"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Galatians 2:20 KJV

The more time we spend with God praying and meditating on His Word, the more we find our focus in life changing from self-centeredness to Christ-centeredness. John the Baptist summed up the process of becoming by proclaiming, “He must grow greater and greater, but I less and less.” Fenelon expresses the same thought: “Whatever spiritual knowledge or feelings we may have, they are all a delusion if they do not lead us to the real and constant practice of dying to self.” To die to self, or to surrender means to give up, relinquish, yield, let go, abandon, submit, give up my rights.

As we seek to become like Christ and to learn to abide in the Vine, however, we begin to encounter some opposition, Tozer writes, “It would seem that there is within each of us an enemy which we tolerate at our peril. Jesus called it ‘life’ and ‘self,’ or as we would say, the self-life. To allow this enemy to live is in the end to lose everything. To repudiate it and give up all for Christ’s sake is to lose nothing at last, but to preserve everything unto life eternal.”

“I Myself No Longer Live . . . “

There is only one thing God wants in us, and that is unconditional surrender.

Oswald Chambers

1. In John 12:24-25, Jesus sets forth some conditions and results related to our surrender before God. What are they?

2. Richard Foster defines self-denial as “simply a way of coming to understand that we do not have to have our own way.” In Luke 9:23 Jesus outlines a three-point program for discipleship. Write a brief explanation of each point.
When Jesus mentioned self-denial and cross-bearing, what did he really mean? (Mark 8:34). Many think of self-denial as giving up something during the Lenten season. Others have said that it is to be dead to self, or even to hate self. I disagree with these opinions. When Jesus referred to self-denial, he was not talking about denying ourselves some luxury item or denying the reality of self or the needs of self. Rather, he was focusing on the importance of renouncing self as the center of our life and actions. In other words, self-denial is the decision of each of his followers to give over to God his body, career, money, and time. A true disciple is willing to shift the spiritual center of gravity in his life. Self-denial is the sustained willingness to say no to oneself in order to say yes to God. . . . The cross . . . is the symbol of mission, essence of purpose. . . . Whatever mission God gives me is my cross.

Bill Hull

3. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul writes of his own personal surrender. Read Philippians 3:1-11. How does his example of yielding his life challenge you? (In answering this question, it might help you to note what Paul surrendered as well as his purpose for giving it up.)

You have trusted Him as your dying Savior; now trust Him as your living Savior. Just as much as He came to deliver you from future punishment did He also come to deliver you from present bondage. Just as truly as He came to bear your stripes for you has He come to live your life for you.

Hanna Whitall Smith

AUTHOR’S REFLECTION - When my husband Jack and I moved to a new town some years ago, we had three small children all under three years old. Jack was beginning his veterinary practice. Because he treated large and small animals, he was usually gone 12-14 hours a day. Besides having three small children, an absent husband and father, we lived in a very old house that had mice! I had no close friends — only One, who heard my cry, “Lord! I can’t go on anymore, I’m tired, I’m lonely, I want to give up.” Unmistakably, I heard God’s voice in my heart saying, “Good. I don’t want you to go on in your own strength. I want to live your life for you.” That was my initial surrendering. From that time on I began to understand that the Christian life is not imitation, but habitation. It’s an exchanged life — His life for my life. Really, it’s not an even exchange, as Elisabeth Elliot says: “What is ours belongs to Christ, but also what is His belongs to us!” Since I’m still in the process of becoming, I am continually challenged to surrender circumstances to Him daily. When I’m irritable and frustrated over situations I cannot control, God will gently ask, “Cynthia, whose life is it?” I have to answer, “It’s yours, Lord, it’s yours.”

“But Christ Is Living in Me”

4. Read Colossians 3:1-4 and Galations 2:20. How do these verses help you in your understanding of what it means to surrender?
The spirit of God witnesses to the simple almighty security of the life hid with Christ in God. 

Oswald Chambers

5. Meditate on Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 3:16-19. Personalize this prayer by using “I,” “me,” and “my” for the word “you,” and write it out in the space below. Use this as your prayer often to renew your awareness of Christ’s living in you.

6. In 1982, Lydia Joel was head of the Performing Arts dance department in New York City. Parade Magazine quoted part of her lecture to freshmen dancers.

   This is an absolutely undemocratic situation you face. You have no rights here. Your only right is to come to class and be wonderful. You can’t protest, you can’t be absent, you can only work. . . . You must give your entire self in an act of faith. If you have any sort of resentment or lack of clarity, you will find heartbreak. But if you manage to live through four years of this demand upon your inner self, your life will be literally changed.

   a. What were these students asked to give up?

   b. What was their motivation for surrendering?

   c. What was their reward?

   d. What does God ask of you?

   e. What should be your motivation?

   f. What are the rewards and benefits of your yielding?

   g. Why is the process of giving up so often a struggle? (Paul’s discussion in Romans 7:14-25 of his own struggle may yield some helpful insights here.)

In C.S. Lewis’ book The Screwtape Letters, Screwtape (Satan) writes letters of instruction to his demon nephew, Wormwood, on how to keep a Christian from growing. Here he explains to Wormwood the doctrine of
surrender (through this dialogue, Lewis highlights a key result of God’s grace in our lives): “When He talks of their losing their selves, He means only abandoning the clamour of self-will; once they have done that, He really gives them back all their personality, and boasts (I am afraid, sincerely) that when they are wholly His they will be more themselves than ever.”

7. In Romans 8:12-14, Paul sums up his discussion of living by the Spirit versus living according to our sinful nature. What does he tell us to do?

8. It’s been said, “It’s not how much we have of the Holy Spirit that matters, but how much the Holy Spirit has of us.” The key is always submitting and abandoning ourselves to God. “We have to keep letting go, and slowly and surely the great full life of God will invade us in every part, and men will take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus.”

Has there been a time in your life when you have voluntarily handed your life over to God? If yes, describe your experience.

If no, would you prayerfully consider surrendering your life now? Here is a suggested prayer from Hannah Whitall Smith:

Here, Lord, I abandon myself to thee. I have tried in every way I could think of to manage myself, and to make myself what I know I ought to be, but have always failed. Now I give it up to thee. Do thou take entire possession of me. Work in me all the good pleasure of thy will. Mold and fashion me into such a vessel as seemeth good to thee. I leave myself in thy hands, and I believe thou wilt, according to thy promise, make me into a vessel unto thy own honor, “sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.”

SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE MEMORY: Galatians 2:20. As you hide this verse in your heart, and as you live day by day, ask God to bring to mind your commitment to surrender all of your life to Him.

George Mueller’s secret:
“There was a day when I died:
• Died to George Mueller: to his tastes, his opinions, his preferences and his will.
• Died to the world – its approval or censure.
• Died to the approval or blame even of my brethren and friends.
Since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God.”