way. He knows that we depend on Him to show us that way. He will do whatever it takes to guide us—if we let Him.
3. **We must let God guide us.** Because of our free will God will not force His way upon us. He will only take us where we willingly let Him go.

One of the three cures for the Laodicean lukewarm condition is eye-salve. Jesus offers this salve for sale. He says, "I advise you to buy from Me...eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see" (Revelation 3:18). We are told that the "The eye is the sensitive conscience, the inner light, of the mind. Upon its correct view of things the spiritual healthfulness of the whole soul and being depends" (RH, November 23, 1897 par. 5). No wonder we need that eye-salve so desperately.

But how do we buy eye-salve from Jesus? Through two foundational choices: repentance and surrender (Revelation 3:19-20). Choices are the currency of heaven. And the cost is all of them.

God guides us in many ways. He guides us through His Word, through Holy Spirit convictions, through friends and family, and through open and closed doors, to name a few. There are also ways that God does NOT guide us. Examples of these include feelings and the bad example of the crowd that surrounds us.

Sometimes God seems especially silent on a matter. There several reasons why this might be so:

1. God has already spoken, and we are resisting His will
2. We may not be fulfilling the conditions
3. God may be testing us or teaching us faith and patience
4. We may not be ready to hear God's will
5. God may not wish to command us on this matter



So what do we do when God is silent? Plead with God to show us anything that is getting in the way. Surrender wholly to Him. And, if all else fails, err on the side of healthy self-denial.

Ponder

Black, White, Gray, and Vinegar

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Key phrase: If all else fails, err on the side of healthy self-denial.

“By day and by night, my prayers ascended to heaven that I might know the will of God, and have perfect submission to it. **Still my way was not made clear**; I had no special evidence that I was in the path of duty, or that my prayers had been heard...Although I had prayed for months that the Lord would make my path so plain that I would know that I was making no mistake, still I was obliged to say that God hangs **a mist before my eyes**” (3BIO pp. 288-289).



“To know the will of God is the greatest knowledge, to find the will of God is the greatest discovery, and to do the will of God is the greatest achievement” (George W. Truett).

“Your ears will hear a word behind you, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ whenever you turn to the right or to the left” (Isaiah 30:21).

“So be careful to do what the Lord your God has commanded you; **do not turn** aside to the **right** or to the **left**” (Deuteronomy 5:32).

“He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in the ways of his father David, **not turning** aside to the **right** or to the **left**” (2 Chronicles 34:2).

“**Do not swerve** to the **right** or the **left**; keep your foot from evil” (Proverbs 4:27).

Three Things about God’s guidance:

1. Only God can guide us.

- a. “I know, O Lord, that a man's way is not in himself, Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps” (Jeremiah 10:23).
- b. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart And **do not lean on your own understanding**. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. **Do not be wise in your own eyes**” (Proverb 3:5-7).

2. God longs to guide us.

- a. “I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth” (Isaiah 42:16).
- b. “This is what the Lord says — your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: ‘I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go” (Isaiah 48:17).
- c. “Who is the man who fears the Lord?, He will instruct him in the way he should choose” (Psalms 25:12).



3. We must let God guide us.

- a. Story - Man 1: "I never felt called..." Man 2: "Are you sure you were within calling distance?"
- b. "I advise you to buy from Me...eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see" (Revelation 3:18).
- c. "The eye is the **sensitive conscience**, the inner light, of the mind. Upon its correct view of things the spiritual healthfulness of the whole soul and being depends" (RH, November 23, 1897).
- d. "Says Christ, By renouncing your own self-sufficiency, **giving up all things**, however dear to you, you may buy the gold, the raiment, and the eyesalve that you may see" (Our High Calling, p. 350).

How does God guide us?

Biblical principles

Example and words of godly friends

Counsels of Ellen White

Inspired Christian writers

Opening and closing doors

Godly guilt

Godly guilt brings conviction and encouragement. The devil's counterfeit guilt brings discouragement and depression.

Martin Luther story - "It is often necessary that a truth, in order to produce its due effect on the mind, must be repeatedly presented to it" (Merle D'Aubigne).

"There are two kinds of people: those who say to God, 'They will be done,' and those to whom God says, 'All right then, have it your way'" (The Great Divorce, C.S. Lewis).

Two ways that God does NOT guide us: Feelings, What everyone around us is doing

Why might God be silent?

1. God has already spoken

In his doubt and anguish he bowed upon the earth, and prayed, as he had never prayed before, for some confirmation of the command if he must perform this terrible duty...and he went to the place where he had several times met the heavenly messengers, hoping to meet them again, and receive some further direction; **but none came to his relief**" (Patriarchs and Prophets p. 148).

2. We are not fulfilling the conditions

"All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the LORD your God" (Deuteronomy 28:2).

3. God may be testing our faith or teaching us patience or trust

I Believe (author unknown)

"I believe in the sun, even when it is not shining
I believe in love, even when I feel it not
I believe in God, even when He is silent"

"God gives us sufficient evidence to enable us to accept the truth understandingly; but he does not propose to remove all occasion for doubt and unbelief. Should he do this, there would no longer be a necessity for the exercise of faith; for we would be able to walk by sight" (Signs of the Times, June 23, 1887).

4. We are not ready - "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now" (John 16:12).

5. God may not wish to command us in the matter - Weeding the garden analogy.

What to do when God is silent? **Err on the side of healthy self-denial**

"...if I am willing to go, God can prevent me. But if I refuse to go, God Himself will not force my will" (Under Sealed Orders, by Norma Youngberg, p. 164).

"I was obliged to say that 'God hangs a mist o'er my eyes.' But **when I had taken my seat** in the cars, **the assurance came** that I was moving in accordance with the will of God...The sweet peace that God alone can give was imparted to me, and, like a wearied child, I found rest in Jesus" (Historical Sketches, p. 160).

Reflect

1. Summarize the chapter in your own words.



2. What key concepts from the chapter do you want to apply to your life? How will you accomplish this?

Points to Ponder

3. Read through the Ponder section prayerfully. Pick one or two Bible verses or EGW statements to memorize, or review often. List the references here, and write the quotation on a 3x5 card.

- 1.

- 2.

Interact

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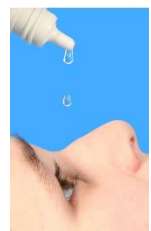
1. Have you ever had an experience similar to Ellen White's Europe trip quandary? If so, what happened?

2. If someone asked you the best way to deal with the "gray" choices in life, what would you tell them?



3. Can you think of any choices that you resisted giving to God? How did He get through to you?

4. How can we buy the heavenly eye-salve from Jesus?



5. What does it mean, in your own words, to "err on the side of healthy self-denial?"

Note

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