

## Session #2: It Starts with a God Encounter

### Watch!

Link to video: <https://youtu.be/usqCkIMNZZM>

### Study!

We can't transform our inner world ourselves. Nothing will happen in our discipleship journey unless we enter the sanctuary of God and encounter Him. In order to tend to our own vineyards, we need to know and learn from the Master Gardener Himself. Today, there isn't a physical sanctuary as there was in Israel. Instead, we encounter God by entering His sanctuary through His Word and in prayer.

In this lesson, we're going to thoughtfully and meditatively walk through Psalm 73 to see what happened to the psalmist when he encountered God in His sanctuary. This psalm was written by Asaph, who was a worship leader. Except he was no ordinary worship leader—he was the worship leader for King David, which meant he was the worship leader for the entire Kingdom of Israel. He held a visible and very prominent position, yet he was still very human, dealing with the very struggles we all are susceptible to, or experience, today.

**Scripture Focus:** Psalm 73 (Pay attention to biblical tone, tension, twist and theology.)

God Is My Strength and Portion  
Forever  
A Psalm of Asaph.  
73 Truly God is good to Israel,  
to those who are pure in  
heart.  
2 But as for me, my feet had  
almost stumbled,  
my steps had nearly slipped.  
3 For I was envious of the  
arrogant  
when I saw the prosperity of  
the wicked.  
4 For they have no pangs until  
death;  
their bodies are fat and  
sleek.  
5 They are not in trouble as  
others are;  
they are not stricken like the  
rest of mankind.  
6 Therefore pride is their  
necklace;  
violence covers them as a  
garment.  
7 Their eyes swell out through  
fatness;

their hearts overflow with  
follies.  
8 They scoff and speak with  
malice;  
loftily they threaten  
oppression.  
9 They set their mouths against  
the heavens,  
and their tongue struts  
through the earth.  
10 Therefore his people turn back  
to them,  
and find no fault in them.[a]  
11 And they say, "How can God  
know?  
Is there knowledge in the Most  
High?"  
12 Behold, these are the wicked;  
always at ease, they increase  
in riches.  
13 All in vain have I kept my  
heart clean  
and washed my hands in  
innocence.  
14 For all the day long I have  
been stricken  
and rebuked every morning.  
15 If I had said, "I will speak  
thus,"

I would have betrayed the generation of your children.

16 But when I thought how to understand this,  
it seemed to me a wearisome task,  
17 until I went into the sanctuary of God;  
then I discerned their end.

18 Truly you set them in slippery places;  
you make them fall to ruin.  
19 How they are destroyed in a moment,  
swept away utterly by terrors!  
20 Like a dream when one awakes,  
O Lord, when you rouse yourself,  
you despise them as phantoms.

21 When my soul was embittered,  
when I was pricked in heart,  
22 I was brutish and ignorant;  
I was like a beast toward you.

23 Nevertheless, I am continually with you;  
you hold my right hand.

24 You guide me with your counsel,  
and afterward you will receive me to glory.

25 Whom have I in heaven but you?  
And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

26 My flesh and my heart may fail,  
but God is the strength[b] of my heart and my portion forever.

27 For behold, those who are far from you shall perish;  
you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you.

28 But for me it is good to be near God;  
I have made the Lord God my refuge,  
that I may tell of all your works.

### Lesson Framework:

Three profound lessons Asaph learnt:

1. Shift your perspective of life from temporal to eternal.
2. Shift your pursuit in life from material to spiritual.
3. Shift your place of hope from man to God.

Asaph's frustration began when he changed his focus. Instead of looking at God he was focusing on others and also on himself. This caused him to struggle with the contrast between the truth of God's Word and his personal experience.

When he focused on the enemies of God, he saw three problems he could not reconcile. The wicked were **prosperous**, they were **proud**, and they were **powerful**. They demonstrated total disregard for God and His people, and yet nothing bad seemed to happen to them.

But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end. (Psalm 73:13-17)

The bible says "until" Asaph entered into the sanctuary of the Lord, he wasn't able to see the whole picture. Then everything changed. Coming into God's Sanctuary allowed Asaph to realise his own ignorance, repent of his own arrogance, and re-surrender his own heart back to God. It was only when he focused back on God, everything shifted and he was able to see from God's perspective. The churning within his own heart turned into worship.

The transformation that Asaph experienced was found in three places.

1. His **evaluation** of life was from the **wrong perspective**.
2. His **goal** in life was of the **wrong pursuit**. He needed to shift his pursuit from temporal to eternal.
3. His **foundation** in life was in the **wrong place**.

"If we were to gain God's perspective, even for a moment, and were to look at the way we go through life accumulating and hoarding and displaying our things, we would have the same feelings of horror and pity that any sane person has when he views people in an asylum endlessly beating their heads against the wall."

(Alcorn, 2003)

## Reflect!

Why is it so hard for us to view life from the eternal perspective?

Why is it that sometimes in life, even if we get what we desire, it doesn't satisfy?

Why is it sometimes so hard to trust in God?

## Share!

Q: What are some key insights that I take home from today's session?

Q: What do I want my accountability partners to keep me accountable for?

Q: Asaph had two inner struggles: the struggle of comparison and the struggle of cliches. What are some of your inner struggles?

Q: Asaph evaluated life from the temporal rather than the eternal. Currently, how do you evaluate your life? What steps can you take to change your perspective? What changes would you make to your life in light of eternal perspective?

Q: Asaph recognised his pursuit of sinful desires, fatal attractions and unworthy loves. What sinful desires, fatal attractions or unworthy loves are you currently pursuing and being preoccupied with in your soul? How can you remove and replace with pursuits and preoccupations that please God?

Q: Asaph discovered that God is everything and if God is everything, then God is enough! Can you say, "I am most satisfied in God"? How does one get to that place of absolute surrender, that God is enough?

## Between Sessions

### Challenge!

Take some time to reflect over the lesson you've learnt today and write your reflections in your journal.

Below are five steps to renew your inner life before God. Actively work through these steps each day and record your progress in your journal. Be sure to note down any personal testimonies and changes you've experienced throughout your day. Be prepared to come and share your experience and how God may have been speaking to you through this activity.

1. Recognise the true state of your inner life.
2. Repent of all sinful desires, fatal attractions, unworthy loves.
3. Remove temporal viewpoint and worldly values.
4. Replace with eternal viewpoint and biblical values.
5. Renew your commitment to bring order to your inner life.

### Memorise!

23 Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand.  
24 You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me  
to glory.  
25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that  
I desire besides you.  
26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my  
heart and my portion forever.  
(Psalm 73:23-26, ESV)

### Prepare for next session!

Read Andrew Murray's article, *Absolute Surrender*. Take some time to journal your reflections and thoughts and come prepared to share at the next meeting.

## **Absolute Surrender** (Andrew Murray\*)

*“And Ben-hadad the king of Syria gathered all his host together: and there were thirty and two kings with him, and horses, and chariots: and he went up and besieged Samaria, and warred against it. And he sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel into the city, and said unto him, Thus saith Ben-hadad, Thy silver and thy gold is mine; thy wives also and thy children, even the goodliest, are mine. And the king of Israel answered and said, My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am thine and all that I have” (1 Ki. 20:1-4).*

What Ben Hadad asked was *absolute surrender*; and what Ahab gave was what was asked of him—*absolute surrender*. I want to use these words: “My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am thine, and all that I have,” as the words of absolute surrender with which every child of God ought to yield himself to his Father. We have heard it before, but we need to hear it very definitely—the condition of God’s blessing is absolute surrender of all into His hands. Praise God! If our hearts are willing for that, there is no end to what God will do for us, and to the blessing God will bestow.

*Absolute surrender*—let me tell you where I got those words. I used them myself often, and you have heard them numberless times. But in Scotland once I was in a company where we were talking about the condition of Christ’s Church, and what the great need of the Church and of believers is; and there was in our company a godly worker who has much to do in training workers, and I asked him what he would say was the great need of the Church, and the message that ought to be preached. He answered very quietly and simply and determinedly: *“Absolute surrender to God is the one thing.”*

The words struck me as never before. And that man began to tell how, in the workers with whom he had to deal, he finds that if they are sound on that point, even though they be backward, they are willing to be taught and helped, and they always improve; whereas others who are not sound there very often go back and leave the work. The condition for obtaining God’s full blessing is *absolute surrender* to Him.

And now, I desire by God’s grace to give to you this message—that your God in Heaven answers the prayers which you have offered for blessing on yourselves and for blessing on those around you by this one demand: *Are you willing to surrender yourselves absolutely into His hands?* What is our answer to be? God knows there are hundreds of hearts who have said it, and there are hundreds more who long to say it but hardly dare to do so. And there are hearts who have said it, but who have yet miserably failed, and who feel themselves condemned because they did not find the secret of the power to live that life. May God have a word for all!

Let me say, first of all, that God claims it from us.

### **God Expects Your Surrender**

Yes, it has its foundation in the very nature of God. God cannot do otherwise. Who is God? He is the Fountain of life, the only Source of existence and power and goodness, and throughout the universe there is nothing good but what God works. God has created the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the flowers, and the trees, and the grass; and are they not all absolutely surrendered to God? Do they not allow God to work in them just what He pleases? When God clothes the lily with its beauty, is it not yielded up, surrendered, given over to God as He works in its beauty? And God’s redeemed children, oh, can you think that God can work His work if there is only half or a part of them surrendered? God cannot do it. God is life, and love, and blessing, and power, and infinite beauty, and God delights to communicate Himself to every child who is prepared to receive Him; but ah! this one lack of absolute surrender is just the thing that hinders God. And now He comes, and as God, He claims it.

You know in daily life what absolute surrender is. You know that everything has to be given up to its special, definite object and service. I have a pen in my pocket, and that pen is absolutely surrendered to the one work of writing, and that pen must be absolutely surrendered to my hand if I am to write properly with it. If another holds it partly, I cannot write properly. This coat is absolutely given up to me to cover my body. This building is entirely given up to religious services. And now, do you expect that in your immortal being, in the divine nature that you have received by regeneration, God can work His work, every day and every hour, unless you are entirely given up to Him? God cannot. The Temple of Solomon was absolutely surrendered to God when it was dedicated to Him. And every one of us is a temple of God, in which God will dwell and work mightily on one condition—absolute surrender to Him. God claims it, God is worthy of it, and without it God cannot work His blessed work in us.

God not only claims it, but God will work it Himself.

### **God Accomplishes Your Surrender**

I am sure there is many a heart that says: “Ah, but that absolute surrender implies so much!” Someone says: “Oh, I have passed through so much trial and suffering, and there is so much of the self-life still remaining, and I dare not face the entire giving of it up, because I know it will cause so much trouble and agony.”

Alas! alas! that God’s children have such thoughts of Him, such cruel thoughts. Oh, I come to you with a message, fearful and anxious one. God does not ask you to give the perfect surrender in your strength, or by the power of your will; God is willing to work it in you. Do we not read: “It is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13)? And that is what we should seek for—to go on our faces before God, until our hearts learn to believe that the everlasting God Himself will come in to turn out what is wrong, to conquer what is evil, and to work what is well-pleasing in His blessed sight. God Himself will work it in you.

Look at the men in the Old Testament, like Abraham. Do you think it was by accident that God found that man, the father of the faithful and the Friend of God, and that it was Abraham himself, apart from God, who had such faith and such obedience and such devotion? You know it is not so. God raised him up and prepared him as an instrument for His glory.

Did not God say to Pharaoh: “For this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power” (Exodus 9:16)?

And if God said that of him, will not God say it far more of every child of His?

Oh, I want to encourage you, and I want you to cast away every fear. Come with that feeble desire; and if there is the fear which says: “Oh, my desire is not strong enough, I am not willing for everything that may come, I do not feel bold enough to say I can conquer everything”—I pray you, learn to know and trust your God now. Say: “My God, I am willing that Thou shouldst make me willing.” If there is anything holding you back, or any sacrifice you are afraid of making, come to God now, and prove how gracious your God is, and be not afraid that He will command from you what He will not bestow.

God comes and offers to work this absolute surrender in you. All these searchings and hungerings and longings that are in your heart, I tell you they are the drawings of the divine magnet, Christ Jesus. He lived a life of absolute surrender, He has possession of you; He is living in your heart by His Holy Spirit. You have hindered and hindered Him terribly, but He desires to help you to get hold of Him entirely. And He comes and draws you now by His message and words. Will you not come and trust God to work in you that absolute surrender to Himself? Yes, blessed be God, He can do it, and He will do it.

God not only claims it and works it, but God accepts it when we bring it to Him.

### **God Accepts Your Surrender**

God works it in the secret of our heart, God urges us by the hidden power of His Holy Spirit to come and speak it out, and we have to bring and to yield to Him that absolute surrender. But remember, when you come and bring God that absolute surrender, it may, as far as your feelings or your consciousness go, be a thing of great imperfection, and you may doubt and hesitate and say: "Is it absolute?"

But, oh, remember there was once a man to whom Christ had said: "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23). And his heart was afraid, and he cried out: "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

That was a faith that triumphed over the Devil, and the evil spirit was cast out. And if you come and say: "Lord, I yield myself in absolute surrender to my God," even though it be with a trembling heart and with the consciousness: "I do not feel the power, I do not feel the determination, I do not feel the assurance," it will succeed. Be not afraid, but come just as you are, and even in the midst of your trembling the power of the Holy Spirit will work.

Have you never yet learned the lesson that the Holy Spirit works with mighty power, while on the human side everything appears feeble? Look at the Lord Jesus Christ in Gethsemane. We read that He, "through the eternal Spirit" (Hebrews 9:14), offered Himself a sacrifice unto God. The Almighty Spirit of God was enabling Him to do it. And yet what agony and fear and exceeding sorrow came over Him, and how He prayed! Externally, you can see no sign of the mighty power of the Spirit, but the Spirit of God was there. And even so, while you are feeble and fighting and trembling, in faith in the hidden work of God's Spirit do not fear, but yield yourself.

And when you do yield yourself in absolute surrender, let it be in the faith that God does now accept of it. That is the great point, and that is what we so often miss—that believers should be thus occupied with God in this matter of surrender. I pray you, be occupied with God. We want to get help, every one of us, so that in our daily life God shall be clearer to us, God shall have the right place, and be "all in all." And if we are to have that through life, let us begin now and look away from ourselves, and look up to God. Let each believe—while I, a poor worm on earth and a trembling child of God, full of failure and sin and fear, bow here, and no one knows what passes through my heart, and while I in simplicity say, O God, I accept Thy terms; I have pleaded for blessing on myself and others, I have accepted Thy terms of absolute surrender—while your heart says that in deep silence, remember there is a God present that takes note of it, and writes it down in His book, and there is a God present who at that very moment takes possession of you. You may not feel it, you may not realise it, but God takes possession if you will trust Him.

God not only claims it, and works it, and accepts it when I bring it, but God maintains it.

### **God Maintains Your Surrender**

That is the great difficulty with many. People say: "I have often been stirred at a meeting, or at a convention, and I have consecrated myself to God, but it has passed away. I know it may last for a week or for a month, but away it fades, and after a time it is all gone."

But listen! It is because you do not believe what I am now going to tell you and remind you of. When God has begun the work of absolute surrender in you, and when God has accepted your surrender, then God holds Himself bound to care for it and to keep it. Will you believe that?

In this matter of surrender there are two: God and I—I a worm, God the everlasting and omnipotent Jehovah. Worm, will you be afraid to trust yourself to this mighty God now? God is willing. Do you not believe that He can keep you continually, day by day, and moment by moment?

Moment by moment I'm *kept* in His love;

Moment by moment I've life from above.

If God allows the sun to shine upon you moment by moment, without intermission, will not God let His life shine upon you every moment? And why have you not experienced it? Because you have not trusted God for it, and you do not surrender yourself absolutely to God in that trust.

A life of absolute surrender has its difficulties. I do not deny that. Yes, it has something far more than difficulties: it is a life that with men is absolutely impossible. But by the grace of God, by the power of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, it is a life to which we are destined, and a life that is possible for us, praise God! Let us believe that God will maintain it.

Some of you have read the words of that aged saint who, on his ninetieth birthday, told of all God's goodness to him—I mean George Muller.

What did he say he believed to be the secret of his happiness, and of all the blessing which God had given him? He said he believed there were two reasons. The one was that he had been enabled by grace to maintain a good conscience before God day by day; the other was, that he was a lover of God's Word. Ah, yes, a good conscience is complete obedience to God day by day, and fellowship with God every day in His Word, and prayer—that is a life of absolute surrender.

Such a life has two sides—on the one side, absolute surrender to work what God wants *you* to do; on the other side, to let God work what *He* wants to do.

First, *to do what God wants you to do.*

Give up yourselves absolutely to the will of God. You know something of that will; not enough, far from all. But say absolutely to the Lord God: "By Thy grace I desire to do Thy will in everything, every moment of every day." Say: "Lord God, not a word upon my tongue but for Thy glory, not a movement of my temper but for Thy glory, not an affection of love or hate in my heart but for Thy glory, and according to Thy blessed will." Someone says: "Do you think that possible?"

I ask, What has God promised you, and what can God do to fill a vessel absolutely surrendered to Him? Oh, God wants to bless you in a way beyond what you expect. From the beginning, ear hath not heard, neither hath the eye seen, what God hath prepared for them that wait for Him (1 Corinthians 2:9). God has prepared unheard-of things, blessings much more wonderful than you can imagine, more mighty than you can conceive. They are divine blessings. Oh, say now: "I give myself absolutely to God, to His will, to do only what God wants." It is God who will enable you to carry out the surrender.

And, on the other side, come and say: "I give myself absolutely to God, *to let Him work in me to will and to do of His good pleasure*, as He has promised to do."

Yes, the living God wants to work in His children in a way that we cannot understand, but that God's Word has revealed, and He wants to work in us every moment of the day. God is willing to maintain our life. Only let our absolute surrender be one of simple, childlike, and unbounded trust.

### **God Blesses When Your Surrender**

This absolute surrender to God will wonderfully bless.

What Ahab said to his enemy, King Ben-hadad—"My lord, O king, according to thy word I am thine, and all that I have"—shall we not say to our God and loving Father? If we do say it, God's blessing will come upon us. God wants us to be separate from the world; we are called to come out from the world that hates God. Come out for God, and say: "Lord, anything for Thee." If you say that with prayer, and speak that into God's ear, He will accept it, and He will teach you what it means.

I say again, God will bless you. You have been praying for blessing. But do remember, there must be absolute surrender. At every tea-table you see it. Why is tea poured into that cup? Because it is empty, and given up for the tea. But put ink, or vinegar, or wine into it, and will they pour the tea into the vessel? And can God fill you, can God bless you if you are not absolutely surrendered to Him? He cannot. Let us believe God has wonderful blessings for us, if we will but stand up for God, and say, be it with a trembling will, yet with a believing heart: "O God, I accept Thy demands. I am thine and all that I have. Absolute surrender is what my soul yields to Thee by divine grace."

You may not have such strong and clear feelings of deliverances as you would desire to have, but humble yourselves in His sight, and acknowledge that you have grieved the Holy Spirit by your self-will, self-confidence, and self-effort. Bow humbly before him in the confession of that, and ask him to break the heart and to bring you into the dust before Him. Then, as you bow before Him, just accept God's teaching that in your flesh "there dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7:18), and that nothing will help you except another life which must come in. You must deny self once for all. Deny self every moment, and then Christ will come in and take possession of you.

When was Peter delivered? When was the change accomplished? The change began with Peter weeping, and the Holy Spirit came down and filled his heart. God the Father loves to give us the power of the Spirit. We have the Spirit of God dwelling within us. We come to God confessing that, and praising God for it, and yet confessing how we have grieved the Spirit. And then we bow our knees to the Father to ask that He would strengthen us with all might by the Spirit in the inner man, and that He would fill us with His mighty power. And as the Spirit reveals Christ to us, Christ comes to live in our hearts forever, and the self-life is cast out.

Let us bow before God in humility, and in that humility confess before Him the state of the whole Church. No words can tell the sad state of the Church of Christ on earth. I wish I had words to speak what I sometimes feel about it. Just think of the Christians around you. I do not speak of nominal Christians, or of professing Christians, but I speak of hundreds and thousands of honest, earnest Christians who are not living a life in the power of God or to His glory. So little power, so little devotion or consecration to God, so little perception of the truth that a Christian is a man utterly surrendered to God's will! Oh, we want to confess the sins of God's people around us, and to humble ourselves. We are members of that sickly body, and the sickliness of the body will hinder us, and break us down, unless we come to God, and in confession separate ourselves from partnership with worldliness, with coldness toward each other, unless we give up ourselves to be entirely and wholly for God.

How much Christian work is being done in the spirit of the flesh and in the power of self! How much work, day by day, in which human energy—our will and our thoughts about the work—is continually manifested, and in which there is but little of waiting upon God, and upon the power of the Holy Spirit! Let us make confession. But as we confess the state of the Church and the feebleness and sinfulness of work for God among us, let us come back to ourselves. Who is there who truly longs to be delivered from the power of the self-life, who truly acknowledges that it is the power of self and the flesh, and who is willing to cast all at the feet of Christ? There is deliverance.

I heard of one who had been an earnest Christian, and who spoke about the "cruel" thought of separation and death. But you do not think that, do you? What are we to think of separation and

death? This: death was the path to glory for Christ. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross. The cross was the birthplace of His everlasting glory. Do you love Christ? Do you long to be in Christ, and not like Him? Let death be to you the most desirable thing on earth—death to self, and fellowship with Christ. Separation—do you think it a hard thing to be called to be entirely free from the world, and by that separation to be united to God and His love, by separation to become prepared for living and walking with God every day? Surely one ought to say: “Anything to bring me to separation, to death, for a life of full fellowship with God and Christ.”

Come and cast this self-life and flesh-life at the feet of Jesus. Then trust Him. Do not worry yourselves with trying to understand all about it, but come in the living faith that Christ will come into you with the power of His death and the power of His life; and then the Holy Spirit will bring the whole Christ—Christ crucified and risen and living in glory—into your heart.

\***Andrew Murray** (9 May 1828-18 January 1917) was a South African writer, teacher, and Christian pastor. Murray considered missions to be "the chief end of the church." He was a champion of the South African Revival of 1860. Murray authored over 240 books.

### References

Alcorn, R. (2003). *Money, Possessions and Eternity*. Illinois: Tyndale House.

Murray, A. (1895). *Absolute Surrender* [Ebook] (pp. 3-11). Chicago: Moody Press. Retrieved from [http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted\\_hildebrandt/SpiritualFormation/Texts/Murray\\_AbsoluteSurrender.pdf](http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted_hildebrandt/SpiritualFormation/Texts/Murray_AbsoluteSurrender.pdf)