

The Last Great Step

By: Jim Hohnberger

Moses took the step, John The Baptist took the step. As did Peter, James, John and the apostle Paul. They gave everything. They surrendered all, they trusted and depended fully in God. They all took the step that God is waiting; waiting patiently for you and I to take.

I call it “The Last Great Step”. And there are but few, very few in our day that have taken it. Though it’s available to us all; irrespective of our past, our abilities, our knowledge, our religion or our nationality. Going all the way with God is what I Corinthians 15:28 calls us to. “That God may be all **and in all.**”

But that is not how it is in the vast majority of Christianity today! God is something, but He is not “All in All”. I am a firm believer that we are not God’s children unless we are such entirely. Christ emphatically states in Luke 14:33 that, “Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.” But this is not how it was with me at first ... no ... At first, with me it was, “I and not Christ”. Next it was, “I and Christ. Perhaps now it is even, “Christ and I”. But God wants it to be, “Christ Only”, and not I at all.

Christ wants my heart and hands to be as free to serve Him as His heart and hands were to serve

me. We are to let Him have all there is of us, body, soul, mind, spirit, time, talents, voice, possessions, literally everything. God wants us to lay our whole life open before Him, that He may guide it, direct it and restore it to His original pattern.

He wants us to see that apart from him we are hopelessly lost to selfishness in all its forms. God wants us to find our sufficiency in Him and not in ourselves, our abilities, our money, our understanding, nor in our possessions, professions, doctrines, reforms or church affiliation or even our attendance. Do you think this is going too far? God doesn’t think so, for His infallible Word clearly states, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of **God.**” II Corinthians 3:5.

A measure of surrender, we are all willing to make, and think indeed it is fit and proper that we should. But an utter abandonment, without any reserves, seems to us too much to be asked for. We are afraid of it! It involves too much. We think it is too great a risk. To be measurably obedient we desire; to be perfectly obedient, almost appalls us.

Love gives all and must have all in return. Most all of us are hesitating on taking “The Last Great Step”. Very few have ventured into this complete

life hid with Christ in God. Colossians 3:3. But venture forth we must, "for the love of Christ constraineth us." II Corinthians 5:14.

A few years ago I asked a close business acquaintance of mine, if my family could use his island retreat for some much needed rest. After we paddled out to the island in our canoe and set the vacation home in order. Sally and I went down to the dock to sun ourselves.

Now what do you suppose our two sons did? Why they set about to explore every inch of the island. It wasn't very long before our boys were back with a full report. "Father and Mother you will never guess what we found!"

"Please tell us."

"On the west side of the island are some tall cliffs and there are diving boards built into them. There is this one real high one, about the height of our one and one-half story home."

Then they asked the big 'question. "Father can you go off it?"

"Why of course I can."

"When?" they asked together.

That is when I started hesitating. I knew I could go off it, but they wanted me to do it now!

"Perhaps after lunch" was my reply.

Again my two eager boys approached me after they finished the dishes. "Father, are you ready to go off that tall diving board?"

"Listen boys, its not good to swim after eating a meal. I need to let my food digest." Again I was hesitating.

Finally late in the afternoon they coaxed me over to the tallest diving board. I walked out to the end of it and looked down.

"Jump" my boys shouted, "Jump!"

"Just give me a minute."

"What are you waiting for?" they questioned.

"I am going to count to 10, then I'll jump."

"Father, we will count for you. 1-2-3-4 -" they counted rapidly.

"No, I'll do my own counting."

A lot of us are just like this, we are hesitating to take that step. We know others have done it. We know we wont be hurt. But we hesitate and postpone.

Friends, God is waiting for all of us to take that "Last Great Step". We know it is possible. Others

have done so before us. We know it's the best life, but we are hesitating, fearful of yielding all. Yes we are truly fearful of living every moment to please God in all our actions, as the best and happiest thing in the world.

I did take the plunge off the diving board that day. Not once or twice but at least a half dozen times, as eventually did my two sons, as well as my wife.

Now I have a question to ask. If I never would have ventured to take that jump, do you think my boys would have? Probably not!

Many of us wonder why our youth are not following our profession of Christianity? I believe it is because its only a profession and not a living, vibrant experience in our daily lives. When they daily see us live what we profess, then they'll desire to walk as we walk, not walk as we have talked.

I can remember the day God asked me to go all the way with Him. That day I was to live to please God in **all** the actions of my daily life, from the time I arose to the time I turned out the lights. He wanted every thought, every word and all the duties of my

every day life centered and filtered through Him. In short I was to live in the one desire to please Him and not myself. To devote myself to Him not just in profession but in **all** the common duties of ordinary life.

Would I consent to go all the way with God? Would I allow Him to live out His life in me? To have me fully, entirely, completely, 100%?

At first I was scared to give God all. But as I thought about it, I knew on principle that His will for my life was best. Yes, I would cooperate with God, I would allow Him to perfect in me His will and way and in cooperating with Him I would become that new creature in Christ Jesus my Lord and Saviour.

The next day, God woke me at 4:10 AM. With zest and vitality I sat straight up in bed and said, "Good morning Lord, I'm all yours today. I'm clasping my hand in Thine and by Thy grace I'm not letting go. I will consult with you on every thought, filter every word and screen all my activities through you. No longer will I be a slave to my own will, desires and passions. But by the power of an abiding Christ I will live above the

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power of the flesh, the world and selfishness. Today I'm a free **man in Christ**. And Lord, I know you will make it all real to me."

Just then Sally woke up, looked up at me and said, "What are you beaming about?"

With a smile I said, "Today I walk with God all day, the entire day."

Her response was, "Really? Come now."

My wife knew this stubborn German she had married. She had reason to doubt for she had been married to me for nearly twenty years.

This was my first trial. I could so easily have gotten irritated with her but God was calling for the surrender of that irritation. I yielded it to Him promptly and said, "Sally, I've had it with partial Christianity. God has shown me the power is there. I've just not cooperated, surrendered and trusted in

Him as it is my privilege to. But today I'm all His."

This day my one and only motivation was to live to please God **all day long**, however crucifying to my own will and way. I can honestly say, I was tested and tried all day long. But in every circumstance I heard the still small voice in my conscience calling me to surrender my will and trust in Him for strength, for wisdom and direction. See Isaiah 30:21, Hebrews 13:5, Matthew 28:20, John 10:27, Psalms 32:8. In every situation I immediately turned to my Saviour in an attitude of consent and cooperation. I found out that He is able to keep me from myself all day long. Jude 24.

I would love to share the entire day with you. With all its joys, trials, challenges, confrontations and deliverances, but that would take a book. I will share with you one event that characterizes the essence of the entire day.

It was 3:00 in the afternoon, I had just finished enjoying a delicious meal Sally had prepared. I looked at my boys and was about to say, clean up the dishes and table. When I sensed that still small voice of my conscience saying, "Give the boys some time off and you can clean up the dishes." This is where the true abiding experience begins, in the realms of our thoughts. We are admonished in II Corinthians 10:5 to "Bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Now this thought, was either from God or from

the flesh. Some have asked me how I know whether this is God, the flesh or the devil? I have generally found that if it is a call to meekness, humility, the serving of others needs and the death to self, its probably not from the devil or the flesh. It is God and God's spirit of love that draws upon us to live a life of service to others.

Bringing this thought into obedience in this situation meant to first submit my will to His will. Yes Lord I'd be perfectly happy to do the dishes. Then I trusted in Him for divine grace to cheerfully perform that which He had called me to. As I cooperated in preparing the dish water, placing the drying rack on the counter and then washing the dishes my two sons delightfully assisted in clearing the table and stacking all the dishes so they would be ready for my wet hands to clean, stack and put away.

My wife had been intently observing me all day. To my amazement she sat down in our lazy boy chair and just sat there pondering the changes she had seen in her husband throughout the day.

Then she noticed me washing a quart jar which had some baked on apple sauce on the outside rim. I should say here that my way of doing dishes is different from her way of doing dishes. I like to get them done, period. She likes to get them done right. As I was scrubbing the quart jar I thought to myself. This dried on applesauce is just on the outside, why spend so much time and effort on such a little speck. So I rinsed it and set it on the drying rack. That is when she stood up, walked over and pulled the quart jar out of the drying rack.

Instantly I sensed irritation rising and wanting to control me. The decision is always mine. I can either yield to the flesh or to the spirit. Will I choose to get irritated and express some negative thoughts or will I choose to surrender them and leave them alone. I chose by the grace of God to yield the irritation to God.

Then Sally took the jar and not only inspected it closely but she raised it up to the light, right in front of me. I couldn't believe my eyes. This is so unlike my wife. It was as though she was putting it under a microscope.

In the past when such a difference of opinion

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would come between us, I'd say something like, "You ought to at least be thankful I'm doing the dishes."

This seemed liked more then my flesh could tolerate. It was telling me to let her have it. Give her a piece of your thoughts. In my other ear, so to speak, the spirit of the Lord was saying, "Yield it to me, its just a little thing."

Praise God I had made an agreement with Him that He could have all that there was of me. Promptly I yielded again, when suddenly my precious Sally drops the quart jar into the water and it splashed soap suds onto my shirt. Again the inward battle ensues. This is just too much to tolerate says the flesh. Its just a little thing Jim, yield it to me says the spirit. As Joshua 24:15 says so well, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." Again the choice had to be made of surrendering my will and putting my complete dependence in my Lord and Saviour. That's the gospel! The gospel that saves me from

me. It is saying, "yes" to God and "no" to self.

Have you found it friends? It is not the mere attendance of church once a week. Its not merely a mental assent to some doctrines or an entering into some reforms. But it is a complete surrender of all I am, all I have and all I desire to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It is a continuous dependence in a power outside of myself to guide, instruct and empower me in all the common duties of life. It's an attitude of pleasing God in every action, thought and word through out my entire day. Its a continuous saying "no" to the flesh and "yes" to God. It's an entire living to please God and to do His will however crucifying to one's self.

Such a life is continuously available to all, regardless of our religious affiliation, belief or understanding. Because it goes beyond mere doctrine, membership and profession and enters into the first and most fundamental principle of Christianity. Living to please God in all our actions.

That is why individuals like Mary Magdalene, who had lived a life of a harlot could so quickly and readily become the most devoted and virtuous of all. If it is so readily available to a depraved sinner such as Mary Magdalene, who had no church membership, no higher learning or great position in society. Then certainly there is hope for all of us. If we will take ... The Last Great Step.

Many times that day God called for the surrender of my will to His will. This is where it all

begins in a call to surrender. But this call to surrender is not a one time call but it is a continuous call throughout our entire day. This is what trips up so many Christians. They don't realize that there is a continuous reckoning of self dead. That is why the apostle Paul said, "I die daily." I Corinthians 15:3 1. Whenever Paul's will and his desires conflicted with duty and the will of God, instead of following impulse and inclination he would, in faith, surrender them to God.

That is the first part of this great step. A willingness to not only surrender all to God but a willingness to continuously surrender all to the will of God. The second part is a continuous dependence in Christ to be with me, guide me, instruct me and empower me to do His will. This then is faith, a faith that works by love and then purifies our every thought, word and action.

"The Last Great Step" then is a step of faith which will consist of a constant renunciation of self and a continuous dependency in Christ. And so long as these are active and continuous we will be able to walk with God, even as Enoch of old walked with God.

That day I did walk with God all day long. Now He's preparing me to walk with Him continuously as did His Son. This is what God is calling us to. Won't you join me in taking this Last Great Step?

Power for Living



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