

Surrender

By Wendy Wood



To surrender means to give oneself up to the power of another, to yield or submit to the rule of another person. When you think of an army surrendering to a conquering king or nation, it is a giving up of fighting against a greater power. The surrendering army is done fighting. They know their position is a losing one and they have no hope of turning things around. They submit to the conquering nation and its way and rules for the land. To be a follower of Christ is to surrender one's life to His Kingship as the Master and Lord of your life. It is to say, "my way of living is a losing position and my only hope is to surrender my will to God's and live His way".

Luke 14:25-27 lays out what Jesus considered to be the cost of following Him.

"Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple."

The cost of being a follower of Jesus was to be willing to give up everything - every relationship, every way of life, every personal desire - to follow Jesus' way. Jesus talks about hating the people we typically love the most, our family members. Jesus is making a comparison as to how much we are called to love Him. God's word often uses comparisons to show how much greater value is in God's love and future glory. For example, in 2 Corinthians 4:17 the trials of this life are called "light momentary afflictions" compared to the "eternal weight of glory" that is coming in eternal life with God. God, through Paul, is not claiming that the trials of this life are meaningless or that they don't really hurt. He's not saying a lifetime of suffering is no big deal. What He is saying is that compared to how much glory we receive in heaven as God's children is so much better than we could ever imagine that when we compare what suffering is in this life, it really is a short time and actually worth the pain! In Luke 14, Jesus is saying that compared to how much we love Him and serve Him, it should seem like we "hate" our families. The love we have for Jesus should be THAT great!

In this same passage, Jesus was welcoming people to die to their way of life to find life in Him. Jesus wasn't describing a "camp high" experience or a Sunday morning Christianity that is often found in American churches. Jesus said that to follow Him was to bear a cross and that meant death of self. It was a surrender to what God's plan and purpose for life would be. There was no holding back a favorite treasure or relationship that would be on the disciples' terms. Jesus required full submission to His way. It was all or nothing.

Romans 12:1 says, ***"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship"***. "A living sacrifice" is another way of saying "surrender". A living sacrifice is a daily, moment to moment choice to die to self and to live to please and honor God. There is a point in time when "surrender" to God's way is wrought in our hearts as God shines His light into our dark hearts and marks us as His own. This is justification. But from then on, surrender is a moment to moment decision to sacrifice selfish desires for those desires that God puts within us and grows in us. A living sacrifice has to make the decision to stay on the altar and continually die. A surrendered soul must continually say, "not my will but God's will be done".

Daily surrender might include:

Continuing to be patient when you are sinned against AGAIN

Holding your tongue rather than lashing out

Asking for forgiveness from someone who has also sinned against you

Making a costly financial gift

Assuming the best of someone who has wronged you in the past

Daily surrender also includes long term plans:

Giving up a lucrative career for ministry

Choosing to stay off social media entirely to fill your mind with God's word

Being content in your marital status

Enduring a difficult boss to honor God in your work

Loving a wayward child

Helen Roseavear was a missionary doctor in the Congo in the 1950s and 1960s. Here is her practical description of what it means to be a living sacrifice.

To be a living sacrifice will involve all my time. God wants me to live every minute for Him in accordance with His will and purpose... No time can be considered my own, or as "off-duty" or "free"...

To be a living sacrifice will involve all my possessions. All should be available to God for the furtherance of His kingdom. My money is His... He has the right to direct the spending of each penny... I must consider that I own nothing. All is God's, and what I have, I have on trust from Him, to be used as He wishes.

To be a living sacrifice will involve all of myself. My will and my emotions, my health and vitality, my thinking and activities all are to be available to God, to be employed as He chooses, to reveal Himself to others. Should He see that someone would be helped to know Him through my being ill, I accept ill health and weakness. All rights are His - to direct my living so that He can most clearly reveal Himself through me. God has the right, then, to choose my job, and where I work, to choose my companions and my friends.

To be a living sacrifice will involve all my love. I relinquish the right to choose whom I will love and how, giving the Lord the right to choose for me. Whether I have a live partner or not is wholly His to decide, and I accept gladly His best will for my life. I must bring all the areas of my affections to the Lord for His control, for here, above all else, I need to sacrifice my right to choose for myself. I need to be so utterly God's that He can use

*me or hide me, as He chooses, as an arrow in His hand or in His quiver.
I will ask no questions: I relinquish all rights to Him who desires
my supreme good. He knows best.”*

There are some counselees who start off and are excited to “go through the process” of counseling. They are excited to dive deeper in the Word and learn about their hearts and idols. You may see quick change as they start to spend time in the word and put effort into taking their thoughts captive. But, they may be like the seeds that fell on the rocky soil or the soil covered in weeds that sprouted up and showed quick growth, but as the counseling weeks continue, they seem to stop growing and become disenchanted with “just being in the Word”. It’s as if they thought “doing counseling” would be the avenue to get what they want. They may ask “when is this going to get practical?” or “yes, but when are we going to get to my real issues?” Surrender to God is not really what they want. They want their agenda to be fulfilled. They may be expecting that God will bless their desires and will if they are “faithful” to study His Word. This person is not taking up their cross. Rather, they are trying to manipulate God into giving them what they want.

Do you have a counselee who is trying to figure out how to get God to give them what they want?

Maybe it’s the counselee who has an angry spouse and just wants God to give them a “biblical spouse”. Maybe your counselee is willing to respond with truth in love until their spouse doesn’t change. Then they think God’s way doesn’t work.

Maybe it’s the single counselee who just wants God to give them a “biblical marriage”. Maybe your counselee is willing to date biblically until God doesn’t provide the right spouse in a timely fashion and then they feel justified in masturbation or pornography.

Maybe it’s the counselee with chronic pain or illness who just wants to be healthy in order to serve God. This person may begin with praise and thanksgiving to God as they begin to study His word, but as the pain persists, they grow weary with God not answering their prayers and they seek help elsewhere.

Maybe it’s the parents of an ill child who want God to glorify Himself through healing. This counselee may be “trusting” God and praising Him for who He is until the illness remains or the child dies. The early response was believing God would grant their desires in their way.

Being a follower of God means we commit to an unknown future. We do not know what God's plan is for our marriage, children, careers, health, relationships, or any other aspect of life. Surrendering to God means we trust Him with all the unknowns. We do not know the future, but we know what God has revealed about Himself! We know He is a God of steadfast love and faithfulness. We know He is a God of compassion, mercy, and grace. We know that God is present with us and is for us. We know God is just and will judge righteously. This is truly a God we can give our future to with confidence!

This blog was written after reading "Surrender" by Nancy Leigh DeMoss. You can find excerpts and a brief summary of her book [here](#). I highly recommend her book.