

WEEK SIX

A LIFE OF SURRENDER

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.”

PROVERBS 3:5–6 NIV

The word surrender brings to mind many pictures, perhaps a white flag waving atop a surrounded military fort or a troop of outnumbered soldiers with their hands raised. We typically associate surrender with defeat. However, when it comes to life with Christ, the act of giving up control to Him is actually the beginning of our freedom. A life of surrender requires trust, and that trust is developed in the context of relationship. Would you allow a stranger to care for your children or watch over your home while you were on vacation? Of course not. Trust is earned, so until you have an understanding of a person's character, it isn't possible to trust him or her with something of value.

In order to surrender our lives to God, we must believe that He is good and is worthy of our trust. For many of us, that is easier said than done, and it is often due to doubt or disappointment from past experiences with people or churches. Our hearts can become weary and hardened by such things, but there is hope! We can begin to trust Jesus when we understand what He did for us. He left heaven and came to earth; He felt hunger, hurt, and rejection; He was beaten and crucified, and three days later rose from the grave—all so He could prove His love, earn our trust, and be in relationship with us.

Write Psalm 119:68

If you want to get to know God better, you will need to do what you would do when getting to know a friend: spend time with Him. This doesn't have to look a certain way. The key is to invite Him into your life. The Lord will reveal Himself to you as you do things that feed your spirit, like studying the Word, seeking Him in prayer, and building relationships with like-minded friends.

“For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.”

ISAIAH 55:9

Sometimes, God’s way of doing things doesn’t make sense to us. His way of thinking is much different—and much greater—than ours. Though we don’t always understand, when we make the choice to trust and obey Him, we set ourselves up for success.

Picture this: You’re going to take a road trip to see the Grand Canyon, and you plan to drive your car—but you don’t have a smartphone, map, or compass for the trip. Your best friend not only has all of these items, but also knows every pothole, gas station, and restaurant along the way. Wouldn’t you want him to come along? What if he has a single condition for joining you: to be in the driver’s seat? There’s the dilemma. It’s hard to hand over the steering wheel because it involves giving up control. However, as a believer, the only way you can live the abundant life that God has for you is to fully surrender your life to Him and adopt His way of doing things.

*Ask Yourself: What areas of my life have I not surrendered to God?
Am I having a hard time trusting Him with those areas?*

AN EPIC JOURNEY

God wants to make our lives smoother by being Lord over everything. It is only when He is in control that we can walk in spiritual order. Anything we decide to hold on to becomes our responsibility to maintain. However, if we surrender every area of our lives to Him, He will partner with us on this journey and bring us safely to our final destination.

Write Luke 14:33

Man was created to be a worshipper and we will worship what we value most. In Exodus 20:3-4, God told the Israelites not to place any gods before Him or make any kind of idol. We may think of an idol as a carved statue, but an idol is also anything we desire more than God. If we want to walk in spiritual order, God must be first.

Materialism is a common culprit of misplaced priorities in our lives. When material things become most important to us, we find ourselves consumed by pressure and stress as we strive to gain more. Materialism gives the enemy an opening to attack our minds and emotions with incessant thoughts about what we have and what we want. The more we have, the more it demands our attention.

Read the following verses. What happens when we give things and money the place of priority in our lives?

MATTHEW 13:22

REVELATION 3:17

1 TIMOTHY 6:9–10

Ask yourself: Is there anything in my life that is more important than God?

Read the following verses: Psalm 62:10, Hebrews 13:5 and Luke 12:22–31. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how these passages apply to your life.

“Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need.”

MATTHEW 6:33

RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS

Did you know that relationships can come between you and God? It can be relationships with family, friends, co-workers, pastors, church members, neighbors, and even enemies. But whether good or bad, they can become more important to us than our relationship with the Lord.

Read Genesis 22:1–18. In this passage, Abraham faces an inconceivable situation. He has waited decades for a big promise to be fulfilled— the promise that he would be the father of nations. In Abraham’s old age, God blesses him with a son, Isaac. The child grows and so does Abraham’s joy. And then, one day, God tells Abraham to sacrifice the boy on an altar. Surely Abraham had questions. He loved his son very much— but he also trusted God.

The Bible tells us Abraham rose early the next morning to obey God’s command. In other words, he did not try to delay or find a way out. There was no hesitation in his conduct. In a great act of faith, he placed Isaac on the altar and would have followed through with the command if an angel had not stopped him. God saw Abraham’s willingness to obey, provided an alternate sacrifice, and blessed him with a family heritage unlike any other. His descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the shores.

We often insist on having our own way in relationships, not realizing that our attempts to control them may be detrimental. Not only are our relationships unlikely to flourish when we try to control them, they can take our focus off of God and take inappropriate priority in our lives. As was true for Abraham, God’s blessing can flow into our relationships if we readily surrender them to Him.

Ask Yourself: Do I have a relationship that has come between God and me?

Another principle that will allow us to have healthy relationships is staying free of offense. Our most difficult relationships to surrender may be the ones in which there is offense and unforgiveness. Consider this: What if you gave up your “right to be right” and instead chose to be unoffended, no matter the situation?

Six Ways to Stay Unoffended

1. Take the lowest seat.

Consider everyone more important than yourself. Put the needs of others before your own. Strive to please God, not yourself or others. Be a servant, and look to honor others rather than yourself.

2. Always remain grateful.

Gratitude changes our attitude by keeping us aware of God's provision and blessings.

3. Give others their freedom.

Don't try to control others. People need the freedom to make their own decisions. Sometimes they make good ones; sometimes they make bad ones. Either way, it is their decision.

4. Make decisions that promote life in others.

When someone offends you, it may seem natural to ignore that person or pay back wrong, but Jesus says there is a better way. Maintain a positive attitude toward them. Choose to speak words of life over them and do things that build them up. How they respond is up to them.

5. Trust God to bring justice when an offense comes.

Vengeance belongs to the Lord. Think about what it would be like to pay for your own sin, rather than Jesus taking care of it. None of us want what we really deserve. We'd rather have grace!

6. Dedicate time to the Lord.

Refresh your spirit in prayer, Bible study, and fellowship with Jesus. God's presence brings change.

I SURRENDER ALL

There are many areas of our lives that we need to surrender to God. These include plans, goals, pleasures, ambitions, hurts, the future, the past, selfishness, ego, sin, pride, physical appearance, lust, anger, fear, and health. We must also surrender unforgiveness, because holding on to an offense is essentially saying that we have a right to withhold grace from someone. This type of pride is an idol that will cause a wedge between God and us.

Surrendering does not mean we no longer have goals or ambitions. On the contrary, God is the One who puts desires in our hearts. When we surrender everything to Him, we will find that His path to the fulfillment of those desires is better than we could have imagined on our own. We simply have to submit to God's will and join with Him in His plans for us.

Ask Yourself: Have I surrendered my past, present, and future to God? Do I trust that His way is better than my own?

Journal: *Below is a space for you to write what you're learning, thoughts on this week's topic, or what you feel God is leading you to do.*