

FULL SURRENDER TO JESUS

**The start, middle and finish
of the race**

**Thirty men and women who have given us an
example to follow**

*‘The first step into the realm of giving is not manward but
Godward: an utter yielding of our best. So long as our idea of
surrender is limited to the renouncing of unlawful things, we
have never grasped its true meaning.’*

Lilias Trotter

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INTRODUCTION

In the run up to the last Olympic Games, there was a recurring theme echoed by all the competitors – ‘I am going to give it everything I have got’. I think we would have all thought it strange if any of them had said they were not committed to winning, but that they were going to compete and try to get to a stage of full commitment by the time they had finished competing.

No professional football manager would consider taking on a player who said that they were prepared to give it a go, but as they were a bit busy they wouldn’t be able to turn up for all the training. It would not be acceptable to write into their contract that they had other things they needed to attend to. The sports world is full of men and women who have settled their priorities.

The strange thing is that in the Christian Church in the UK, many of us have stopped applying this principle to our relationship with Jesus. For some reason, we seem to think that it is OK to have a vague aim of full commitment as something, sometime, somewhere in the future. In the present, all that is needed is to muddle along with half-formed, half-baked, training programs that may or may not improve our performance. In many periods of the Church’s history, such thinking would have been considered nonsense. Real Christianity would have required setting Jesus and His Kingdom as the absolute priority from start to finish. We need to recover the understanding that total surrender is the place from which we start our Christian race, the road on which we run, and the goal at the finishing line.

The main reason we should fully surrender to Jesus on our Christian journey, is that He said we needed to. Luke records (*in*

ch.14) an occasion when large crowds were travelling with Jesus, and he turned to them and said:

‘If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, even their own life, such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.’

Jesus then went on to use the examples of someone starting a building project, and a king getting ready for war. He knew the crowd would think it silly to start something big, without sitting down first and weighing up what it would cost, so, he then said:

‘In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.’

The short biographical accounts that follow, are examples of men and women who took full surrender seriously. They did not necessarily come to it at the start of their Christian lives, but once they embraced it, they saw it as normal. It is normal. It is impossible to read the words of Jesus and come away with the impression that it is possible to follow Him and to still insist on doing our own thing as well.

When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, the immediate emphasis was upon the holiness of God, the coming of His Kingdom and the acceptance of His will in our lives. There was no provision to add an over-ride that said ‘but not yet’.

Many of the struggles we face as followers of Jesus, may be explained by the fact that we have not yielded particular areas of our lives to Him.

May God awaken His Church from its slumbers and teach us again that there is no substitute for obedience.

GLADYS AYLWARD

When the film *'The Inn of the Sixth Happiness'* was released in 1958, it starred Ingrid Bergman, a stunning Scandinavian actress better known for her performance in *'Casablanca'* opposite Humphrey Bogart. The person she represented in the film, was in fact a rather short, plain looking woman by the name of Gladys Aylward. Though somewhat diminutive in physical size, Aylward was one of God's giants in spiritual stature.

Having failed as a candidate for the China Inland Mission because of her struggle to master Chinese, the 26 year old unmarried parlour maid, saved up her meagre wages until she had enough for a one way ticket to China on the Trans-Siberian Railway. Detained by, and then escaping from the Russian Army whilst on the journey, Gladys eventually reached China where she joined an aging missionary, Jeannie Lawson to run the Inn of the Eight Happinesses. This became their base for evangelism. Through the favour of God, Gladys was appointed by the local Mandarin to be the 'foot inspector', a role created to enforce the new legal measures against foot-binding of young girls. This gave her access to homes and villages all over the Province.

Gladys became a Chinese citizen in 1936, having established a reputation amongst the people as 'The Virtuous One'. Her reputation came from her care of numerous orphans, and from her successful intervention in a prison riot which she was instrumental in quelling almost single handedly.

When the Japanese invaded China as part of their offensive prior to the Second World War, Gladys was wounded, but she still managed to evacuate about a hundred children to safety over a perilous mountain route. It was this act that led to her fame, and the making of the film that glamourised her hard, but fruitful life and ministry. She died in Taiwan in 1970.

WILLIAM BOOTH

William Booth began his first job at the age of thirteen when he was apprenticed to a Nottingham pawnbroker. Two years later in 1844, he was converted. Training himself in both writing and speaking, Booth became a Methodist lay preacher, but was encouraged to be an evangelist by his best friend, Will Sansom. They both began to preach to the poor and the marginalised of Nottingham. Sansom died of tuberculosis in 1849, otherwise Booth would probably have remained as a partner in this ministry.

Unemployed, Booth reluctantly left his family and moved to London, where he found work with another pawnbroker. He tried to continue lay preaching, but the meagre opportunities that came his way from the Methodists frustrated him, and so he again took to open-air street evangelism. Though Booth became a prominent Methodist evangelist, he was unhappy that the annual conference of the denomination kept assigning him to a pastorate, when he wanted to be free to conduct evangelistic campaigns. At the Liverpool conference in 1861, his request to be released for full-time evangelism was refused yet again, and Booth resigned from the Methodist ministry. He was soon barred from campaigning in Methodist congregations, so he became an independent evangelist, founding the Christian Mission.

The Christian Mission grew slowly and the work was difficult. His wife, Catherine, wrote *'he would stumble home night after night haggard with fatigue, his clothes torn, and bloody bandages round his head where a stone had struck'*. The early years were lean ones, where the need of sufficient money was a growing issue, but Booth and his co-workers persevered in the work.

In May 1878 the Christian Mission became The Salvation Army and, during Booth's lifetime, spread to 58 countries and colonies.

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was hanged by the Nazis on 9th April 1945. He was thirty nine. A German pastor, theologian, anti-Nazi dissident, and key founding member of the Confessing Church, his writings on Christianity's role in the secular world have become widely influential. His book *'The Cost of Discipleship'*, based on the Sermon on the Mount, has become a modern classic.

Ordained as a pastor in his early twenties, he began to teach systematic theology at Berlin University, but his promising career was dramatically altered with the Nazi rise to power in January 1933. From the beginning, he was an opponent of the regime. Two days after Hitler was installed as Chancellor, Bonhoeffer delivered a radio address in which he attacked Hitler and warned Germany against slipping into an idolatrous cult in which they worshipped their leader. He was cut off the air in the middle of a sentence. Bonhoeffer had spent time in America, where he had been deeply influenced by his links with black gospel preachers, who had combined spirituality with a social conscience. He forged these passions into his own walk with Christ. This was marked by a clarity of intellectual thought on the one hand, and an almost naïve simplicity which insisted on taking the words of Jesus at face value, on the other. His stance put him firmly in opposition to the Nazi regime, and any collaboration with it by Christians.

Bonhoeffer would not have sat easy with the form of Christianity that exists in many of our churches today. Perhaps above all else, he slated cheap grace, which encouraged a man to receive forgiveness for sin, but without forsaking that sin and following Christ unreservedly in a stand against the wisdom and ways of the world. When Bonhoeffer refused to follow the majority of German Christians in accepting Hitler's leadership, he knew it may cost him his life, and he was right.

GRANNY BRAND

Evie Brand, known by everyone as 'Granny' moved into her retirement home just before she was 70. She had spent half her life on the mission field in the hills of India, but the mission organisation she worked for could not endorse another period in the area known as the Mountains of Death. Her husband Jesse had died of blackwater fever some 20 years previously, and she had already spent that time as a widow working alone. But the retirement home she moved into wasn't a little cottage on the English South Coast. With the help of her son Paul, she had a small bungalow built up in the Indian hills where she could carry on her work, but now without the visible support of a mission.

She had always had a bit of a reputation for being strong minded and stubborn, and now she brought those characteristics into play for the Kingdom of God. For the next 25 years, until her death at the age of 95, she continued bringing hope and wholeness to remote villages. Almost single-handedly, she achieved the eradication of the painful Guinea worm parasite; she fought marijuana growers, led Bible studies, and took in foster children.

As a young woman, at the end of Queen Victoria's reign, Evie had been something of a socialite, known for her frills and flounces. But God called her to the mission field, to marry a missionary and to live and die in the service of the Indian hill people. Her final years saw perhaps her greatest work in the service of God.

When her son Paul visited his mother towards the end of her life, he noticed a spiritual strength she had not shown before. He found her younger - not in her body, but in her spirit.

'This is how to grow old,' he wrote, *'allow everything else to fall away, until those around you see just love.'*

WILLIE BURTON

William Burton's parents had dedicated him to God's work in Africa before he was born. After his birth in Liverpool in 1886, other servants of the Lord laid hands on him as he grew up, also praying that God would send him to preach the Gospel on that continent. In fulfilment of prophetic prayer, Willie arrived in South Africa in 1914. During the next 46 years, as part of the Congo Evangelistic Missionary Society, he established 1000 mission stations in the Belgian Congo. By the time of his death in 1971, there had been about 2000 native churches raised up through his ministry, and like Paul, he could well have said '*Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.*'

Converted under the preaching of R.A. Torrey, Willie Burton had come under deep conviction of sin when he came to the Lord in 1905. From the beginning, he was sold out for Jesus. Within a few years, he joined up with a newly established Pentecostal Bible school in Preston. This then led to a life of living by faith and he spent three years travelling the countryside preaching in homes and the open-air as well as pastoring a little church at Lytham.

Burton was one of the early Pentecostal missionaries who saw God work in the miraculous throughout his life. As a young man, while standing in a butcher shop in a small English village, he was prompted of God to lay hands on a deaf lady and pray for her in the name of Jesus. She was instantly healed. All the village quickly heard about it and this led to a revival in two quarrelling Methodist Churches. After his arrival in Africa, the work began with the healing of a local native who was badly bent over and walking with sticks. He was instantly healed, and walked with a straight back for the rest of his life. Willie Burton had strong links with other Pentecostal pioneers, and worked for some time with James Salter, who was Smith Wigglesworth's son-in-law.

AMY CARMICHAEL

Amy Carmichael was the oldest of seven siblings born to Christian parents in the small village of Millisle, County Down, Ireland. In the mid-1880s whilst in her late teens, Amy started a Sunday-morning class for the 'Shawlies' (mill girls who wore shawls instead of hats) in a church hall in Rosemary Street, and the mission grew until they needed a hall to seat 500 people. In 1889 she moved on to work amongst the mill girls in Manchester.

Although she suffered from neuralgia, which made her whole body weak, and put her in bed for weeks on end, she became convinced of her calling to missionary work. She applied to the China Inland Mission, and went to their London training house for women, but it was felt that her health would make her unfit for the work. This seemed to be confirmed when she returned after a short period in Japan. However, she then went to work with the Church of England Zenana Mission in South India where she found the climate more amenable. Amy's most notable work was with girls and young women, some saved from prostitution. Hindu temple children were primarily young girls dedicated to the gods, then placed into forced prostitution to earn money for the priests.

Amy founded the Dohnavuer Fellowship in 1901, at Tamil Nadu, thirty miles from India's southern tip. The name came from Count Dohna, who had funded German missionaries there in the early 19th century. It became a sanctuary for over 1000 children who would otherwise have faced a bleak and abusive future.

The image of a missionary is often of someone physically tough and resilient, but Amy found strength in weakness. From 1931 she remained bedridden for much of her final two decades, after a serious injury in a fall. She never returned to her home in Ireland, and died in 1951 after fifty five years on the front line in India.

JIM ELLIOT

'He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.'

Jim Elliot's journal entry for October 28, 1949, expressed his belief that work dedicated to Jesus was more important than his own life. Just over six years later, at the age of 28, married and with a baby daughter, he fulfilled that belief. He, and four other young men, were speared to death by Auca Indians.

Jim and the other missionaries – Ed McCully, Roger Youderian, Pete Fleming, and Nate Saint – had made contact with the Aucas from their Piper PA-14 airplane, using a loudspeaker and a basket to pass down gifts. After several months, the men decided to build a base a short distance from the Indian village, along the Curaray River. There they were approached by a small group of Indians and even gave an airplane ride to one of them who was more curious than the others, whom they called George. Encouraged by these friendly encounters, they began plans to visit the Aucas. Their plans were pre-empted by the arrival of a larger group of about ten warriors, who killed Jim and his four companions.

Jim had professed faith in Jesus at the age of six, growing up in a home where obedience and honesty were set out as the natural God given order. The Elliot parents encouraged their children to be adventurous, and to live their lives for Christ. Jim always believed he was to wholeheartedly follow Jesus. The issue was not if, but where and when. Declining opportunities to minister at home in the States, Jim followed his call to South America. Whilst undergoing language and acclimatisation training, he married Elisabeth whom he had met at college. Their only child, Valerie, was born February 27, 1955. She was just ten months old when her father was killed.

ELISABETH ELLIOT

It is appropriate to follow the short account of Jim Elliot, with that of his wife Elisabeth. Having experienced great trials and hardships on the mission field before they were married (told in her book *'These Strange Ashes'*) Elisabeth then suffered the loss of Jim and was left in a foreign country with a baby daughter.

It is not possible to explain her later actions in human terms, they can only be understood in the light of the constraining and motivating grace of God. After the death of her husband, and alone with her 10-month-old daughter, Elisabeth continued to live among and minister to the Quichua tribe. During that time she met two Auca women who stayed with her and taught her their language. She then went as a missionary to serve the same tribe that had killed her husband.

During her time in Ecuador, Elisabeth wrote *'Through Gates of Splendour'* (the story of the five men, including her husband, who were killed by the Aucas), *'Shadow of the Almighty'* (a memoir about the life and work of her husband), and *'The Savage, My Kinsmen'* (about her own time among the Aucas). When she returned to the US in 1963 she began a career as a writer and speaker. She would go on to write 24 books, many of which stand among the very best of writings on Christian life and biography.

Elisabeth married again, but when she died in 2015, she had outlived Jim by over sixty years. Her books stand as the legacy of both their lives, fully and unconditionally surrendered to God. Just as we began the article on Jim with a quote from his journal, we will close this with a quote from Elisabeth:

'I have one desire now – to live a life with reckless abandon for the Lord, putting all my strength and energy into it.'

ALLEN GARDINER

In 1852, news arrived in England of mingled tragedy and heroism. It is hard to imagine a long, slow death by starvation, but information had come that the bodies of seven men had been discovered on an island below Tierra del Fuego, at the furthest reaches of South America,. They had starved to death. The men had been pioneer missionaries to that land, led by Allen Gardiner, a commander in the Royal Navy

Gardiner had sailed the world both in service to the Navy and to Jesus Christ. He was a prayerful man, of whom a crew member once remarked *'To be on ship with him is to be like heaven on earth'*. Though he had once lived as an avowed atheist, after his conversion he pioneered the gospel in different parts of the world, including the Dutch East Indies and among the Zulus in South Africa. But he was drawn again and again to South America, and prayed much for the land as well as attempting various missionary endeavours there.

Although married and with a family, Gardiner sailed repeatedly in order to attempt to evangelise Argentina and Chili, and he had especial concern for Patagonia in the South. Virtually all the work which he did over many years appeared barren and almost completely fruitless. In his lifetime, he saw no harvest for his labours. On his final journey he starved to death on one of the remotest, wildest islands on earth.

When God moved powerfully in Argentina almost exactly a hundred years later, around a million people were converted in one of the greatest revivals in history. Those in the revival have gone on record, that they consider the work of Allen Gardiner and his companions, to have been the seed that fell into the ground and died in order to bring forth fruit in their generation.

KEITH GREEN

On the CBN website, there is a note that *'When musician Keith Green died in a plane crash on July 28, 1982, the world lost a special man whose heart was aflame with the gospel message. Before his untimely end, Green took the world with him on his seven-year spiritual journey. He held back nothing and was consumed with loving Christ and the church.'*

Converted in the days of the Jesus People Movement, which swept through America in the 1970's, Keith Green had an impact on his, and subsequent generations, which was out of all proportion to the few short years that he had in ministry. His life story *'No Compromise'*, written by his widow Melody, reveals a passionate rebel who was prepared to let everything take second place for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

Radically converted from the hippy culture when he was twenty one years old, Green was increasingly troubled by the hypocrisy of Christians in the established Churches. In *'Asleep in the Light'*, a radio hit in 1978, he sang: *'Jesus rose from the dead and you can't even get out of bed.'* Keith's spiritual intensity took him beyond most people's comfort zones, and constantly drove him beyond his own places of comfort as well. He made audiences squirm by saying, *'If you praise and worship Jesus with your mouth, and your life does not praise and worship him, there's something wrong!'* But he also challenged himself, writing:

*'I repent of ever having recorded one single song
and ever having performed one concert,
if my music, and more importantly, my life,
has not provoked you into godly jealousy,
or to sell out more completely to Jesus!'*

MADAM GUYON

'*A Short and Easy Method of Prayer.*' sounds a pretty innocuous title for a book, but it was considered heretical by the church authorities in France, a hundred years before the French Revolution. It resulted in its author, a gentlewoman by the name of Madam Guyon, being sent to prison for seven years between 1696 and 1703. Forced into an arranged marriage with an older, wealthy, suitor when only fifteen, Madam Guyon had become a widow at the age of twenty eight. Left in comfortable financial circumstances she was able to concentrate on developing her spiritual life. At a time when the church at large was in decline and bound up with superstition and ritual, Madam Guyon had come into a relationship with Jesus through what was known as the Quietist movement. Quietism has possibly been more defined by its opponents than by its adherents, and may best be spoken of as a tendency or direction of thought rather than a set of beliefs. Its adherents tend to emphasise a constant, inward contemplation of God, which results in a rest of the soul upon grace alone.

Madam Guyon, was sought after by many for her spiritual counsel. One of her closest followers and defenders was a Catholic Bishop, Fenelon, whose writings have also been held in high esteem over the centuries. Although Quietism was largely a feature of some parts of the late Seventeenth Century Catholic Church, many of the leading figures of Protestantism, such as Fletcher and Wesley also came under its influence. At its heart, and particularly as articulated by Madam Guyon, it emphasises a total surrender of the will to God through which the soul is brought into a heightened state of grace. In practical terms it enabled Madam Guyon to live through her prison years with the testimony of one of her poems:

*'While place we seek or place we shun, the soul finds happiness in none;
But with my God to guide my way, 'tis equal joy to go or stay.'*

FRANCES HAVERGAL

*'Take my life, and let it be, consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
Take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise.*

*Take my hands, and let them move, at the impulse of Thy love.
Take my feet, and let them be, swift and beautiful for Thee.*

*Take my voice, and let me sing, always, only, for my King.
Take my lips, and let them be, filled with messages from Thee.*

*Take my silver and my gold; not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect and use, every power as Thou shalt choose.*

*Take my will, and make it Thine; it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is Thine own; it shall be Thy royal throne.*

*Take my love; my Lord, I pour, at Thy feet its treasure-store.
Take myself, and I will be, ever, only, all for Thee.'*

It is easy to think that the writer of such a song might have always enjoyed a life that was fully surrendered to Jesus. But though Frances Havergal had become a Christian at the age of thirteen, in the middle of the nineteenth century. it was not until she was in her late thirties, just a few years before she died, that she came to a place where she was able to hand over everything unreservedly to Him. It was in the following year, that she was able to write as she did '*Take my life and let it be, consecrated Lord to Thee*'.

Although always a prolific writer, it was the last few years of her life that saw her greatest works. The change was profound and especially noticeable to her close friends and family. She had moved into the reality of the words:

*'Take my love; my Lord, I pour, at Thy feet its treasure-store.
Take myself, and I will be, ever, only, all for Thee.'*

MAXIMILIAN KOLBE

Maximilian Kolbe was a Polish Franciscan priest who died as prisoner 16770 in Auschwitz, on August 14, 1941. When a prisoner escaped from the camp, the Nazis selected 10 others to be starved to death in reprisal for the escape. One of the 10 selected to die, Franciszek Gajowniczek, began to cry, *'My wife! My children! I will never see them again!'* At this, Maximilian Kolbe stepped forward and asked to die in his place. Much to everyone's amazement his request was granted.

Kolbe had previously been involved in founding a friary just west of Warsaw. It had housed 762 Franciscans and printed eleven periodicals, one with a circulation of over a million. When Germany invaded Poland in 1939, he knew that the friary would be seized, and he sent most of the friars home. It then became a shelter for 3000 Polish refugees of whom two thirds were Jews. Inevitably, the community came under suspicion and was closely watched. Then in May 1941 the friary was closed down and Maximilian and four companions were taken to the Auschwitz death camp, where they worked with the other prisoners. In the harshness of the camp, Father Kolbe maintained the gentleness of Christ. At night he seldom lay down to rest, moving from bunk to bunk, saying: *'I am a Catholic priest. Can I do anything for you?'*

When the ten were selected for death in reprisal for the escape, it was entirely in keeping with Maximilian's character that he should offer himself in the place of a married man with children. After being locked up without food or water, he constantly encouraged the others with prayers, psalms, and meditations on the Passion of Christ. After two weeks there were still four of them alive, and their execution was ordered to release the space for others who had been condemned. Maximilian was the last to be killed. Franciszek, the man he replaced, outlived him by 53 years.

BROTHER LAWRENCE

One set of writings that has stood the test of time more than most, is the little collection of the conversations and letters of Nicholas Herman, better known as Brother Lawrence, who lived from 1605 until 1691. The collection is known by the title of *'The Practice of the Presence of God'*. Never out of print since it was first published over 300 hundred years ago, the writings have been through hundreds, possibly thousands, of editions and have been a source of blessing for millions of those who long to know, and to draw near to, the living God.

Many Christians who wanted to know God better sought the counsel of Brother Lawrence, but he really only emphasised one thing, a message that is at one and the same time both terrifyingly hard and babyishly easy.

It was that our relationship with God demands everything, costs everything and requires a total re-prioritisation of our lives. It is no less than death to self. But because of what Jesus has accomplished for us; because of the Father's treatment of us as much beloved but wayward children; because of the Holy Spirit's ever present strengthening and help, all we have to do is look to God alone and walk with Him one step at a time. Our responsibility is not to attain some mystic higher level of spirituality, but to receive what He has done by faith, and to stand in the human/divine relationship that God has given to us by grace.

Brother Lawrence was a gardener and kitchen worker, and demonstrated that a full and deep relationship with God could be worked out in the day to day jobs he had to face. He demonstrated that the life of Christ can be received by faith in all circumstances, and outworked in the ordinary humdrum work and daily living that is the lot of most of us.

IGNATIUS LOYOLA

As a young man, Ignatius was full of himself and had a great desire to be famous. He was heavily into the martial arts of his day and he joined the army at seventeen, where he strutted about with his cape flung open to reveal his tight-fitting pants and boots, and a sword and dagger at his waist. Apparently, he was not only a fancy dresser, but an expert dancer, and a womaniser who was touchy about what people said about him. Because he had influential family members in high places, he escaped prosecution for some of the things he did, including being involved in duels where he had killed his opponents.

Although he was involved in many battles, he managed to escape injury until the age of thirty, when he was hit by a cannon ball and seriously wounded in both legs. He recovered, though a bad limp meant that his military career was over. During a period of recuperation from surgery, he experienced a spiritual conversion which led to his receiving a call to religious life. Hospitals in the early sixteenth century were run by religious orders, and the reading material available to bedridden patients tended to be selected from scripture or devotional literature. The work which particularly struck him, was the *'Vita Christi' (Life of Christ)* by Ludolph of Saxony. This book inspired him to devote himself to God and follow the example of Francis of Assisi and other great monks. It also inspired his method of meditation, which later became known as *'The Spiritual Exercises'*, and which formed one of the pillars of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), which he founded. He is perhaps best known for the prayer:

*'Teach me to give and not to count the cost,
To fight and not to heed the wounds,
To toil and not to seek for rest,
To labour and not to ask for any reward,
Save that of knowing that I do your will.'*

ANDREW MURRAY

Andrew Murray was a South African, the son of a Dutch Reformed minister. Although he was born and bred in a Christian family, and although he was someone who had experience of revival throughout his early life, Murray was fifty before he came to a place of full surrender.

Murray had entered into Christian service as a young man and that developed into a travelling ministry. He would go out on horseback for weeks at a time, to hold meetings for the Dutch-speaking South African farmers. In 1860, at the age of 32, he accepted a pastorate in Worcester, in South Africa. His arrival at the church, coincided with a scheduled conference on revival and missions, where there were reports of the revivals which were happening in North America and Europe.

Murray's whole life was focussed on preaching and teaching, but in 1879, he became ill and lost his voice. He then experienced two silent years. Through surrendering everything to God, he came to a new place of deep humility. God began to speak to him about healing and he travelled to London where, in the wake of the 1859 revival, a home for healing had been started by William Boardman. Andrew Murray was completely healed and never had trouble with his throat again. From that point on, he knew that the spiritual gifts of God were for believers of every generation.

In 1882 he attended the Keswick Convention and subsequently became one of their best known speakers. Murray was one of those whom God used to pave the way for the Welsh revival, not least through his books. He wrote over two hundred, many of which are still in print today.

WATCHMAN NEE

Watchman Nee was someone who lived by the revelation he received from the Word of God, the Bible. The heart of the revelation involved the living of a crucified and resurrected life. He saw that the believers' experience of the death and resurrection of Christ is the foundation of a normal Christian life, and that living a normal Christian life is the heart of the church being the Body of Christ, in both its local and universal expressions. Nee realised that we, as believers, have been crucified with Christ and that the normal Christian experience involves Christ living in us, and is outworked through our experience of bearing the cross in our everyday human situations.

Nee Shu-tsu, whose English name was Henry Nee, was born of second-generation Christian parents in China in 1903. His mother had consecrated him to the Lord before his birth. Praying for a son, she had told the Lord, *'If I have a boy, I will present him to You.'* He showed great academic promise and could have had a promising secular career, but at the age of seventeen, and after considerable struggle, he was dramatically saved. He said later: *'From the evening I was saved, I began to live a new life, for the life of the eternal God had entered into me.'*

Nee went on to become one of the key leaders in the establishment of the Church in China, which went underground with the rise of Communism, and which has since emerged as one of the most dynamic and fastest growing churches in the world. Nee was imprisoned by the Communists for his work for Christ amongst the churches, and he died in 1972 after twenty years in prison. Although he only wrote one book – *'The Spiritual Man'*, many of his spoken sermons have been collected, edited and printed as books in order to preserve and spread his teaching. Of these, the most famous is probably the classic *'The Normal Christian Life'*.

GEORGE NORTH

Although he was undoubtedly one of the key figures in the origins of the Charismatic Movement in the 1960s and 70s, George North never espoused a second blessing charismatic theology. Various known as Pastor North, Mr. North or Wally North, he always sought to point men and women to a New Covenant relationship with Jesus Christ, which included a full relationship with the Holy Spirit as a normal part of becoming a Christian.

He was known to have moved in most, if not all, of the spiritual gifts at one time or another, but was primarily appreciated for his biblical preaching. Regarded by some as an apostle with a ministry which bore evidence of notable power, he shunned any such title, and the extensive ministry which he carried out in many newly formed 'house churches', tended to be in the style of an invited friend rather than that of an overseer.

A strong Christian from his early years, it was after his move to Bradford in 1952, that George North began to teach and preach more explicitly about the fullness of the Spirit. Some students of revival, would include the season of outpouring that the local congregation experienced in Bradford, as a genuine, though small revival. Whatever it should be termed, life flowed out from it to new churches in Liverpool, the Wirral, Exeter and London. With the number of groups growing, the ministry expanded during the late 70s to include Summer Conferences, initially at Swanwick, then Cliff College and ultimately Rora House in Devon. In due course, such gatherings extended to many countries.

Though much loved by many who knew him, George North was never a 'popular' speaker holding large scale meetings in the style of many of the early charismatic leaders. Always a fairly quiet, family man, his influence was as much from the fact that he lived a holy, surrendered life, as from his preaching about it.

POLYCARP

‘Eighty six years have I have served Him, and He has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?’

The response of the Roman authorities to this statement was to take the speaker, Polycarp, and burn him to death. There were periods, when the early church was hated, both by the society and government of the Roman Empire, not least because the Christians refused to sacrifice to the pagan gods. Though persecution was not consistent, the Empire went through many phases of demanding that the Christians sacrifice or be killed. Sacrifice always involved denying their faith and many Christians went to their deaths rather than do so.

Polycarp was a very old man, and many consider him to be the last person of his generation to have known one of the close followers of Jesus. He had been a disciple of the apostle John, who died when Polycarp was probably in his late twenties or early thirties. He was greatly respected as a teacher and church leader, and became Bishop of Smyrna, a city in Asia Minor (modern Izmir in Turkey), a town devoted to worship of the Roman gods..

The record we have of Polycarp’s death comes from a letter that was written by an eye-witness, who belonged to the church in Smyrna. In the letter he states that the fire surrounded, rather than burnt Polycarp’s body, and the executioners had to resort to stabbing him in order to kill him. It was said that the blood that flowed out from his wounds extinguished the fire causing the heathen onlookers to marvel.

Polycarp was the twelfth martyr from the church in Smyrna. Such things were part and parcel of being a Christian.

EVAN ROBERTS

At the beginning of the Welsh Revival in 1904, God raised up a man from among the coal miners to be His principal spokesman. Evan Roberts was in his mid-twenties, a godly young man who gathered a small team of friends and relatives who helped to spearhead what God was doing.

They did not have any special techniques, and what they did would not be considered user friendly today. Quite simply they preached, they prayed and they looked to God to work as He wanted. At the heart of their message was Jesus and the work that He accomplished on the cross, and then they emphasised what the response to that should be. It was total surrender, and the practical outworking of that was to be in four points:

***Confess all known sin to God.
Put away all doubtful things and forgive everyone.
Always obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit.
Publicly confess Jesus Christ as Saviour.***

The prayer that accompanied that call to surrender was ‘*Bend the Church, and save the world!*’ What followed was an inescapable sense of the presence of God.

Church services that had been cold and formal began to throb with new life. Believers and unbelievers alike came under conviction of sin. Confession and restitution, sometimes costly, became the order of the day. Without advertising or special promotions, churches were crowded day and night. Within five months, 100,000 new converts were added to the churches. Such was the impact on Wales, that the newspapers even carried lists of names of those who had been converted.

GIROLAMO SAVONAROLA

As we rightly remember and give thanks for men such as Martin Luther, who were instrumental under God in effecting a measure of reformation in the Church, we perhaps forget those who blazed a trail in the years preceding them.

As a young boy, Girolamo Savonarola, yielded his whole heart and life to God. He was a loyal Roman Catholic whose life was shaped by the teachings, rites and ceremonies of the church in his home country of Italy, but his sensitive soul also keenly felt its sins and shortcomings. Whilst in his early twenties, he went to live in a monastery, where he gave himself to the prolonged, intense study of the bible. Although he had access to, and read some of the best literature of his time, he was primarily a man of the scriptures, and it was these, which shaped his thinking and his action in the years ahead.

He wept and prayed for the Church and the nation, and as he began to have more and more opportunity to preach, he thundered against the sins of both the clerics and the leaders of society. At first few came to hear him preach, but then for a decade his fame grew and people packed the churches and lecture halls to hear him. Many responded, and Italian society went through some noticeable changes. In 1497, at the age of forty five, Savonarola preached to crowds of up to fifteen thousand people. Responding in a similar way to the Ephesians, they brought such a collection of lewd and pornographic books and other worldly items, that it made a bonfire in the town square 60ft high and 80ft across.

The next year he was dead. Alexander VI, one of the worst ever popes, ordered him to be hanged and his body publically burnt. In Germany, Martin Luther was a fifteen year old boy. The fruit that was seen in his life, no doubt came in part from the seed that Savonarola, and others like him had sown in the preceding years.

WILLIAM SEYMOUR

Although Texas law forbade blacks to sit in classrooms with whites, Charles Parham, a white man, had invited William Seymour, a young black preacher, to sit in on his bible lectures on the work of the Holy Spirit. They got round the law by having Seymour sit in a hallway and listen to the lectures through the doorway. Seymour was hungry for God, and hungry for holiness, and he was prepared learn whatever he could, wherever he could.

At the very beginning of the twentieth century, it was Seymour rather than Parham who came to the fore, and he has since been recognised as one of America's outstanding black religious leaders. It was William Seymour who found an old abandoned African Methodist Episcopal church in Los Angeles that had also been used as a warehouse and stable. It was a shambles, but Seymour and his small band of black maids, washerwomen, and labourers cleaned the building, set up board plank seats, and made a pulpit out of old shoebox crates. Services began in mid-April 1906 and the church was named the 'Apostolic Faith Mission.' It was situated on Azusa Street, and it was by that name that it gained fame as the birthplace of Pentecostalism.

Even its most ardent advocates would allow that Azusa Street was a mixed bag of blessing, but Seymour stands out as a man of God who laid everything on the line, in his search for and promotion of Christian living in the holiness and power of the Spirit of Christ. Seymour dreamed that Azusa Street would create a new kind of church, where a common experience in the Holy Spirit would tear down old walls of racial, ethnic, and denominational differences. Dying less than twenty years after the glory days of the church, Seymour never saw that in fullness, but one of his contemporaries, Frank Bartleman, went on record that: '*At Azusa Street, the colour line was washed away in the Blood.*'

THE SOLDIERS OF SEVASTE

Governor Agricola spoke mildly but firmly. *'You refuse to offer the sacrifice ordered by Emperor Licinius!'* One of the soldiers answered on behalf of the rest. *'We will not sacrifice. To do so is to betray our holy faith.'* Licinius, joint Roman Emperor with Constantine in 320 AD, was trying to get control of the whole Empire. Part of his strategy was to eliminate Christianity, which Constantine favoured. The crack regiment at Sevaste in Turkey had been ordered to sacrifice to the pagan gods. But of over 3000 men, forty Christians had refused.

Agricola's first step was to have them flogged, but to no avail, they still refused. *'Chain them in my dungeons!'* roared Agricola. *'We'll see what Lysias has to say about this.'* Lysias, was overall commander of the 12th Legion, and was in no gentle mood when the forty were hauled before him a few days later. It was winter, and he ordered them to be stripped and made to stand naked on the nearby frozen pond until they died or agreed to sacrifice. The rebels stripped off, and singing to the Lord, they marched onto the ice. As the sun sank behind the hills they prayed *'Lord, there are forty of us engaged in this battle; grant that forty may be crowned and not one be missing from this sacred number.'* But, one of them was unable to stand it and came ashore. As he did, one of the guards had a vision of angels with forty crowns but only thirty-nine martyrs. Responding to God where he stood, he stripped off his own clothes and rushed to take the other man's place.

In the morning they all appeared to have died and their bodies were piled on a cart to be taken and burnt. However, one, little more than a boy, was alive. He was a local lad whose mother had been watching the whole thing, and the soldiers told her to take him home quickly to save him. But she refused to let him be cheated of his martyr's crown, and encouraging him to present himself to God with the others, she watched as he was taken away.

AMANDA SMITH

It is sometimes argued, that it is all very well looking at the examples of other Christians in order to gain inspiration, but our situation is unique and (in our opinion) usually more difficult than anyone else's. The thing about fully surrendering to Jesus, is that it is the ultimate equaliser. It makes no difference whether we are the richest, most talented, most beautiful of God's creatures, or the poorest and most disadvantaged, the call to surrender is the call to die to ourselves, and death treats everyone equally.

Amanda Smith had no discernible advantages in her start in life. Born in 1837 into a family of slaves, her father was owned by one person and she and her mother by another. Even when her father had obtained his freedom, it required much prayer and pleading for him to obtain hers. Married to her first husband at the age of sixteen, when he died, she subsequently remarried but her husband did not look after her. She supported herself and her daughter by taking in laundry and cleaning houses, but constantly lived on the breadline. Four of her five children had died in infancy and she prayed often for deliverance from the trials of her hard life. A friend spoke to her about sanctification, surrender, and the need to ask for grace to endure, rather than seeking release from her trials. God worked mightily in her life. Though she again suffered the loss of her husband, and barely had enough to live on, the grace of God began to shine through her weakness.

Amanda became an outstanding evangelist, not only in America, but also in England, India and Africa where she ministered for eight years. On her return to America, as well as being involved in evangelism, she supported the Temperance Movement and also started an orphanage in Chicago. Among all her disadvantages, Amanda did have one outstanding talent, a beautiful voice, which she used both in singing and preaching, but it was her submission of everything to God which ultimately made her so effective.

CHARLES SPURGEON

Not many eighteen year olds are appointed as church ministers, especially when they have only been a Christian for a couple of years, but such was Charles Spurgeon. By the time he was twenty he had preached 600 sermons and he was invited to be the minister at New Park Street Church in the London borough of Southwark. In spite of having a capacity for a congregation of 2000, it was not big enough for the crowds who wanted to attend, and a new building was commissioned to seat 6000 people. By the time of Spurgeon's death in 1892, it was the largest independent church in the world.

Spurgeon was not a missionary and, as far as we are aware, he never suffered for his faith. Spurgeon's calling was to study and then to preach, teach and write. He is reputed to have worked in this way for up to 18 hours daily, and to have read a whole book of Christian writing virtually every day of his life.

Apart from those in the bible, Spurgeon is the most widely read preacher in history and there is more material available by Spurgeon than by any other Christian author, living or dead. The printed sermons of Spurgeon during his ministry fill 63 volumes and are equivalent in size to the 27 volumes of the ninth edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. The series stands as the largest set of books by a single author in the history of Christianity.

Members of Parliament, those of the Royal Family and other famous people attended his services, as well as crowds of ordinary men and women from the streets of London. Many were converted including one woman who responded through reading a single page of one of Spurgeon's sermons – it had been wrapped around some butter she had bought.

HUDSON TAYLOR

'China is not to be won for Christ by quiet, ease-loving men and women. The stamp of the men and women we need, is such as will put Jesus, China, and souls, first and foremost in everything and at every time—even life itself must be secondary.'

Of all the people included in this booklet, Hudson Taylor, who wrote the above, may be the most well known, and the subject of more biographies than any of the other people we have included. In this very brief account, we are selecting just two things about Hudson Taylor, and those who followed him. The first, is the principle that God taught him from the earliest days:

'Depend upon it. God's work, done in God's way, will never lack for supplies.'

Funds from home rarely arrived, but Hudson was determined to rely upon God for his every need, and he never appealed for money to his friends in England. The stories of God's provision for Hudson Taylor and his fellow workers are legion, and would fill a book in themselves.

The second thing is the cost, which he acknowledged in the quote at the beginning. Many of the missionaries who followed him to the field died in their first year. His own daughter died from water on the brain; his family was almost killed in the Yang Chow Riot of 1868 and Maria, Hudson's first wife, died in childbirth. His second wife died of cancer, and sickness and ill health were frequent. Under Hudson Taylor's leadership, China Inland Mission supplied over half of the Protestant missionary force in China, and, during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, fifty-six of these missionaries were martyred, and hundreds of Chinese Christians were also killed. When he said life must be secondary, it was no mere platitude but an absolute reality.

RICHARD THOMAS

In 1964 Fr Richard Thomas, a Jesuit, was appointed to El Paso in Texas. After an encounter with the Holy Spirit, he started charismatic prayer meetings in the parish with his helper, Sr Maria Virginia, DC. During one prayer meeting in 1972, they read the passage in Luke 14 which says,

'When you give a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relations or rich neighbours, in case they invite you back and so repay you. Now when you have a party, invite the poor... for they have no means to repay you and so you will be repaid when the upright rise again.'

Recognising that they had not ever obeyed this scripture, the prayer meeting decided together that on the soon forthcoming Christmas Day, they would provide a lunch for the poor who lived and worked in the dump in nearby Juárez, where the people used to sort the rubbish and sell it to a recycling co-op.

This decision was very costly as this group of middle class people moved out from their comfort zone to serve their neighbours who lived amongst the rubbish, some of whom had never washed in their whole lives. The group prepared food for 125 people, but when they came together, 350 people turned up. Explaining that there was not enough food, they simply shared out what they had. To their astonishment everyone had more than sufficient. Widely recognised as a direct miracle of God, this was not the end. Inspired by their experience of God's power, the group continued to minister the life of Jesus in the community and saw many lives transformed both physically and spiritually.

A documentary of this amazing story can be found on youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKZKXOCE43k>

LILIAS TROTTER

Lilias Trotter was born in 1853, the daughter of a wealthy stockbroker. In her early twenties, Lilias joined the volunteer force that counseled enquirers during the London campaign meetings of American evangelist Dwight L. Moody

She was a nearly self-taught artist of whom the famous art critic, John Ruskin, said, that if she were to devote herself to her art, she would be the greatest living painter of her time. But in May 1887, when a missionary asked at a religious meeting if God was calling anyone to North Africa, Trotter stood and said, *'He is calling me'*. Subsequently, she and two friends, all women in their thirties, went out to Algeria as missionaries among the Muslims there.

As sometimes happens today, Jesus worked particularly among the Muslims by giving visions or dreams of Himself. Those that became converts were often banished or beaten, and some died. Local government officials even bought a house across the street from Lilias and her friends, and lured potential converts away with competing classes. Spies and gendarmes even followed the women when they went into the southern desert, and threatened fines and imprisonment for any who went near them or accepted their literature.

In her journal, many of her own thoughts and sayings have been preserved. One emphasis that comes through is the need to surrender the good to God and not just the bad. She wrote:

'The first step into the realm of giving is not manward but Godward: an utter yielding of our best. So long as our idea of surrender is limited to the renouncing of unlawful things, we have never grasped its true meaning.'

UNKNOWN

'I'm part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have the Holy Spirit's power. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I'm a disciple of His. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, my future is secure. I'm finished and done with low living, sight walking, smooth knees, colourless dreams, tamed visions, worldly talking, cheap giving, and dwarfed goals.

I no longer need pre-eminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don't have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by faith, lean in His presence, walk by patience, am uplifted by prayer, and I labour with power.

My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way rough, my companions few, my Guide reliable, my mission clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded, or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifices, hesitate in the presence of the enemy, pander at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I won't give up, shut up, let up, until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, preached up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus. I must go till He comes, give till I drop, preach till all know, and work till He stops me. And, when He comes for His own, He will have no problem recognising me, my banner will be clear.'

The author is unknown, but is believed to be a young pastor in Zimbabwe who was martyred for his faith in Jesus Christ. The above was found in his study after his death.

RICHARD WURMBRAND

A Romanian Christian of Jewish descent, Richard Wurmbbrand was repeatedly arrested by the Communists during the rise of Communism after World War II. He spent a total of fourteen years in prison for his faith, three of which were in solitary confinement in an underground cell with neither light nor sound. When released he became a voice to the West of those Christians who had been, or who still remained in prison. He was a prolific writer and the following are some quotes from his writings.

'It was strictly forbidden to preach to other prisoners. It was understood that whoever was caught doing this received a severe beating. A number of us decided to pay the price for the privilege of preaching, so we accepted their [the communists] terms. It was a deal; we preached and they beat us. We were happy preaching. They were happy beating us, so everyone was happy.'

'I had prepared myself for prison and torture as a soldier in peacetime prepares for the hardships of war. I had studied the lives of Christians who had faced similar pains and temptations to surrender and thought how I might adapt their experiences. Many who had not so prepared themselves were crushed by suffering, or deluded into saying what they should not.'

'I tremble because of the sufferings of those persecuted in different lands. I tremble thinking about the eternal destiny of their torturers. I tremble for Western Christians who do not help their persecuted brethren. In the depth of my heart, I would like to keep the beauty of my own vineyard and not be involved in such a huge fight. I would like so much to be somewhere in quietness and rest. But it is not possible. The quietness and rest for which I long would be an escape from reality and dangerous for my soul.'

'A faith that can be destroyed by suffering is not faith.'

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

None of the people we have read about slipped unconsciously into a place of full surrender. It is not something that creeps up on us unawares, and takes us by surprise whilst we are thinking about something else.

The bible is clear - following Jesus costs everything and demands first place in our lives over everything else. In recent years – and it may only be a phenomena of the last few decades – two key elements have been lost from the presentation of the Gospel in the Western Church. The first, is the demand of Jesus that He requires everything from us, and the second, is the promise of Jesus that He gives everything to us. Hudson Taylor called this ‘*The Exchanged Life*’.

In this booklet we have referred to full surrender. Others have used a variety of terms such as walking in the Spirit, sanctification, dying to self, second (or third or fourth) blessing, the normal Christian life, or many others. The terms do not all mean the same thing, but they all point to the fruit of the foundational transaction with Jesus Christ, whereby we say an unreserved yes to Him and He gives an unreserved yes to us. The result of the transaction, carried out in time, but for eternity, should be that we know the ongoing working of His Spirit in our lives, delivering us from all that is old and bringing us into all that is new. Why would any of us want anything less? There is surely nothing quite so miserable as a Christian life that is dogged with failure and which never seems to quite ring true with what the bible would lead us to expect.

The remedy is not to try harder. God forbid! And may God deliver us from teaching that holds a carrot in front of us, and wields a stick behind us. Salvation, is first second and lastly through grace,

by faith. Of course we will seek, of course we will ask and of course we will knock. But when we find, receive and have the door opened to us, we will know – without any shadow of a doubt – that it is all of grace, as God fulfils in us, the promises of His New Covenant in Jesus Christ.

God has not lost the plot. He is not on tenterhooks, waiting for the Church to discover the latest new technique that will save it from slipping beneath the waves of obscurity and irrelevance. He is not flinging out life-rafts, with just enough of an experience to keep us afloat for another week, while we hang on for the arrival of the long awaited ship of blessing. The Lord reigns! Christ has triumphed, and the Holy Spirit has come down from heaven to prepare the Church for a glorious eternity, that will astonish all the principalities and powers for ever and ever,

The snippets in this booklet are for your encouragement, to remind you of the call to lay hold of the real, gutsy, fulfilling Christianity that comes from unreservedly following Jesus.

Throughout the ages of the Church there have been those who have found the pearl of great price. It is not hidden away on a secret reserve list marked, ‘For Special People Only’, but it does require open eyes and hearts to find it. When it is found, the price sticker is always the same – everything. Isn’t God gracious! No matter how much or how little we have, we always have just enough. Your ‘everything’, may be different from mine, and different from those who have been featured in the stories we have read, but it will always be enough, it will always be exactly the right amount.

The really good news is this, there is no limit to what we may receive in return. The pearl symbolises everything that God has for His people, the riches of Christ are truly inexhaustible.

I have deliberately chosen these stories from a broad spectrum of church denominations, streams, times, countries and situations. I am persuaded that there is no particular group that has established itself as God’s favourite. The biblical and historical evidence seems to rather point toward the fact that, as far as God is concerned, being correct is always secondary to being surrendered and cast upon His Grace.

I have not included a booklist for further reading. All the stories mentioned may easily be found through a skim on the internet or a browse in a Christian bookstore.

If you are unable to find what you need or if you would like further help then you can contact me through the website listed at the beginning of the book.