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9. Surrender Your Will

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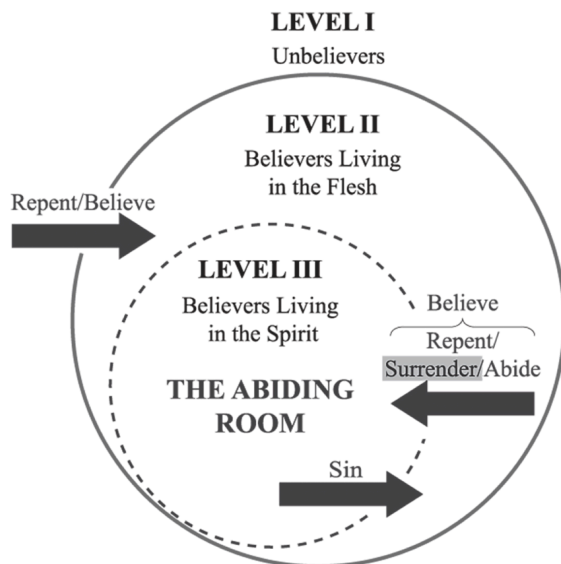
9. Surrender Your Will

This Bible study lesson is based on Chapter 10 of *The Abiding Room*, a book by Kevin Seacat.

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“Not my will, but yours, be done” (Luke 22:42 NIV).

As we begin the chapters on surrender, the word “Surrender” is shaded in the diagram:



We now know the key to being filled with the Holy Spirit is abiding in Jesus. This means the reason so few Christians are consistently experiencing the abiding, Spirit-filled life is because they aren't abiding in Jesus. Why is that? I believe the primary reason is simply very few are aware abiding exists and what it entails. Hopefully, the information presented on these pages will help enlighten and inspire many in that regard.

First, it's important to explore what prevents us from abiding. I think two primary barriers exist for most of us: (1) living for ourselves in the flesh, and (2) sin. Before we can truly abide in Jesus, we must address the effect the flesh and sin have on our lives. The remedy for living in the flesh is surrender. After that, we'll consider the remedy for sin, which is repentance.

Before we proceed, let's briefly look at the words we'll be using. While most things in our spiritual lives exist in varying degrees, in the next few lessons we'll use absolute and direct terms to make the point about the importance of the abiding, Spirit-filled life. The assumption is that experiencing the full, consistent blessings of the abiding, Spirit-filled life explained previously is only possible if we are obedient to the instruction on surrender and repentance in the upcoming lessons.

In some cases, we'll be speaking as if the area being addressed is either all or nothing. We will say things along the lines of, "If you want to receive the full benefits, you must pay the full cost." The hope is that, in our making direct and absolute statements, you will experience an increase in the quality of your life and, ultimately, greater eternal rewards.

Therefore, keep in mind we are using emphatic words for only one purpose: to experience more of the abiding, Spirit-filled life now, and in anticipation of the day when Jesus says to you, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (see Matthew 25:23 NIV).

In addition, it's worth noting we'll use the term "surrender" to refer to the surrender of our will to God's will after our salvation. Surrender is the ongoing, repeated, daily act of surrendering our will to the Father's will. Surrender may be known by other names, such as abandon, release, relinquish, or yield. All these terms imply the giving up of ourselves and our rights to Jesus and trusting in His indwelling Holy Spirit to bring about the desires of our hearts in His time and His way.

What might the absolute surrender of your whole heart look like? Let's explore the possibilities.

The Ultimate Surrendered Life

The ultimate example of a surrendered life, of course, is Jesus. Perhaps as amazing as the fact that Jesus lived a perfect life, is that He left a perfect life. He surrendered His rights and left His perfect life in heaven to be nailed to a cross for us on earth. He did not consider Himself first. In fact, He did not consider Himself at all.

The Bible describes Jesus' surrender to God the Father this way: "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:3-11 NIV).

As we humble ourselves and surrender our will to the Father's will as Jesus did, our hearts come into alignment with His plans for our lives. Then we can fully know the joy of living out the purpose for which God created us.

Remember, God wants you to experience Him in fullness even in the seemingly minor moments of the day. These minor moments are the pathway to the major plan He laid out for you since the time He chose to create you!

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10 NIV).

God's Way or Your Way?

Too often my plans, strategies, and tactics take me off course and bear little fruit. This occurs because of my independence from God rather than the perfect will of God playing out as a result of my surrender and dependence on Jesus.

In many ways, our ongoing spiritual battle is the opposite of a physical battle. In physical battles, you throw all your effort into pummeling the enemy into submission until they surrender and the battle ends. In contrast, to win the spiritual struggle between our flesh and the Spirit, we must begin with surrender. Victory in the spiritual battle within us is assured when we surrender at the outset.

As you follow the example of surrender Jesus modeled, and surrender your rights to self, you can trust the indwelling Holy Spirit to do the work in and through you. Giving up your independent ways sets you on the path leading to victory over your

flesh.

Surrender Your Comfort

The fullest blessings of God follow the person living in wholehearted surrender. God sees our hearts as surrendered when they are emptied of our self-centered plans and in a state of ready obedience to His will. Surrender often means leaving the comfortable present circumstances we know for the unknown future God has planned for us.

Let's look at two biblical examples of people whose surrender meant leaving the life they knew to follow God wherever He led them. The first example is Abraham in the Old Testament, and the second is Peter and the disciples in the New Testament.

The earthly blessing Abraham and the disciples received was the result of abandoning their agendas and accepting God's invitation to follow His plan for their lives. While we don't know exactly what they gave up, we do know they couldn't have experienced the blessings God had in store for them if they had clung tightly to the safety of their present circumstances. These principles of the blessing of surrender are still true in your life today.

We might not even know Abraham's name (which was Abram at the time of God's invitation) if he hadn't left behind the life he knew for the unknown life God invited him into. Because Abraham trusted God, he became the father of the Jewish nation:

"The Lord had said to Abram, 'Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing'" (Genesis 12:1-2 NIV).

"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going" (Hebrews 11:8 NIV).

It's also unlikely we would know the disciples' names if they hadn't left behind the lives they knew for the unknown plans God had for them. In a dialogue found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the apostle Peter expressed the disciples' surrender to Jesus in this way: "And Peter said, 'See, we have left our homes and followed you'" (Luke 18:28 NIV).

Jesus responded to Peter with this affirmation of their surrender and the blessings that follow it: “And he said to them, ‘Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life’” (Luke 18:29–30 NIV).

Surrender Daily

What might surrender look like in your life? Is it possible Jesus is the Lord of your life but not the Lord of your today? Is it possible you turn to Him for the big, insurmountable obstacles that occur occasionally in your life but don't give Him all the little things that are occurring every moment of the day?

Surrender can look as simple as beginning each day with heartfelt attitudes and prayers, such as:

- *Lord, this day is yours. I'm going to trust you for everything today.*
- *Lord, not my will, but your will be done today.*
- *Lord, I have no idea what this day looks like, but you do, so I'm giving it to you and trusting you for it.*
- *Lord, I surrender control of this day to you. Take it and use me for your glory.*
- *Lord, show me how to be your hands and feet today.*

An attitude of surrender sets your heart and mind on trusting God to guide you through the upcoming day. A surrendered heart keeps your chocolate milk stirred up. What a wonderful blessing it is to live with a heart fully surrendered to and trusting in Jesus!

Fasting from Self

When we're in the flesh, we're very likely motivated by our desire to be esteemed, noticed, admired, and respected by others. Sometimes we long to be the center of attention. With the immense influence of social media today, many sources encourage us to put the focus on ourselves in an attempt to portray ourselves in a positive light. This can become habitual.

As you may know, when the Bible speaks of fasting, it means going without something for a period of time in order to focus on God, to pray about something in particular, and to listen to and hear from God. Try “Fasting from Self.” For three days, try to fast from self by doing as little as possible to draw attention to yourself in both writing and conversation.

Here’s what it involves:

- Don’t tell anyone you’re taking the challenge.
- For three days—if possible, including the weekend when you’re more likely to be around friends and family—don’t talk about yourself.
- Participate in conversations, but don’t express your own opinions.
- If the conversation turns to you, respond briefly, and, without being too obvious, turn it back to others.
- If someone expresses an opinion that’s the opposite of yours, hold back from expressing yours.
- Humble yourself and be genuinely interested in anyone and any topic. Don’t redirect the conversation to something that interests you, even if you are bored and you completely disagree with what’s being discussed.
- If you find yourself in a discussion that seems to have no end in sight, or participating in something that is completely disinteresting to you, stay engaged and enjoy it.
- Last, take a break from posting anything on social media.

If you feel led to try this, you may be surprised at how many times you want to express an opinion or draw attention to yourself. It can be a challenge to yield yourself to such a seemingly easy task, but it may reveal something that will bless your obedience in practicing surrender.

Surrender to God’s Plan for You

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV).

Although this beloved message from God is directed to the Israelites as a people group, Jeremiah 29:11 describes God’s heart for all His children. God has a unique plan for you too. And if you look in the rearview mirror of your life, you can probably

see how God has blessed you when you listened to His directions in the past. You celebrate when you think about these times of trusting Him.

But you may also remember choices you've made to go your own way that brought regret. Everyone can look back and see both types of experiences. Take a moment to recall some choices in your past, both good and bad.

You undoubtedly also remember times when the Holy Spirit gave you whispers, hints, and nudges, telling you which way to go. Sometimes you chose to listen to them, and sometimes you chose to ignore them. These experiences remind you of the value of listening to the Spirit's guidance.

When you completely yield your life to God and abide in Jesus, you can hear the Holy Spirit more clearly as He guides you in the next direction you should go. The view out the front window is not always clear. That's the point. You have to trust God for where He is taking you and listen to instructions for the next turn. As a follower of Jesus, when you come to a decision point in your life, you can have confidence that the Holy Spirit living within you will guide you in the right direction and help you make the right choice. In those moments, it's reassuring to know other names for the Holy Spirit are Helper and Comforter!

God created you to live a surrendered life so you can enjoy intimacy with Him. As you increasingly surrender your life to God, you'll experience the plan He has intended for you from the beginning. It's a life filled with joy, peace, and the power to live for His glory.

ABIDING TRUTH: To experience the fullest blessings of the Spirit-filled life, surrender your will to God's will.

Reflection Question

What did Abraham need to surrender to God? What did the disciples need to surrender to God? How can you move forward with this concept of surrendering? What would it look like to daily surrender to his will?

Write down your answer to the box below ("Your Response or Question") and send it to us. It will appear in Messages.