

Collision And Liability

By Wolfgang Hasselkus

Issues: God's lordship becomes a painful matter when his will collides with our personal goals.

But because he demonstrated forever his absolute love and commitment to us, we are obligated to give God total control over all that is precious to us.

As long as God's will lines up with our own wishes, everything is fine with us.

But when our personal goals collide with God's will, we truly learn what his lordship over us means. Until we see him lay his hand on what is most important to us, his lordship is a lofty but empty theory.

When God challenged Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham realized how much his heart was wrapped up in this son whom he loved, and who was the fulfillment of God's promises to him. Quietly he carried out the struggle of giving up to God his most precious possession.

Down to the core

So it is with us. God calls us to give him not the sum total of the little things we happen to have a surplus of, but that which is most strongly connected with our personal identity-the things with which our very life is entwined. God reaches past the surface of our lives, down to the core of our being.

That makes us uneasy. After sacrificing all that we are, we can say only, *What am I now?*

But it is exactly in these precious areas that God must be our Lord. Anything else would be at most a partnership with God. Partnership with him sounds like a proper ideal to our modern minds, but it is not a relationship God allows us to have.

As our Lord, God wants to touch our inner selves. He wants to change our character. He wants to deal with the undisciplined thoughts that burden us. He wants to control our anger and our unbridled speech with which we ruin other people. He wants to cure us of our thirst for glory that makes us push ourselves to the front whenever possible. He wants to heal us of our jealousy that keeps us from rejoicing with others. He wants to uproot our bad habits, our indifference, our selfish goals.

We are to have the mind of Christ-and that means a radical change in the depths of our personality. God offers no cheaper alternative. He is satisfied with nothing less than new thinking and new behavior.

Being open to this spiritual learning frees us from ourselves. If you feel you are your own worst enemy, if you never seem to turn the corner in making changes in your life, if you are constantly preoccupied with yourself-then know that our Lord offers freedom. "Learn from me," Jesus said, "and you will find rest for your souls." We're freed from ourselves as we become preoccupied with Jesus.

Also-rans

Every church has two kinds of Christians. One group draws its life from God's word. They

wrestle faithfully for obedience and sanctification.

The others are also believers, and they read their Bibles and join in church activities, but in truly moving onward for God they seem to always keep their handbrake on.

Those in the first group are committed disciples. The others are also-rans. The essential difference between them is the issue of lordship. The also-rans have never given themselves totally to the Lord. The sixth and eighth chapters of John's gospel describe what they are like—defiantly rejecting Jesus' claims to absolute lordship.

As the also-rans influence the church around them, the typical problem that emerges is disregard for all authority. Because they have never resolved the issue of lordship, they reject both God's word and men's.

If you struggle with accepting God's word because it demands too much from you, or if you cannot accept the authority of other people because you don't like having anyone tell you what to do, realize that these ready-made arguments are the expressions of an also-ran. They are an insult to God.

As Israel conquered Canaan, some fortified cities that offered strong resistance were not overcome. Occupied by the Canaanites, these pockets of resistance were always the source of problems for Israel. In the same way, the unresolved issue of God's lordship always brings trouble to the church.

Yet we tend to arrange our lives according to these small pockets of resistance to God's lordship. Our lifestyle is determined by such things as pride, secret sins, and our self-obsession. We have a wrong view of sin if we think we must avoid only outward sinful deeds. The real issue is our sinful nature—our selfish pride. And whoever is willing to submit to God's lordship only partially, and in only certain areas, will be a failure. Partial obedience is the beginning of disobedience.

Only by totally embracing God's will can we be protected from defeat.

This requires, of course, that we be flexible—free to do the will of God under any condition. We cannot be bound or hindered by the search for worldly security. To the man who said, "I will follow you wherever you go," Jesus replied, "The Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

One who is free from self-imposed restrictions and from the nonbiblical restrictions imposed on him by others is available to God. He is free to work anywhere God chooses to send him. He no longer clings in fear to the old and familiar.

Pain and sweat

A disciple of Jesus is a hard worker until the end. The fields in which God wants us to labor are like the ground described in Genesis 3—cursed, and producing thorns and thistles, and requiring painful toil and the sweat of our brows.

Whoever does not believe this is dreaming. Work done for the kingdom of God will be difficult, but the radiant power of Christ's disciples lies in the fact that they have said yes to this hard, costly work. And yet they also radiate peace.

God's work for us was also costly. To fulfill his marvelous plan and to demonstrate his committed love for us, he gave away that which was most precious and important to him. So we can understand why he therefore wants control of whatever is most precious in our lives.

Because he emptied himself for us, we cannot offer him any less.

» **See Also:** *On Your Own: Called to Sacrifice*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

WOLFGANG HASSELKUS is a medical doctor, and also ministers with The Navigators in his native West Germany.

On Your Own
Called to Sacrifice

Using your knowledge of these biblical personalities, list here the things of value they were required to give up for the sake of obeying God:

Moses

David

Mary, mother of Jesus

The twelve apostles

Others: Gideon, Hannah, Jeremiah, Zacchaeus,
or Paul