

THE SACRAMENT OF LIVING

EPIPHANY 2011

Christianity puts surrender to love right at the core of the spiritual journey.

David G. Benner

Surrender to Love

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Matthew 16 vs. 24-27

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. ²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?”

Matthew 16 vs. 27-28

²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done ²⁸ "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

God Loves You Deeply and Unconditionally

Remember the Nature of Jesus

3 Stories

Woman caught in adultery

John 8

Zacchaeus

Luke 19

Prodigal Son

Luke 15

Call of Surrender is a Surrender to Love

What a different relationship begins to develop when you realize that God is head- over-heels in love with you...He just can't help loving you. And he loves you deeply, recklessly, and extravagantly – just as you are. God knows you are a sinner, but your sins do not surprise him. Nor do they reduce in the slightest his love for you

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Ephesians 3 vs. 16–19

¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Creator

Lover of your soul

Guide

Rescuer

Matthew 16 vs. 24-27

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Deny Yourself

Take Up Your Cross

Follow Jesus

Surrender to God's Timing

Surrender Your Definition of Success

Surrender Comfort as Your Primary Goal

Surrender the Fight Against Temptation

The great distinctive of the love of the Christian God is that there are no strings attached to it. God simply loves humans. He created us for a love relationship with himself, and nothing we can do – or not do – changes the love he bears us.

The notion of God's loving us unconditionally is absolutely radical. As Phillip Yancey has written, "The Buddhist eight-fold path, the Hindu doctrine of *karma*, the Jewish covenant, and Muslim code of law – each of these offers a way to earn approval. Only Christianity dares to make God's love unconditional."

The God Christians worship loves sinners, redeems failures, delights in second chances and fresh starts, and never tires of pursuing lost sheep, waiting for prodigal children, or rescuing those damaged by life and left on the sides of its paths.

The Christian God of grace stands in stark contrast to the vindictive, whimsical, threatening, and often capricious gods of other religions. Only the Lord God unconditionally cherishes human beings. Only the Lord God forgives all our offenses and teaches us how to forgive ourselves. Only the Lord God provides everything he demands.

Only the Lord God offers the life of his own Son for the salvation of His people. The Lord God's persistent habit of relating to humans with grace is the best news the human race has ever received.

The good news of Christianity is something that we would have never discovered if Jesus had not come and shown us the character of God. Everything within us tells us that the universe must be organized according to a principle wherein we get what we deserve. But quite unbelievably, God is not simply the projection of our own image on the cosmos;

he is different from anything we could have ever imagined.
He offers us something we could never deserve –
forgiveness of our sins and embrace of his love.

What makes grace amazing is that it alone can free us from
our fears and make us truly whole and free. Surrender to
God's love offers us the possibility of freedom from guilt,
freedom from effort to earn God's approval, and freedom to
genuinely love God and others as the Father loves us.

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