



Dangerous Surrender

Copyright © 2007 by Kay Warren

This title is also available as a Zondervan audio product.
Visit www.zondervan.com/audiopages for more information.

Requests for information should be addressed to:
Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49530

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Warren, Kay.

Dangerous surrender : what happens when you say yes to God / Kay Warren.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN-13: 978-0-310-25890-2

ISBN-10: 0-310-25890-1

1. Submissiveness—Religious aspects—Christianity. 2. Providence and government of God.
3. Service (Theology). 4. Spirituality. I. Title.

BV4647.A25W37 2007

248.4—dc22

2007029329

This edition printed on acid-free paper.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the *Holy Bible: New International Version*®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Other Bible translations quoted in this book are listed on page 255, which hereby becomes a part of this copyright page.

Internet addresses printed in this book are offered as a resource to you. These are not intended in any way to be or imply an endorsement on the part of Zondervan or the author, nor do we vouch for the content of these sites for the life of this book.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Interior design by Beth Shagene

Printed in the United States of America

Contents

<i>Foreword by Rick Warren</i>	9
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	11
<i>How to Benefit from This Book</i>	15
CHAPTER 1: Peeking through the Cracks	17
CHAPTER 2: The Kingdom of Me	37
CHAPTER 3: Gloriously Ruined	59
CHAPTER 4: Ready, Set, Stop	77
CHAPTER 5: Exposing Evil	97
CHAPTER 6: Mirrors Don't Lie	115
CHAPTER 7: The Gift of Presence	131
CHAPTER 8: A Deliberate Choice	147
CHAPTER 9: An Unexpected Bond	163
CHAPTER 10: Linking Arms	181
CHAPTER 11: Some May Die Today	197
APPENDIX 1: For Further Investigation	217
APPENDIX 2: What Every Church Can Do about HIV/AIDS	231
<i>Notes</i>	237
<i>Readers' Group Discussion Guide</i>	239
<i>Bible Translations</i>	255



How to Benefit from This Book

SOMEONE ONCE ASKED ME TO DEFINE CHRISTIANITY IN ONE word, and after some reflection, I responded, “It all boils down to surrender.” Everything I know about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ begins and ends with surrender—with saying yes to God. That tiny, simple word initiates an exhilarating, life-altering adventure that will take you places you never thought you’d go—both literally and figuratively.

On my own journey of surrender to God, I’ve witnessed the best and the worst this world offers. I’ve traveled to brothels and resorts, palaces and mud huts. Along the way I’ve met with presidents and prostitutes, billionaires and paupers. I’ve held newborn babies crying robustly and dying women whispering their last words.

The journey has been about new internal realities as well as external realities. God has also taken me places within myself I’ve never anticipated. I’ve experienced the best and the worst about *me*. In that process, God has become more real and more personal.

As you read, I believe you will encounter these same unexpected highs and lows. That's why I recommend you find a reading partner right from the start. Most of us learn best when we have the opportunity to process and dialogue with someone else about what we're reading.

The reading won't be easy or always pleasant—this is not a book to read when you're seeking a lighthearted romp through a make-believe world. But if you're yearning for something you can't quite define, then you're ready for *Dangerous Surrender*.

The end of each chapter contains simple steps to get you started on applying the principles of surrender. At first glance, they may seem so basic you'll be tempted to ignore them, but they are intended to put surrender within your grasp. They are attainable by everyone!

Reading *Dangerous Surrender* may raise questions in your mind. In fact, I expect you'll come to the end of each chapter and discover you have more questions than answers about how to apply the principles to your own spiritual journey.

Don't be discouraged! I intentionally left the how-to's a bit vague. Sure, it would have been easier if I had given you a step one, two, and three to becoming a dangerously surrendered man or woman of faith. But that isn't real life. No one arrives at spiritual maturity by following a formula—at least I haven't experienced that. Instead, I've included a section at the end of the book with five or six questions per chapter to allow you to wrestle with the new thoughts and ideas stirred up by your reading. These questions probe beneath the surface to help you as you process your reactions and come up with responses that will eventually lead to a shift in your thinking and behavior.

Now—let's talk.

Peeking through the Cracks

“Much is required from those to whom much is given.”

Luke 12:48 NLT

If through a broken heart
God can bring His purposes to pass in the world,
then thank Him for breaking your heart.

Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, November 1

I DIDN'T SEE IT COMING.

I woke up on a normal day, looked ahead to a typical schedule. Nothing out of the ordinary was planned—routine stuff filled the calendar slot. I didn't have the faintest clue that God was about to rock my world and change the trajectory of my life forever.

Unaware of the radical change in store for me on that spring day in 2002, I sat down on the couch in my living room with a cup of tea and picked up one of the weekly newsmagazines we subscribe to. I noticed that there was a story about AIDS in Africa, and I casually flipped over to that section, not because I cared about AIDS in Africa (I didn't care about AIDS anywhere, let alone in Africa), but because I wanted to stay up on current events. As I began to read, I quickly realized that the graphic pictures

that accompanied the article were horrific—skeletal men and women, children so weak they couldn't brush the flies away from their faces. I couldn't look at them. But for some strange reason, I was compelled to continue reading. I partially covered my eyes with my hands and tried to peek through the cracks in my fingers at the words without looking at the faces of dying men, women, and children.

God is really wise and knew exactly how to bypass my feeble attempts to block out the upsetting photographs. If he couldn't get my attention with the pictures, he would use the words. The phrase "twelve million children orphaned due to AIDS in Africa" jumped off the magazine pages and imprinted itself in my mind. I was shocked and stunned and, frankly, disbelieving. "No," I said out loud, "there's no way there could be twelve million children orphaned in one place due to one illness at one time. I don't even know one orphan—how could there be twelve million?" I threw the magazine on the floor in horror.

But I couldn't get rid of this new reality so easily. That night I was haunted by the thought of twelve million boys and girls left alone, their parents the victims of AIDS. As I drifted into sleep, my last thought was about the orphans; I woke up in the morning with their little faces swirling through my mind. Suddenly AIDS, Africa, and orphans were everywhere! Every newspaper I picked up had an article about AIDS in Africa; it seemed as though every newscast echoed the story. Over the next few weeks I tried to escape the stories and the pictures, but I couldn't.

God and I began an intense internal conversation. My first argument with him was over the numbers of people infected by HIV—the virus that causes AIDS—and the number of orphans left in the wake. I reasoned to myself that

the media must be exaggerating the numbers. Since I considered myself pretty savvy about global situations, surely I would *know* if a problem of this magnitude existed.

As the days went by, the internal dialogue with God continued unabated, but it also began to shift focus. I gradually began to accept that while I had been raising my family and serving in my church, a humanitarian crisis of gargantuan proportions had been escalating on our planet. There was no media exaggeration, no propaganda to garner sympathy for a minor cause. Something tragic and terrible was happening right under my nose.

I felt powerless to do anything about the new reality thrust in front of me. I cried out to God, “Why are you bothering me with this? There’s nothing I can do about it. I’m just an ordinary person. What could one person do about such a gigantic problem? And by the way, in case you haven’t noticed, I’m a white, suburban mom with a minivan. What do I know about a disease in Africa?”

After a month of anguished wrestling with God, I reached a point at which I had to make a conscious decision. Would I retreat to my comfortable life and to my settled plans, pretending I didn’t know about the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the millions of orphans? Or would I surrender to God’s call and let my heart engage with a cause I was pretty sure would include buckets of pain and sorrow? I didn’t know what would happen if I said yes to this increasingly strong urge to engage—what did “engaging” even mean? I felt like I was standing on the edge of a giant precipice; I couldn’t go back, and yet the way forward looked like stepping into a void.

The moment of decision came. With eyes closed and teeth clenched tightly, I finally said yes. The second I did,

my heart broke, and I was *shattered*. It was as though God took my heart and put it through a wood chipper—what went in was a “branch,” but what came out on the other side was a heart shredded into a million pieces. With lightning speed, God yanked the blindfold of apathy, ignorance, and complacency from my eyes, and I was overcome by the realities of the suffering he revealed. I ached with a new kind of pain—a pain that felt as though it had come from the most visceral part of me. I was filled with sorrow and grief. I wept as though I was the one who was sick, or it was my child who was dying, or I was the orphan left alone. I knew next to nothing about HIV/AIDS, but my heart was instantly linked with those who know it intimately. Like the apostle Paul knocked off his donkey on the road to Damascus (see Acts 9), I was changed by my encounter with truth.

I became a seriously disturbed woman.

Suddenly I was consumed with a desire to learn about HIV/AIDS. I devoured every book, article, and video I could get my hands on. I searched the Internet for websites that would teach me about this global crisis. I consulted health care professionals. I put out feelers through all of my contacts, in search of anyone who could help me understand how HIV/AIDS began, what was known about it, and what could be done. I was disturbed—almost frantic—in my hurry to make up for lost time.

Disturbed

The word *disturbed* is often associated with mental illness and instability. We say, “He’s disturbed,” when we describe someone who reacts in an overly emotional way or appears troubled emotionally. I want to redefine this word, because

I believe that God is looking for some disturbed people. He is searching for men and women, students, and young adults who will allow him to disturb them by making them truly see the world in which we live—so disturbed that they will be compelled to do something about what they see.

Most of us have grown up in a culture that promotes precisely the opposite approach. Parents tell their children, “Never talk about politics or religion; it makes people uncomfortable.” And for the most part, we’ve obeyed this cultural edict. Instead of tackling uncomfortable topics, we talk about the latest TV reality show or the hot sports figure or the price of gasoline. Believers are just as guilty as non-believers! Even worse, we refuse to talk about the painful, disturbing subjects—child prostitution, child labor, rape, poverty, injustice, ethnic hatred, greed, materialism, environmental destruction, HIV/AIDS. These are disturbing topics. But if we’re not disturbed by the world in which we live, we will be consumed with the trivial, the insignificant, and the temporary. We will spend our days pursuing all the wrong goals, living by the wrong measurement of success, evaluating our legacy by the wrong standard.

Jesus’ words “Much is required from those to whom much is given” (Luke 12:48 NLT) began to reverberate inside my mind, taking their place alongside the disturbing images I had seen. I had been given so much—what was my responsibility in return? God clearly tells us that we are “to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with [our] God” (Micah 6:8). I began to wonder how to apply this truth to my life. How does becoming a seriously disturbed person affect the way I live?

I soon realized that the first place to get shaken up would be my approach to personal comfort. Instead of being

disturbed, I was comfortable. I had no complaints. My material needs were more than met. I lived in a beautiful part of the country. I enjoyed a rich and satisfying marriage. My children made me proud—they're good human beings. I had meaningful friendships that provided companionship and fun. I was involved at my church in multiple ministries that I loved.

It's very easy for us to remain aloof and untouched by the suffering that defines the existence of the vast majority of people on this planet. I have read that if you have food in your refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead, and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75 percent of the people in this world! If you have *any* money in the bank and some in your wallet and some spare change in a dish somewhere, you are among the top 8 percent of the world's wealthy; 92 percent have less to live on than you do! If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation, you are ahead of 500 million other people in the world. If you can attend worship services at church without the fear of harassment, arrest, torture, or death, you are more blessed than three billion people in the world.

I don't tell you this to make you feel guilty—but I do hope you feel uncomfortable. I hope these statistics disturb you. God in his sovereignty decided where you would be born and allowed you to live in a place that has almost everything anyone could ever desire, so there is no guilt that he has ordered our lives in such a way. The only guilt we bear is the guilt of ignoring the men, women, and children of this world who do not have what we have—the guilt of spending the majority of our time, money, and resources exclusively on ourselves and our families. *That* is legitimate guilt.

Let's just say that something is beginning to stir in your soul as you read. What should you do about it? Where should you begin? What is God's will for you and for the broken world you inhabit?

One thing I know for sure: God's will begins with surrender.

Dangerous Surrender

Surrender is a dirty word to many of us. It has mostly negative connotations. Some synonyms are *give in*, *give up*, *admit defeat*, *lay down your arms*, *submit*, *yield*, *capitulate*. Surrender implies failure, a decision made only when irrevocably backed into a corner, a concession by the conquered to the conquerors, a tattered white flag waving weakly. No wonder we avoid talking about surrender. It's not very attractive to those who see themselves as strong. One of the most deeply held illusions of Westerners such as me is that we are tough and independent and quite sure that we don't need anyone else. We carry these illusions over into our spiritual lives as well, and doing so keeps many from following Christ. "Surrender to God? No thanks. I can do life by myself." Even those of us who have acknowledged our need for Jesus Christ to be our Savior have a difficult time surrendering our will to him on a daily basis; we're just too full of ourselves, too much in control, too proud.

From God's perspective, however, surrender to his will has only positive connotations. Surrendering means that we have come to the end of our independence from him, our reliance on self-sufficiency, and our insistence that we don't need him. Surrender to God changes everything! Why add the word *dangerous* to surrender? Because we don't surrender

to a benevolent but impotent grandfatherly figure; we surrender to Almighty God—the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. C. S. Lewis’s character Aslan in the *Chronicles of Narnia* depicts God as a magnificent lion—good, but certainly not safe. I’ll explore this concept further in the next chapter, but here at the start, please know that surrendering your life to God is the boldest and riskiest step you can take. Being dangerously surrendered to God allows you to know him in increasingly deeper ways and to participate fully in his will.

The Developing Photograph

Before that spring day in 2002, I thought I knew what God’s will was for that stage of my life. Rick and I were entering the empty nest season. Our youngest son was a senior in high school, and we had our lives planned out. We share a deep love for pastors and missionaries and thoroughly enjoy using our spiritual gifts of teaching. We anticipated that the second half of our lives would be spent traveling the world teaching and encouraging ministry couples. It was a really good plan for our future.

It just wasn’t God’s plan.

Through the years, I’ve found that discovering God’s will often resembles looking at an undeveloped Polaroid photograph. When the camera spits out the picture, the images are gray and shapeless, but the longer you look at the picture, the clearer it becomes. The day I said yes to caring about people with HIV/AIDS, God handed me a fuzzy Polaroid picture. I didn’t know exactly what he wanted me to do. I had no agenda, no plan in mind, no long-range strategy—I just knew I couldn’t face God someday and tell him

I had ignored the suffering of millions of people just because it made me uncomfortable or because I didn't know what to do about it. The picture didn't grow sharp and clear instantaneously, but over the course of several years, it has become increasingly clear. I now "see" more of what God has in mind for my role in stopping the AIDS pandemic.

Of course, with the advent of digital technology, Polaroid cameras are becoming outdated. Now we're impatient with such a slow process—we want instant clarity! We don't want to wait for the picture to develop. When we sense God leading us on a new journey, we want all of the information up front. We want God to fill out the travel forms in triplicate, give us a detailed road map before we start the journey, and guarantee our safe arrival at the destination. We want the rewards of living lives of faith without actually having to demonstrate faith. For you to become a seriously disturbed, surrendered person of faith, you will have to be willing to say yes in advance—to give God your answer before you've heard the question.

My friend Gary Thomas frequently challenges me to grow spiritually through his insights that probe beneath the surface of my faith. He writes, "I learned that faith isn't tested by how often God answers my prayers with a yes but by my willingness to continue serving him and thanking him, even when I don't have a clue as to what he is doing."¹

We tend to think that only the superstars—the brilliant high achievers, those with head-turning good looks, the naturally gifted athletes—can make a difference in the world through their dangerous surrender. The great news is that God's plan for getting his work done in the world includes more than superstars.

Ordinary

I look back on the day God grabbed my attention and turned it toward HIV/AIDS and realize that I didn't see it coming for a number of reasons, but mostly because it never occurred to me that I had anything significant to offer to a global problem. I have never seen myself as a particularly gifted or talented person—just as someone average and quite ordinary.

When I was little, I wanted to be a great student in school, but my best efforts never landed me on the dean's list or qualified me for academic scholarships. I was just average. Because I was a pastor's daughter, everyone expected I would learn how to play the piano, so I took lessons. I had visions of myself on a grand tour, playing magnificently for appreciative audiences, perhaps even recording an album or two of my music. I discovered that while I can play the piano, I'm just average. No one will ever ask me to produce a CD of classical music, and no tours have ever been lined up. I realized I was average academically and in the talent department, but I held out hope for a while that I would turn into a gorgeous Miss America type. In fact, I used to wait eagerly for the annual pageant. I longed to have the perfect body and face that all Miss America contestants possess. I studied my bathroom mirror for signs of a budding beauty, but none came. While no one has told me I'm ugly, I've never walked into a room and heard audible gasps from those present who are stunned by my beauty! I'm just average.

By the time Rick and I had married, I was pretty discouraged by the way my life was turning out. I was so average, so *nothing*. You'd think I would have married some

average Joe to go along with my own perceived average status, but instead I married a superstar! Rick was always at the top of everything he put his hand to—always! He did great in school. He was popular, talented, and self-confident. He was the president of every club he ever joined, and the trophy case in his living room was crowded with awards he and his younger sister, Chaundel, had accumulated. He had big dreams for his life. But one summer while working as a lifeguard at a Christian camp, Rick committed his life to Christ, and a new dream was born. His focus changed from business to ministry, and he became a passionate follower of Jesus Christ.

After Rick graduated from seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, we moved back to our native California and started the Saddleback Valley Community Church in 1980. With Rick at the helm, the church grew exponentially—both in numbers and in spiritual depth. I was still a fish out of water, struggling to keep my head above water. He was a superstar; I was more like a “twinkle little star.” A couple of years into the planting of the church, however, God and I had an encounter that became a linchpin moment—one I could look back to over and over again to draw strength from.

I had been asked to be the speaker at one of our women’s events, and I reluctantly agreed. I was working with the children of our church at that time because kids were safe—I didn’t worry that they would judge me inadequate; I figured they didn’t care if I told the Bible story backwards or sideways. On the way to the event, I began to cry and have a pity party—something I did on a regular basis: “God, you have made the most dreadful mistake. Why didn’t you make me better? You should have given Rick a different

wife—someone prettier, more talented, more gifted, more intelligent. I just can't measure up." I don't cry in an attractive way— with just a few tears my eyes get red and swollen shut— so I turned on the radio to try to distract myself from my angst.

Then it happened!

Playing on the radio at that exact moment was a song sent from God's heart to mine:

Ordinary People

*Just ordinary people,
God uses ordinary people.
He chooses people just like me and you
Who are willing to do as He commands.
God uses people that will give Him all,
No matter how small your all may seem to you;
Because little becomes much as you place it in
the Master's hand.*

*Oh, just like that little lad
Who gave Jesus all he had;
How the multitude was fed
With the fish and the loaves of bread.
What you have may not seem much,
But when you yield it to the touch
Of the Master's loving hand, yes,
Then you'll understand how your life could
never be the same.**

Danniebelle Hall

* Lyrics by Danniebell Hall, Forever Daniebelle Ministries. Used by permission of EMI Christian Music Group. All rights reserved.

Now the tears really flowed, but instead of self-pitying tears, they were tears of joy and peace. God chose *me* to be an ordinary person! He could have made me smarter, more talented, and more beautiful if he had chosen to—but his hands lovingly shaped me just the way he wanted me to be. Why? Because my ordinariness, when surrendered to God, allows him to make a miracle out of my life in much the same way as when he fed thousands of hungry people with two tiny fish and five loaves of bread nearly two thousand years ago. Truly, little becomes much when we place it in his hands.

That day, I offered all that I am and all that I am not to him. I said, “God, I’m so sick of whining and complaining that I’m just average. Forgive me for accusing you of making a mistake when you made me. From now on, I accept with joy your decision to make me average. I *surrender* myself to you. Use me whenever, wherever, and in whatever way you choose. Here’s my lunch—will you miraculously multiply it?” That simple but honest prayer of surrender was the most dangerous decision I had ever made.

The past twenty years have provided countless opportunities for me to live up to my promise to be happy with who I am and who God has made me to be. He received my surrender of my ordinariness and has multiplied my meager offerings again and again. I have spent many years developing the gift of teaching I discovered when I stopped being afraid of all of the comparisons to Rick. I was totally satisfied with my plans for future speaking and teaching around the world. But God interrupted my plans and seriously disturbed me on that fateful day when I read a magazine article about HIV/AIDS in Africa.

Models of Surrender

In this journey of becoming more fully surrendered to God, I've benefited greatly from role models—other people who show me the way to becoming yielded to God. Jesus' mother, Mary, has been a model of surrender for me. In fact, more than any other character in Scripture, Mary embodies the full extent of what it means to surrender oneself to God. She was a flesh-and-blood woman who made an astonishing commitment to put herself at God's disposal when the angel announced to her that she would carry the Savior in her womb. The rest of her life offered her the opportunity to make good on that promise. Would she *really* trust God? Would she trust him enough to say yes without knowing where her surrender would take her?

There was nothing about Mary from an outward perspective that would make her worthy of "Who's Who in America" or any list of "Most Widely Admired Women," let alone qualify her to carry the Son of God in her body. She was young, poor, and probably uneducated—yet God honored her with a responsibility that most of us would run from. She could have argued long and hard with the angel who announced God's selection of her to give birth to God's Son, pointing out the obvious reasons he was making a big mistake. She could have made reasonable excuses for declining this "generous offer," perhaps even suggesting a few of her girlfriends whom God might consider instead. As unthinkable as it is from our vantage point in history, she could have flat-out refused. But her feeble protests quickly died. Having no idea what her yes would mean for her, she surrendered: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38 KJV). That is dangerous surrender!

Mary yielded her body to become the place where the Savior developed and grew. She abandoned her previously stellar reputation to the village gossips, who gleefully speculated about her private life. She opened her heart wide to love a child as only a mother can. She watched him become a man who baffled her, confused her, and most likely even wounded her by his refusal to take Joseph's place in the carpenter shop. She followed him around during the three years of his public ministry, probably hoping just to be near him. With growing dread, she watched his popularity wane as he failed to live up to her people's erroneous idea of what the Messiah would look like. Finally, she learned the news that he had been arrested, beaten beyond recognition, and offered as a substitute for a convicted criminal named Barabbas.

A lifetime of saying yes culminated in that awful day when she stood near his cross, shattered by the sight of this precious child of hers hated, bleeding, broken, hanging from a tree—and still she said yes. There is no record of her lashing out at God in her grief, accusing him of giving her a raw deal, of misleading her into this place of extreme agony; there is no rescinding of her yes. Even her broken heart was given back to the one who had chosen her to be used for his purposes. She saw her son viciously slaughtered, placed in a tomb, resurrected, and then gone forever—this time back to heaven. Would saying yes *ever* bring joy to Mary's soul—or would her yes always come with a knife to the heart?

Later, in the book of Acts, we're told that Mary was with the 120 disciples who were hiding in the upper room after Jesus ascended to heaven, and she was probably there when the Holy Spirit was given to all believers. Finally there

is release, redemption, answers to her questions. Surrendered faith makes sense; the picture is finally clear. But Mary didn't wait until all was crystal clear to surrender herself to God. She didn't insist that God's will come with no suffering attached; she simply said, "I am the Lord's servant, and I am willing to accept whatever he wants" (Luke 1:38 NLT).

I can imagine you may be tempted to brush past Mary because her story happened so long ago; and let's face it—there will never be another person who is asked to be the mother of God! It's easy to disconnect from her surrender because it feels so far removed from the world we live in. But it's not so easy to ignore the stories of ordinary men and women still living today. Throughout these chapters, I'll introduce you to people I've met who have encountered God and been challenged to surrender their lives to him. It all starts with a willingness to place no limits on what God can do in our lives. We cannot dictate to him what we will or will not allow.

Another significant role model for me in learning how to surrender completely to God is François Fénelon. He was a highly respected French priest who was appointed by King Louis XIV to tutor his grandson and future heir to the throne. His writings never fail to make me examine the depth of my commitment to Christ. Consider this:

To want to serve God in some conditions, but not others, is to serve Him in your own way. But to put no limits on your submission to God is truly dying to yourself. This is how to worship God. Open yourself to God without measure. Let His life flow through you like a torrent. Fear nothing on the road you are

walking. God will lead you by the hand. Let your love for Him cast out the fear you feel for yourself.²

Dave and Carolyn McClendon's life had slowed down. Their children were grown. Dave had retired from Coca Cola, and Carolyn from Boeing. Then they heard a message I delivered about HIV/AIDS and God's compassion for the sick. They were intrigued and came to a training session we hosted for those interested in volunteering at a local AIDS clinic in their neighborhood. They responded by saying, "Yes, whatever we can do, Lord." What began as spending a few hours a week driving HIV-positive clients to their doctors turned into helping at the food pantry, which led to recruiting friends, neighbors, and small group members to volunteer. Month after month, they found their lives increasingly intertwined with the men and women who were seeking care at the clinic, and before long, they met a very sick Cambodian woman with a young daughter, whom Dave and Carolyn befriended. To their surprise, the mother asked Dave and Carolyn if they would become her daughter's guardians if she died. What could Dave and Carolyn say? How could they possibly turn down this tender request? How could they look into the mother's eyes and tell her they would not care for her treasured little girl? They said yes.

Dave and Carolyn are now co-guardians of an eleven-year-old girl. She spends five or more days and nights a week at their home. The McClendons' guardianship involves a variety of responsibilities and privileges that range from helping with homework to teaching her how to ride a bike, from taking her on fun outings to the zoo and Disneyland to taking her to church and teaching her about God's love—right

down to tending to the mundane details of doctor visits. The mother and daughter have been enveloped into Dave and Carolyn's entire family, where they participate in all family dinners and celebrations. Dave and Carolyn told God that they would do whatever he wanted them to do, that they wouldn't put any limits on what he could do with them in their surrender—and God took them seriously.

How does reading the McClendons' story make you feel? Inspired, or maybe uneasy? If their story (or anything else you've read so far) has made you nervous, you may be tempted to read the rest of this book "peeking through the cracks" in your fingers—afraid to read it yet afraid to put it down. I'm tempted to try to relieve any discomfort you might be feeling and tell you it will all be OK—that the road chosen for you won't have many bumps or potholes, that Mary was an anomaly and most people don't suffer the way she did, that very soon the billions of people who are suffering in our world today will have enough to eat, effective medicine for their sicknesses, and clean water to drink. I'd like to say that this first chapter is the hardest one and that it will only get easier from here on out.

But I can't.

God is longing to *seriously disturb* you about his world. He's searching for men and women, students, young people and old people, people of every race and from every tribe, who will recklessly abandon themselves to him and surrender to his purposes. The Polaroid picture may not be sharp and clear at this moment, and you may be wondering, "What will dangerous surrender look like for me?" On the other hand, you may have a solid plan for your life already laid out, as Rick and I did. The question for you, then, is this: Is it God's plan? Either way, your decision at this mo-

ment is about saying yes to God—like Jesus’ mother, Mary; like Dave and Carolyn; like me—regardless of whether you can see where that yes will take you. My challenge to you is to say, “I don’t know exactly what the question is, God, but my answer is yes!”

Surrender

Will you decide to say yes to God,
even before knowing the full implications
of what that yes may mean for you?



Prayer

Father, you are disturbed by the misery you witness every day. None of it escapes your notice, but, honestly, a lot of it escapes mine. Forgive me for my complacency, my apathy, my ignorance. Help me to see the world through your eyes. I’m scared to surrender all to you; I’m not entirely sure I can trust you with what matters most to me. But I want to know you; I want to love like you love, and hurt the way you hurt. I want to live the adventure of risking it all for you. I am saying yes to you right now, no matter what that yes entails.

Getting Started

- Begin to pray daily for God to open your eyes to new realities about yourself and your world.
- Ask a friend to read this book with you. You'll benefit far more by discussing it, chapter by chapter, with a reading partner.
- Listen to Kay's message to you at *www.kaywarren.com*.