



Surrender: The Heart God Controls (Group Leader Guide)

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As You Begin

The whole idea of surrendering to someone else's control runs counter to the prevailing mind set of our culture—we don't want anyone telling us what to do—we want to be in control of our own lives! But paradoxically, we are never truly free until we have fully surrendered ourselves to the Word and will of God.

The thought of delving into this topic may cause some apprehension in your heart, but as you engage in this study, you will encounter a wise, loving, merciful Lord who can be trusted.

The more fully you relinquish yourself to Him, the more you will discover that He has your best interests at heart and that His will truly is "good, acceptable, and perfect" (see Romans 12:2).

May your deepest heart's desire become that of the Savior who lifted His eyes heavenward, even as He faced the cross, and said, "I delight to do Your will, my God."

Tips for Leaders

Open and close each meeting by praying together. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you through the Word, to help you be real with one another, and to bring about any needed change in each heart.

Seek to lead by example. You can serve your group best by modeling a surrendered heart—by being quick to say, Yes, Lord, and encouraging others to do the same. Some of the questions in this discussion guide call for a level of transparency and openness that many people are not accustomed to. Encourage the members of your group to respect each other's privacy by not discussing others' contributions outside of this group. Remind them that God is patient and gracious with us as He conforms us to the image of His Son, and that we need to extend the same patience and grace toward each other.

This discussion guide is designed to be used in a variety of contexts—from small groups to Sunday school classes. Feel free to direct the discussion based on the size of your group and the allotted time. Avoid rabbit trails into secondary or unrelated issues. However, don't feel pressured to get through all the questions each time you meet.

Depending on your available time and the size and openness of your group, you may end up only discussing two or three questions. The goal is to grow together in your understanding of God and His ways and to experience individually and as a group the reality of the message of this book.

Encourage each member to read the chapter and to complete the “Making It Personal” section found at the end of most chapters, prior to your group meeting. If possible, they should also preview and be prepared to discuss the questions found in this discussion guide.

Keep your group centered on the truth of the gospel: We are all sinners in need of a Savior. Help your members steer clear of self-righteous responses to the confessions of others in the group and from condemnation about their own performance by pointing them to the One who is both the author and perfecter of their faith (Hebrews 12:2).

Introduction

Opening Prayer

Turn to the prayer from The Valley of Vision, found at the beginning of Surrender. Start your time together by reading this wonderful expression of trust in the will of God. You may choose to read as a group in unison, or have one or more read aloud while others listen.

Getting Started

Sometimes we dig our heels in about things that appear foolish in hindsight. Describe a situation where you held out for something that you realized in retrospect was misguided or didn't make sense. What finally convinced you to “surrender” your position?

Going Deeper

1. The Introduction distinguishes between our initial surrender to Christ as our Lord and Savior (or conversion), and a lifetime of surrender (or consecration), as we learn to live out the implications of that initial surrender. Briefly describe the setting and circumstances of your conversion —your initial surrender to Christ.

2. “The fully surrendered life is intended to be—and can be—the norm for every one of God’s children” (p. 25). Do you agree with this statement? From your perspective, is the “fully surrendered life” the “norm” for most of the believers you know?
3. Review and discuss the four reasons suggested in this chapter for why professing Christians may have areas of their life that are “unsurrendered” to God (pp. 22–24). Which of those four scenarios do you think are most common among “believers” that you have observed? Have several in the group share an illustration out of their own life of one of those scenarios.
4. “Do you fear what a lifestyle of full surrender might cost you?” (p. 25). What fears might people have about fully surrendering every aspect of their lives to God? What fears have you experienced at one point or another in relation to full surrender?
5. “The truth is that resistance is far more costly than surrender” (p. 26). What might we stand to lose by holding out on God?
6. Share out of your personal experience, either the cost of resisting God on some particular point, or the blessing you have experienced through relinquishing control of some area of your life to the Lord.
7. In many ways, surrender is an act of trust. You drop your defenses and trust your opponent will honor the terms of your surrender. The pardon given by President Marcos of the Philippines to Hiroo Onoda is a picture of the pardon we are given by God when we repent. What do you know about the heart and ways of God that should make it easier to trust Him and relinquish control to Him?

A Word of Encouragement

As you read the Introduction and considered your own spiritual condition, your heart may have been pricked with the thought that perhaps you have never been truly regenerated (born again). You may have made a profession of faith; others may think of you as a “good Christian.” But you have never “waved the white flag” and surrendered your life to Christ.

Don’t try to talk yourself out of (or let anyone else talk you out of!) any conviction that God may be bringing to your heart. Seek out your pastor or another mature Christian for care and counsel. It may be that the tug of conviction you are experiencing is the doorway to the great joy of true salvation! This could be a God-designed moment for you to repent of your sins and receive His forgiveness —please don’t delay this important conversation!

For Next Time

“Could it be that there are some issues on which you are reserving the right to control your own life?” (p. 22). As you read and discussed the Introduction to Surrender, God may have brought to mind specific areas in your life that are not fully surrendered to His control. Record these areas in a personal journal. Ask God to help you see these issues as He does and express your desire for every area of your life to be under His control.

Grace Note

In the life of a believer, the Holy Spirit brings conviction, not condemnation. Conviction is sweet because it is accompanied by the promise of grace to change. Condemnation brings on guilt (usually heaped on by the Enemy) that we will never measure up to God’s demands. Without being born again and trusting in God’s power to change us, that would be true. Don’t let condemnation rob you of the joy of this journey toward change!

Remember: “Our God abounds in mercy and grace; He is willing to offer a full and complete pardon to those who lay down their weapons” (p. 26).

Chapter One: The Battle for Control

Getting Started

Has anyone in your group ever served in combat or had a friend or relative who did? Describe your experience of being in battle (or what you have heard from your loved one). What did you learn about how to wage and win a battle?

Going Deeper

1. What evidences do you see of nature being “surrendered” to God’s control? Why do you think God gives human beings the freedom to submit to or to resist His control? What limitations has He placed on that freedom, both here and now, as well as ultimately?
2. Did you relate to any of the fictitious scenarios at the beginning of this chapter (pp. 31–33)? What is one example of a recurring battle you have experienced in your Christian life? How could that struggle actually be a battle for control?
3. “Count on it—the very points on which you refuse to surrender will become ‘enemies’ that rule over you” (p. 42). What are some practical examples of how this principle could take place in someone’s life?

4. What is one area of your life that has ended up ruling you as a “tyrant” (either in the past or in the present) because of a lack of surrender to God?

5. Lynda’s testimony (pp. 40–44) illustrates the truth of Romans 6:16—“Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?”

Share one particular area of your life where you have experienced (or currently experience) a sense of being enslaved to sin or ungodly desires. How could surrender to God set you free from that slavery?

6. Take time to pray for each other in relation to any specific battles for control or surrender issues that have been shared.

For Next Time

With regard to any “unsurrendered” areas you have identified in your life, reflect on the effects of being enslaved to these areas. List the bad fruits of being submitted to these desires, so you can see more clearly the cost of your lack of surrender.

Grace Note

Surrender brings peace and a foretaste of the “Paradise restored” that every believer will enjoy one day in heaven. You can begin to enjoy those benefits now by saying “yes” to God. As the familiar song says, “There’s no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.”

Chapter Two: The Terms of Christian Surrender

Getting Started

Has anyone in your group ever visited Appomattox? If so, what did you learn during your visit? What struck you about the illustration in this chapter of Robert E. Lee’s surrender at Appomattox (pp. 49–52)? What parallels did you see to Christian surrender?

Lee’s surrender was a “decisive moment” that changed the course of the Civil War and assured its ultimate outcome. What does that illustrate about the importance of a “decisive moment” of surrender in our relationship with God?

Going Deeper

1. “The person who has never acknowledged Christ’s right to rule over his life has no basis for assurance of salvation. . . . Surrender to the will of God is a mark of the truly converted” (p. 54).

What part does surrender have in true Christian conversion? What concerns does this raise about our message and methods as we seek to share the gospel with unbelievers?

2. How would you define or describe unconditional surrender? What does that mean for a believer? What might conditional surrender look like? Why is it unacceptable for a child of God?

3. How would you distinguish between an initial point of surrender to Christ, and an ongoing, lifelong process of surrender in a believer’s life? What is the connection between the two? Why are both important? How can an initial, unconditional surrender to the lordship of Christ simplify subsequent points of surrender along the way? (Think of the illustration of the dieter on p. 58!)

4. Share a situation you have faced recently that required you to freshly affirm and live out your surrender to the will of God. It may have been a choice to obey God’s Word or the prompting of His Spirit on a simple, every day matter, or it may have been a more major point of surrender.

5. Why might some consider John and Betty Stam’s surrender and sacrifice to be a net loss? How would you evaluate their surrender from an eternal perspective?

6. Why might the concept of “signing a blank contract” for your life and letting God fill in the details seem risky or frightening to some? Why is it really not risky at all? What do we stand to lose by unconditional surrender to God? What do we stand to gain?

7. Discuss any reservations or fears you have about signing your life over to God, or share what you have learned or experienced that has relieved your fears of that kind of surrender.

For Next Time

If you haven’t already done so, write out a prayer expressing your heart’s intent to be wholly surrendered to Christ. Then date and sign your “contract” with the Lord.

Grace Note

There are three wonderful prayers from saints of old included in this chapter (pp. 60–62). If time permits, read these aloud in your group. If not, read them aloud during your personal time with the Lord over the next week.

Chapter Three: A Hole in the Air

Getting Started

Has anyone in your group traveled abroad or spent time ministering internationally? If so, did you observe anything in the lives of the believers in that part of the world that particularly impressed you or struck you as different than American Christianity?

Going Deeper

1. Discuss the difference between commitment and surrender as Josef Tson explains it (pp. 70–71). Which term do you think better characterizes contemporary Christianity in the West? What are the implications of adopting one perspective or the other?
2. Discuss the difference (as Josef Tson and Webster's Dictionary explain it) between a servant and a slave. Which term would the majority of believers in our culture be more comfortable using to describe our relationship to Christ? Why?
3. What are the implications of the fact in the Greek Bible one never serves God but rather one slaves to God (pp. 71–72)?
4. How does the ceremony of joyful slavery found in Exodus 21 illustrate a believer's relationship to God? How was this Old Testament picture fulfilled in Christ?
5. What are some of the "requirements" of being Christ's bond slave that you have found difficult at one time or another?
6. What are some of the privileges, joys, and blessings you have experienced as a result of being His bond slave?
7. Close your time by reading the words of David Livingstone (p. 67) and Mary of Nazareth (p. 81). Then pray together and express your desire to make these words your own.

For Next Time

A man or a woman with “a hole in the ear” is easily identifiable to others. Are there any relationships or circumstances in which you are tempted to, in effect, “cover up” that hole? Prayerfully consider those situations and ask the Holy Spirit to show you the motivations and cravings of your heart that compel such a reaction—and then after asking His forgiveness, ask for the grace to change.

Grace Note

As you consider this idea of being a slave to Christ, meditate on the truths found in Psalm 40. Jesus fulfilled this prophetic statement through His atoning death; He is the first and foremost bond slave to God. He fulfilled the prophetic picture of Exodus 21 in His joyful submission to a gracious and loving Master!

Chapter Four: The Whole of Our Lives

Getting Started

Probably few if any in your group can identify with the passion for communism described at the beginning of this chapter. But you have probably seen that kind of fanatical devotion to some cause or endeavor (other than the Kingdom of God). What have you observed and what were the results?

Going Deeper

1. How did the young Communist’s letter to his fiancée impress you? How does his level of devotion to the Communist cause compare to the average Christian’s devotion to Christ and His Kingdom? How does it compare to your own values and priorities?
2. What were the characteristics of a burnt offering in the Jewish worship system? How did Christ fulfill that Old Testament picture? How does that picture help us understand what it means to be a true follower of Jesus Christ? How is the sacrifice of our lives different than the Old Testament burnt offerings?
3. How does marriage illustrate the twofold aspect of surrender (an initial point, followed by an ongoing, lifetime process)?
4. Between the different members of your group, share some specific sacrifices you can recall God asking you to make—ranging from “twenty-five-cent pieces” to perhaps much larger sacrifices. Would you agree that, regardless of their size, “the sacrifices God asks of us are never pointless” (p. 96)?

5. Have you ever felt that something God was asking of you seemed unreasonable? What perspective does Romans 12:1 give to those sacrifices? Why do you think Paul used the Greek word *logikos* to describe the offering up of ourselves to God as a living sacrifice? How does Christ's sacrifice for us affect the way we view our sacrifices for Him?

6. What might it mean for you this week to offer yourself as a "living sacrifice" to God?

For Next Time

Reread Helen Roseveare's description of what it means to be a living sacrifice (pp. 97–98). Then try writing your own description of what it means to be a living sacrifice.

Grace Note

Don't forget the accent and emphasis of Romans 12:1 . . . "in view of God's mercy" (NIV). That's where the Holy Spirit started as He inspired the apostle Paul to write and that is where we are to start. If you are wrestling with discouragement or fear, remember that surrender is always done "in view of God's mercy."

Chapter Five: Facing Our Fears

Getting Started

This chapter describes the "going but not knowing" aspect of surrender in Abraham's life. Some in your group have also probably undertaken such a "journey"—stepping out in faith without knowing precisely what lay ahead. Have one or more individuals share their story.

Going Deeper

1. Review the four fears addressed in this chapter in relation to surrendering everything to God. Is it wrong to have those fears?

2. Share an instance in which you experienced one of these fears in relation something God was asking you to do. Discuss as a group what promise(s) of God could have counteracted your fear in that situation.

3. What is the role of faith in helping us face our natural fears regarding the will of God? How can we grow in our faith? Why is it so important that we know the promises and the character of God if we're going to trust Him?

4. In addition to "going not knowing," there's also the test of "waiting not receiving." Abraham experienced both. "For more than twenty-five years, [Abraham] didn't have a shred of visible evidence that God's promises would be fulfilled" (pp. 109–10). Is there some matter on which you have been waiting on the Lord for what seems like a very long time? What has helped you to continue trusting God? What additional encouragement can others in the group offer from God's Word?

5. The word Hebrew means "stranger" or "alien." In what sense is every child of God a "Hebrew"? Can you think of a verse or passage in the New Testament that supports that concept?

6. "Trust or tyranny. That is the option. Trust the promises of God—which will free you to live joyfully under His loving Lordship—or live under the tyranny of that which you will not surrender" (p. 115). Encourage one or more in your group to share how failing to trust the promises of God caused them to resist surrender on a specific matter, and resulted in living under the tyranny of that very thing.

7. "Isn't that the heart of the matter for every child of God? Can you trust me?" (p.121). Close your meeting with a time of prayer. Thank God for His character and His promises; express your trust in Him; ask Him to give you grace to face your fears and to fully surrender to Him any areas of life where you may have been afraid to say, "Yes, Lord."

For Next Time

Look for several verses that address the fear(s) you most related to in this chapter. You may want to post a visible reminder of these verses in your kitchen, on your bathroom mirror, on your dashboard, or your screensaver—wherever you are likely to encounter this truth consistently in your daily life.

Grace Note

Our loving God is not unmindful of our fears, tests, and trials. The loving reassurance He extended to Abram echoes throughout time to us today: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward" (Genesis 15:1). Whatever we surrender is more than matched by the exceedingly great reward of knowing God!

Chapter Six: Living the Surrendered Life

Getting Started

“It’s one thing to have an emotional experience at a Christian gathering where you are inspired and challenged to surrender control of everything to God. It’s another matter to live out that surrender once the emotion of the moment has passed—when the bus gets home from the conference . . . when you lose your job and the bills keep coming . . . when you find out you’re expecting your fifth child in seven years . . . when your mate is diagnosed with a terminal illness” (pp. 126–27). Describe such an occasion or experience in your life.

Going Deeper

Talk through each of the ten categories in this chapter (based on Frances Havergal’s hymn “Take My Life and Let it Be”). (If time does not permit you to go through all of them, as a group select several to review.) What does it mean for each of these areas of our lives to be consecrated to God? Share any specific questions you found particularly challenging or convicting as you read this chapter.

- My Life
- My Time
- My Body
- My Tongue
- My Possessions
- My Mind
- My Will
- My Affections
- My Relationships
- Myself

For Next Time

Select one category from this chapter that you feel prompted to focus on between now and your next meeting. Each day, review the questions in that category that will help remind you of areas where you need a deeper surrender to the Lord. If you haven’t walked through the exercise recommended on p. 139, take time to do that this week.

Grace Note

Meditate on Frances Havergal's quote at the beginning of this chapter: "Full consecration may be in one sense the act of a moment and in another the work of a lifetime. It must be complete to be real, and yet—if real—it is always incomplete.

Consecration is a point of rest and yet a perpetual progression." This thought should both motivate and encourage us to press on in the matter of full surrender to God.

Chapter Seven: The Pattern

Getting Started

Does anyone in your group enjoy reading Christian biographies? If so, whose life story has been especially meaningful to you? What inspired you about that person's life?

Going Deeper

1. How is Jesus the perfect Pattern of what it means to live a fully surrendered life:

- In His pre-incarnate existence (i.e., prior to coming to earth in human form)?
- In His incarnation (coming to earth)?
- In His wilderness temptation?
- In His earthly ministry?
- In Gethsemane?
- In His crucifixion?
- Throughout eternity?

2. For Jesus, surrender to God's will meant suffering at times. Why do you think Jesus was able, not only to do His Father's will, but to delight in doing the will of God? How can we learn to delight to obey God?

3. Describe a recent occasion when your natural desires were contrary to the will of God, and you chose to bow the head in surrender to the will of God.

4. What is an issue you are currently facing in which you need to bow your head? Pray for each other in relation to those needed points of surrender.

For Next Time

Throughout the week ahead, ask God to make you alert to opportunities to “bow your head” in submission to His will.

Grace Note

Jesus’ surrender to His Father’s spans from eternity past, through His earthly life and ministry, and continues all the way to Calvary and beyond for all eternity. Though we as redeemed sinners will fail many tests on this earth, we have a Savior who stands at the right hand of the Father interceding for us at this moment and every time we are tempted to resist the will of God. Put your trust in His triumphs on your behalf as you bow your head in glad surrender to His loving control.

Chapter Eight: Yes, Lord!

Getting Started

Can you think of a time when you surrendered to God by faith, contrary to your feelings, and some time later, God allowed you to see the positive results of that choice—either in your life or someone else’s life?

Giving Thanks!

Undoubtedly you have some specific testimonies of the Holy Spirit’s work among the members of your group as a result of this study—beyond what may already have been shared in previous meetings. Provide an opportunity for each individual to express gratitude for what God has done during your time together. You may want to share about:

- A change in your thinking about or your heart attitude toward the will of God
- An area of your life where you were resisting God but have now surrendered to His control
- One or more areas of your life where you have been challenged to say, Yes, Lord!
- A specific passage of Scripture God has used to bring you to a place of greater surrender
- The ways the bad fruit of tyranny has been replaced by the good fruit of trust
- The prayer you wrote out as a “contract” with the Lord
- Any new insights into the character, heart, and ways of God

A Final Project

Think of one or more individuals whose walk with God has inspired you to a life of greater surrender. Write a note to one or more of those people. Share what you have observed in their life and how their surrender to God has influenced your life. Remember

the encouragement from Proverbs 11:25—“The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.”

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