



Chapter 1

Embrace surrender

*‘Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make your paths straight.’*

Proverbs 3:5–6

I was just about to leave a friend's house recently when he turned to me and said, 'Did you see what I got Angus for Christmas?' With that, Philip picked up a remote control and pointed it at a toy police Land Rover which shot across the wooden floor at high speed, sirens blaring and doors flying open.

Philip was simply showing me how his eight-year-old son's present worked, but imagine if he were always the one who controlled the operating of it. The toy would have been *given* but not *given over*. I wonder if we do similarly with God – give our lives to Him, yet not give over *all* aspects of our lives.

We sing, 'I surrender all, all to Thee, my blessed Saviour, I surrender all'¹, but do we? If we are to find freedom in all areas of our lives then, I believe, we must move from simply *following* Jesus to *living for* Jesus. To do that requires us to *embrace surrender*. It is only in surrender that we encounter satisfaction irrespective of circumstance.

The trouble is that surrender has negative connotations and we have a tendency to shy away from it as we ponder the effort required and the price to be paid. What if we have to give up things that we don't want to give up; what about the fact that surrender is associated with being defeated? We live in a competitive society and, as Rick Warren points out, 'If winning is everything, surrender is *unthinkable*. We would rather talk about winning, succeeding, overcoming, and conquering than yielding, submitting, obeying, and surrendering.'²

In order to surrender we must be convinced that surrender is positive, not negative, and we must rid ourselves of the viewpoint that it is a sign of weakness. Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians: 'For when I am weak, then I am strong' (12:10). Only when we are weak are we dependent on God's grace:

‘... My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness’ (12:9).

What does surrender mean?

The dictionary definition of surrender is to relinquish possession or control to another; to give up in favour of another; to give up or give back (that which has been granted); to abandon; to give over or resign (oneself) to something.³ Other words used to describe surrender include: yield, let go (of), deliver (up), forsake, turn over, part with, comply, concede, give (oneself) up. The word refers to submission, renunciation, relinquishment and transferral.⁴

Surrender, in biblical terms, means that we become fully God’s and not our own. It is about allowing *our* desires to be brought in line with *God’s* desires. Many times in my life people have given me a word which has included the verse from Psalm 37:4: ‘Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.’ On more than one occasion I have been convinced that I *had* taken delight in the Lord and yet what I longed for still evaded me. I was puzzled over why I never seemed to see the fruit. Then one day I realised several things:

1. There is a difference between *wants* and *desires*: wants have to do with longings focused on self; desires are from the heart and are in conjunction with vision or destiny.
2. We are most likely to see the fulfilment of our desires when they match God’s desires.
3. The *granting* of our desires begins with the *surrender* of our desires. (Verse 5 of Psalm 37 says: ‘Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this ...’)

Commit means to entrust or consign for safekeeping⁵ or to place in trust or charge.⁶ Do you entrust all areas of your life into the safe-keeping of God's hands and trust Him to be in charge, or do you try to take charge yourself and hold on to the control of some areas?

God's agenda or mine?

I have begun to see that without my ways continually surrendered to God, my desires are unlikely to be the same as His. Rather than praying that God will grant me my heart's desires, I now tend to pray that God will show me what His desires are and that mine will come in line with His. Leading up to praying that way I had to ask myself, 'Do I hold in my mind God's agenda for my life or my own agenda? Do I want God's desires and plans or am I trying to twist His arm to give me my fleshly wants?'

The turning point for me was a reading in *The Word For Today*,⁷ where the author writes: 'Do not ask God to bless your plans, ask Him to show you His; they are already blessed. When the time is right the plan will be clear, the people in place and the resources available.' There is a distinct difference in how things work out when we are flowing with God's plans rather than endeavouring to swim against the tide in an effort to maintain our own.

To surrender and allow God to be Lord of our lives involves not only a letting go but a belief that God directs our lives. Do you consider that life 'just happens' or that God is actually in control? What about when, in your eyes, things 'go wrong'? To believe that God is in control means riding the storm when life is uncomfortable and holding on to the truth that '... in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who