

# The Humility and Difficulty of Surrender

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In John 15, the Lord notes that He is the Gardener. Christ is the vine, and we are the branches. There are certain times in our lives that the Lord may bring about a time of pruning. Surrendering one's rights or desires to the Lord may be a type of pruning. He may be about teaching us that He is the only one who ultimately satisfies, gives life, and sustains. Surrendering may come in the form of letting go of a position, possession, relationship, or some other desire.

Webster gives the following definitions to the word surrender: 1: to agree to stop fighting, hiding, resisting, etc., because you know that you will not win or succeed; 2: to give the control or use of (something) to someone else; 3: to allow something (such as a habit or desire) to influence or control you. One thing that all of these definitions have in common is that they involve humility. Agreeing to stop fighting, giving the control to someone else, and allowing something (or someone) else to control you all involve giving up one's personal rights (i.e. humility). To surrender involves submission and relinquishment. Surrendering is not easy, yet it is one tool that the Lord uses to conform us to the image of His Son Jesus.

Jesus Himself experienced surrender—ultimately when He laid down His life on the cross. One example of His humanity that brings much comfort to my soul is seeing His wrestling with the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane, when He prayed, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. *Yet not what I will, but what you will*" (Mark 14:36, italics mine). Jesus knew what the cross meant. He knew that he would be scorned and rejected by men. Even greater than that, though, He knew it would entail rejection by His Heavenly Father when Christ would become sin for us. Jesus understood what was at stake. He did not desire the cup, evident by His asking the Lord to take it from Him. More than the desire to have the cup pass from Him, He wanted the Father's will. His example is true surrender.

Surrender requires humility. It requires us to take a step back and allow the Father to have His way in our lives. The relinquishment of dreams, desires, relationships, or positions, are not just about giving them up or putting the desire to death just to do it. We surrender in order to live.

*Elizabeth Elliot notes, "If we hold tightly to anything given to us, unwilling to let it go when the time comes to let it go or unwilling to allow it be used as the Giver means for it to be used, we stunt the growth of the soul. It is easy to make a mistake here. 'If God gave it me, we say, 'Its mine. I can do what I want with it.' No. The truth is that its ours to thank him for and ours to offer back to him, ours to relinquish, ours to lose, ours to let go off—if we want to find our true selves, if we want real life, if our hearts are set on glory" (Passion and Purity, page 164).*

Abraham had no guarantees when he laid his son Isaac on the altar (see Gen. 22), yet he surrendered his will to the Lord's. The Lord chose to deliver Isaac and to save his life. For Jesus, however, we see that the Lord chose to turn His back on Him and allow Him to die (in order to be raised to life). We have no guarantees when we surrender something to the Lord. When we lay the desire down, the Lord may choose to bring it back to us at some point, or he may choose to take it. Either way, the Lord extends grace to us in times of surrender. Surrender is difficult and requires humility. One of the greatest lessons that we may learn in times of surrender is that He is sufficient. Is the Lord asking you to surrender something? If so, He will give you the grace to do it. Dying to self will not be easy, but the Lord asks us to surrender in order to live.