

Connections

May 2026

Surrender All, Not Some by Jessica B., *Desiring God*

Some prayers tick like time bombs. We ask for contentment and humility while squinting, afraid we might just get what we've asked for. We are superstitious and fearful, worried that if we surrender all, God will send us to a remote island dressed like John the Baptist. Or worse, we'll wallow in our mundane circumstances, wearing a badge of contentment while our longings are pushed aside like junk mail.

When we pray the hard prayers dutifully, we do so to a malicious God of our own making. This God looks less like a loving Father and more like the bully in a snowball fight with a storehouse of icy artillery. But God is no boogeyman. If we want to join the choir of believers who authentically sing, "I surrender all," we must pray to the God of the Scriptures and no less. We will hand over the keys to the metaphorical car of our dreams only when we trust Jesus is worthy of them (and so much more).

Glory Hurts

I knelt around a blazing bonfire at summer camp as a twelve-year-old and said yes to my Father's question, "Will you go anywhere for me?" Little did I know that, decades later, I would find myself weeping in an isolated mountain range like a prisoner of war. Missions was gloriously romantic on the page, but the power outages, water shortages, stomach viruses, monsoon mold, and repeated question, "Why isn't your language as good as your husband's?" made me mad.

Hadn't I, like Peter, stepped off the boat into uncharted territory in zealous obedience? Yet the waves were rougher than I expected. My surrender had always felt safe in God's hands until my heart broke on the mission field of my dreams.

Many of us have lain on the altar in surrender only to see the knife. We ask for more of Jesus, forgetting that "being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" is painful, even death, to the old man in us (2 Corinthians 3:18). Like Eustace in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, we have layers and layers of dragon skin that require cutting. Christ says like Aslan, "You will have to let me undress you." Desperate to be rid of his scales, Eustace submits. Yet he later recalls, "The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt" (474-75).

Faith calculates as crazy to the world, but those who know God's fatherly heart and tender pursuit see zero risk to our souls. We were created to rest and work and play in the good intentions of our God, believing he cares for us deeply, even when the boat rocks (Mark 4:35-41). We are never pioneers in laying down our lives, but copycats of Christ's example. Naked on a tree, Jesus surrendered to his last breath, never once doubting his Father's good intentions.

If God wasn't amputating the rebellious parts of myself in these mountains, Psalm 84:10 might be just another verse, not my morning sacrifice and meditation at night while the street dogs howl. A day in his courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I do not blend into the fabric of this village as I had hoped, and the mountains here will never clap their hands for my labors, but they will continue to applaud the One who chiseled their every cleft and peak (Isaiah 55:12). I'm a happy doorkeeper in his house, even as my tears continue to salt these hills.

Saints Surrender

Imagine what surrender could mean for you. What anxiety tightens your jaw and knots your neck? What question do you pose to ChatGPT a dozen different ways? Imagine shedding the scales of perfectionism, people-pleasing, or control. What if the pride that keeps our cards close and real friends distant were yanked like old shingles from a leaky roof? In time, surrender becomes life with no shadows, windows open, the breeze in your lungs. Held by the nail-pierced hands that cradle the cosmos, we have no more to hide.

It doesn't require much imagination when we're "surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1). Watch the surrender of those in your small group, church, and wider world, whose lives boast like the Israelites (after slavery, wilderness, and war), "Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass" (Joshua 21:45).

Corrie ten Boom quipped after years in concentration camps, "If God sends us on stony paths, he provides strong shoes." In similar surrender, Dr. Helen Roseveare, who labored amid Congo's political unrest and suffered rape, beatings, and imprisonment, reflected,

Could I see that God wanted to transform my life from a somewhat ugly, useless branch to an arrow, a tool usable in His hands, for the furtherance of His purposes? . . . To be thus transformed, was I willing — am I still willing — for the whittling, sandpapering, stripping processes necessary in my Christian life? (*Living Sacrifice*, 26)

Observe the surrender of our prolific hymnwriter and prayer instructor, the hors d'oeuvre who whets our a petite for King Jesus, the "man after [God's] own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14). David champions God's character no matter the giant, flying spear, or moral failure. Even as a boy, David believes what all Israel forgets: that when anyone belittles God, their boasts end as food for the birds (1 Samuel 17:45-47). When his own son wants him dead, David doesn't lift his sword but exalts the Lord as his shield and glory (Psalm 3:3). You'd think feigning madness and drooling in Abimelech's courts wouldn't inspire a praise chorus

about God's nearness, provision, and deliverance, but that's where David's heart files (Psalm 34).

Even after grievous sin that few recover from, David knows that if the Lord washes him, he'll be whiter than snow (Psalm 51:7). At the end of his life, David tells all who wonder if surrender is safe, "I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread" (Psalm 37:25).

God Works

Surrender isn't a downward staircase into a dank basement

but an open field where "the sun of righteousness" releases us "like calves from the stall" (Malachi 4:2). God is not surprised that we rise and fall on repeat in our attempts to surrender. He masters our affections patiently, over the long haul; he ripens our trust like a peach in the summer sun. His promise "to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20) is not for an elite class, but for everyone who looks to Jesus, "the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross" (Hebrews 12:2).



Time to slip on your sandals, shorts and cotton tees as the heat climbs. Grab a girlfriend and a cold drink and attend one of our Women's Summer Bible Studies. Choose from one of the many topical studies of six to eight weeks length, call the leader to register, and get excited for an amazing small group experience! Connect with other women you don't know, while immersing yourself in a topic of your personal interest!

Jesus and Women by Kristi McLelland

Tuesdays, 6:00 - 8:00pm | May 20 - July 1 | 14803 Dobbs Ave Bakersfield, CA 93314

Leader: Stacy Dangelo (661) 444-1457 | Cost of Book: \$24.99

Imagine walking the dusty roads of Galilee with Jesus of Nazareth—braving jostling crowds just to touch the edge of His cloak and hear Him say, "Take heart, daughter, your faith has healed you." This encouragement from the lips of Jesus surely comforted a hurting woman's soul thousands of years ago. And it offers a similar gospel hope to you today too. Join biblical culturalist Kristi McLelland as she takes you back to Jesus' first-century world, explaining the historical and cultural climate of his day to help you know him more clearly. This seven-session study is a thoughtful look at several of Jesus' interactions with women in the Bible that will fuel your worship of the living God.

Ten Women of the Bible: One by One They Changed the World by Max Lucado

Wednesdays, 9:00 - 11:00am | May 20 - July 1 | 14121 Boon Way, Bakersfield, CA 93311

Leader: Lori Hardy (661) 599-3158 | Cost of Book: \$9.74 (Amazon)

"Ten Women of the Bible" highlights the lives of women from Scripture with lessons about faith, struggle, and God's grace. Max Lucado focuses on their doubts, fears, mistakes, and courage that make them relatable to women now. God works through ordinary people. Lucado encourages readers to trust God, embrace their worth, and see how their own story can be part of a bigger purpose.

I Am Bible Study Seven Powerful Claims of Christ by Rose Visual Bible studies Author Titus O'Bryant

Thursdays, 9:15 - 11:15am | May 21 - June 25 | 9508 Spokane Ave, Bakersfield, CA 93312

Leaders: Donna Dungan and Eva Fankhauser (661) 578-0661 | Cost of Book: \$15

Childcare Available

In the Gospel of John, Jesus uses "I Am" statements that tell His listeners exactly who He is: the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Gate, the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection and the Life, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and the True Vine. This six-session study examines Jesus' extraordinary claims and shows how Jesus provides, protects, guides, saves and gives everything we need to grow in spiritual maturity.

Relaxed by Megan Fate Marshman

Fridays, 6:00 - 7:30am | May 22 - July 10 (Off July 3) | RiverLakes Church

Leader: Rachel Ortiz | Cost of Book: No cost (unless you would like to buy the materials for yourself \$18 + \$ 14 = \$32 for book and workbook, but not necessary to attend class)

Jesus was never in a hurry to be anywhere other than where he was, trusting and obeying His Father. Could the same be said of us? We long to know peace, purpose, and contentment, but life stresses, the world's discouragements, and our own striving for growth get in the way. Join Bible teacher and spiritual leader Megan Fate Marshman for a seven-session Bible study on exchanging self-reliance for the trusting and relaxed posture seen in Jesus. Along the way, you'll learn spiritual growth practices for your daily life that remove your own striving and center you on the One who was never worried about a thing.

We will start by watching a video (30-40 minutes) and then we will go out on a prayer walk around campus. Bring your Bible (digital or physical), walking shoes, and water. After our walk we will huddle up and have a group discussion/prayer time. You are more than welcome to bring your little ones with or without strollers. The more the merrier.