

Give It Up

Christ Centered series week #3

by Bill Aumack

We are in week three of our Christ-centered series. Who remembers what we talked about in week one? **Prayer.**

All right, we talked about the importance of prayer. Hopefully, you all are keeping a prayer list and writing that down, whether that's on your phone, on a piece of paper, or in a notebook—whatever works for you.

Last week, Pastor Chris talked about **loving through Jesus' eyes**—loving like Jesus does, looking at others through Jesus' eyes, and really loving each other.

And this week, we're talking about **Give It Up.**

"Give up what?" That's a good question. We're gonna talk a little bit about that. The Bible tells us we're supposed to give it all up, right? The Bible uses words like, "be a slave to Jesus," "surrender everything to Jesus," "live for Jesus," and "turn it all over to Him."

What does that mean? How do we do that?

Now, let's be honest—nobody wants to be a slave, right? Anybody here want to be a slave? *Yeah, no hands go up.*

So, what do we do? How do we do that? Because these words like "surrender" and "slave" are generally not positive images. We think of an army surrendering to another army and becoming prisoners of war. Yay, that sounds like fun, right?

Nobody wants to do that. Nobody wants to be a slave, having to work for somebody else and not have their freedom, right?

So why does the Bible use these words? Why would God ask us to do such things? Is He some sort of macho guy who needs masses of people to bow down and worship Him so He can feel good about Himself?

I don't think so. I don't think so. Hopefully, by the end of this, you won't think so either.

Names of People Who Surrendered to God

Now, let's do a little something here. If I asked you to throw out some names of people in the Bible who surrendered to God, who do you have?

Moses. David. Noah.

Okay, now you guys did pretty good because when I asked the pastor that, he went, "Jesus." I have to admit I caught him off guard when I did that—he didn't get the introduction you guys got.

But we come up with a couple of names. What if I asked you about people who were faithful and obedient? Who do you have then?

Everybody, right? The prophets, almost everybody in the Old Testament, everybody that's a good example for us in the Bible falls into this category, right? The prophets, David, Job, Moses, Noah, the disciples, Paul—I mean, everybody.

Surrendering, Faithfulness, and Obedience

What if I told you that **obedience** and **faithfulness** are highly related to surrendering? In fact, they're almost the same thing.

Most of us haven't thought of it that way before, but it's really true because surrendering is the **foundation of obedience and faithfulness**.

If you don't surrender, you can't be fully faithful and obedient. It's just that simple. You have to surrender to be obedient and faithful.

Okay, hopefully, you've got your sermon notes out: **Surrendering is the foundation of faithfulness and obedience.**

Surrendering and Obedience

Have you ever noticed that kids sometimes find it easier to obey their parents than adults do? Not that kids always obey, but it's generally easier for kids. Why?

Because they've surrendered to their parents. Their parents are in charge, and they're not, right?

Sometimes they push back—that's kids being kids—but generally, they realize they're not in charge. Mom and Dad are in charge. They've surrendered.

But when you get to be a young adult, you've not surrendered anymore.

"Hey, Mom and Dad, I'm an adult now. I can do my own thing. I don't have to listen to you anymore."

Anybody heard that before? *Not in your families, but your neighbors' families, right?*

And it's harder for us as adults to surrender to our parents because we want to be in charge. We haven't surrendered anymore. We're not obedient anymore.

Galatians 2:19–20

Okay, open your Bibles with me to **Galatians chapter 2**.

As you remember, Galatians is written by Paul to the people who lived in Galatia. Paul had gone to Galatia, brought the truth to them, set up churches, and now, a few years later, they've fallen into error. So, he's writing them these letters.

These letters were written about 52, 53, maybe 54 AD—around that time frame—just to give you some idea. Let's look and see what Paul says.

Galatians 2:19–20:

"For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Now this is Paul. Whenever you read Paul's stuff, you've kind of got to stop and back up and go, "What did he just say?"

Okay, let's back up and see exactly what he just said. Let's get rid of some of the words.

What does it say in the first sentence? *"I've died to the law."* Why? *"So I might live for God."*

"I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."

"I live by faith in the Son of God."

Who is Paul living for? **Paul? No.**

Who is Paul living for? **God.**

Right? He has surrendered to God, and he says, *"I now live for God."*

The Message Paraphrase

Let's read the same two verses out of **The Message**. I know The Message is a paraphrase, but I think it's instructive to read it from this version.

It says:

"What actually took place is this: I tried keeping the rules and working my head off to please God, and it didn't work. So I quit being a law man so that I could be God's man. Christ's life showed me how and enabled me to do it. I identified myself completely with him. Indeed, I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not mine, but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I'm not going back on that."

Makes it a little easier to understand, I think.

Paul surrendered. He gave it all up for God. Paul tried to be obedient. He tried to keep the rules. But it didn't work. He tried to be so righteous, impress everybody else, and impress God with his righteousness. But it didn't work.

So he **surrendered**.

In order to be obedient, in order to be faithful, you have to surrender.

The Surrendered Life Serves Without Question

So, what does the surrendered life look like? **The surrendered life serves without question.**

There are so many stories in the Bible we could look at for this. But let's go to this one: **Genesis chapter 6.**

Genesis—easy to find, right there at the front of the Bible. Genesis chapter 6.

We're not gonna read all the verses, but this is the story of God deciding He's going to destroy the world with the flood and asking Noah to build a boat.

God says, *"Hey, the world's evil all the time. I'm sorry I made it. I'm going to destroy the world with a flood."*

But Noah finds favor in the eyes of the Lord. So God tells him how to build the boat: *"Build it so many cubits long, so many cubits wide, and so many cubits high. Put a window in and do all this stuff."*

Now, I suspect that God gave Noah more instructions than we have recorded in Genesis. That's still pretty vague, right? I mean, I could make it that long and that wide, and I could make it look like a triangle or a pyramid—that might not be the best shape for a boat, right?

So, I think God probably gave him more instructions that we don't have recorded. But God gives him all these instructions.

Now, look at **Genesis 6:22.**

It says: *"Noah did everything just as God commanded him."*

Did Noah say, *"You know, God, this ark thing's okay, but what if we had a master bedroom? And a sauna? Lord, I need my workout room. Gotta bring some weights so I can keep in shape. We're gonna be on this boat a long time. Lord, one window's not enough. Do you know how smelly it's going to get in here with all these animals? We need more windows, Lord."*

No, Noah didn't say any of that.

Noah could have gone back on a lot of things. He could have been kind of like Moses, you know, when God calls Moses, and Moses says, *“I stutter. I can’t go talk to Pharaoh.”*

Noah could have said, *“I’m not a boat builder. Why don’t you contact one of the guys down by the sea? They know how to build boats. What do I know about building boats?”*

But a **surrendered life serves without question.**

Noah knew God’s voice. He recognized that voice, and when he heard that voice, he obeyed—because he had surrendered his life.

Additional Examples of Surrender

Here are a couple of other examples that aren’t in your notes. You may want to write these down and look at them later.

1. Elijah and Elisha

We have **Elijah** passing the mantle to **Elisha**. Remember, the prophet Elijah comes first—they’re in alphabetical order, so it’s easier to remember.

It’s time for Elijah to pass the mantle on to the next prophet, and God says, *“Go find Elisha.”*

So Elijah goes and finds Elisha. Elisha’s working in the field, and Elijah walks up to him, puts his cloak on him, and doesn’t say anything.

Elisha says, *“Let me go say goodbye to my parents, and I’ll be right with you. I don’t want to just disappear out of the field—they’ll think I got stolen by crazy lunatics or something!”*

Elisha didn’t ask, *“Why me?”* He didn’t hesitate. He just followed—because he had surrendered his life.

(By the way, that story is in **1 Kings 19** if you’re interested in looking it up later.)

2. Isaiah's Vision

In **Isaiah 6**, Isaiah has a vision and is taken into heaven, into the throne room.

Isaiah's like, *"I don't belong here!"* He's scared and worried for his life.

An angel comes over, puts a coal on him, and says, *"Hey, you're okay, you're okay."*

Then God says, *"We don't have anybody to send. Who are we going to send?"*

And what does Isaiah say? *"Send me."*

Where are we going? Don't know. What are we going to do? Don't know. How long is it going to take? Don't know.

But when God says, *"Who are we going to send?"* Isaiah says, *"Send me. I will go."*

Isaiah had surrendered his life, and because of that, it was easy to be obedient.

3. Jesus' Example

Lastly, in **John 4:34**, Jesus says:

"My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work."

Who has Jesus surrendered to? **God the Father.**

He says, *"My food is just doing what He asked me to do. I don't argue about it. I don't question it. I don't have any issues with it. Let me just finish His work."*

Why Surrender?

So, the real question now becomes: *What advantages are there to surrendering?*

I mean, besides the fact that we get to be obedient, but *why should we do this?*

I have **three little things** I want to talk about real quick.

A. A Surrendered Life Leads to a Deeper Relationship with God

A surrendered life leads to a **deeper relationship with God.**

Turn with me to **Matthew 12:50.**

Matthew 12:50 says:

"Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

If you have a red-letter Bible, what color is that text? **Red.** Who's speaking? **Jesus.**

A surrendered life leads to a deeper relationship with God. When we do the will of the Father, we become part of the **family of God.**

Have you ever heard people say, *"The family of God"*?

Well, why would I want to be part of the family of God? I'm already part of the family of me, right? I've got my own family. Why do I want to be part of the family of God?

Well, being part of the family of God has some pretty cool perks. One of them being **eternal life in heaven with God, who loves you.**

But there are other things that go with that. I'm not going to tell you what they are—you've got to figure that out for yourself. We don't have time today to go through all of it.

B. A Surrendered Life Helps Us Keep God's Law in Our Hearts

A surrendered life helps us **keep God's law in our hearts.**

Turn with me to **Psalms 40:8.**

Psalms 40:8 says:

"I desire to do Your will, my God; Your law is within my heart."

When God shows you His will, you need to keep it in your heart—and act on it.

It doesn't do you any good to say, *"Yeah, God, I heard You,"* and then just continue down the same path, right?

Acting on God's Will

When you put God's will in your heart, it means you're **acting on it**.

When we say we love somebody, we show our love. Love is a verb. It comes from our heart, not just our head.

He says, *"Don't put God's will in your head. Put it in your heart. Act on it. Do something about it."*

When you put God's will in your heart, it becomes a factor in how you live. You won't make plans without God.

Right? We're not going to jump up and say, *"Today I'm going to do this,"* unless we've talked about it with God first.

C. A Surrendered Life is an Everyday Life Experience

A surrendered life is an **everyday life experience**.

Turn with me to **James 4:15**.

I love the book of James—it's one of my favorite books of the Bible. James doesn't beat around the bush. He just throws it out there and says it like it is.

James 4:15 says:

"Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'"

Before this verse, James talks about how foolish we look sometimes when we say, *"I'm going to do this, and I'm going to do that."*

Remember the parable about the farmer who gets a big crop and doesn't know what to do with it all? He says, *"I know what I'll do. I'll build bigger barns and store my crops so that I can eat, drink, and be merry."*

Did he consult God? **No**.

What happens? His life was required of him.

See, a surrendered life is an **everyday experience**.

Letting God Guide Our Lives

Here's an example:

You might say, *"God, I hate my job. I want to quit my job and find a different job."*

Maybe God will say, *"Yeah, that's a good idea."*

Or maybe God will say, *"No, I need you to stay where you are because I need you to talk to somebody there. You're the only hope they see."*

We don't know, right?

But you've got to talk to God to figure those things out. You can't just make plans on your own.

The Surrendered Life and Hard Times

Lastly, **the surrendered life allows us to follow God in all of our life experiences**—even when times are tough.

You know how we like to say, *"God is good all the time."*

Yeah, when God is good, it's good.

But what about when you look around and you're like, *"Where did God go? What's happening now? I'm sinking. I'm drowning. I'm overwhelmed. I'm overcome. Where did God go?"*

It's harder then, isn't it?

But when we've surrendered our lives to God, we can take the **long view**.

Even if a few years are tough here, they pale in comparison to eternity.

Thinking About Eternity

Have you ever tried to wrap your mind around eternity? Let's do a little thought experiment.

Imagine a steel ball bearing in space, the size of Earth.

Every million years, a tiny bird comes along and brushes its wing against the steel ball—just once.

How long is it going to take to wear down that steel ball?

When that steel ball wears down to nothing, eternity has just begun.

Yeah, you're going to be up tonight thinking about that. Sorry.

It melts your mind. We don't even have a concept of what that means.

But when we're thinking in terms of the long term, a few years here—even if your entire life is horrible for all 77 years of it—what's 77 years compared to eternity?

Examples of Surrender in Hard Times

Let's look at some examples of surrender in hard times.

David and Bathsheba

Do you remember the story of David when he goes after Bathsheba? He does something he's not supposed to do.

Then, to cover it up, he gets her husband killed in war by sending him to the front lines and pulling everyone else back.

David tries to hide what he did, and they have a baby.

The prophet Nathan shows up and says, *"Uh-uh, David, you can't do that."*

God says, *"You can't do that, David."*

David repents, but God says, *"There are consequences to this. The boy will die."*

For seven days, David mourns. He sits in ashes and refuses to eat. His attendants are beside themselves—they don't know what to do.

After seven days, the boy dies.

The attendants are afraid to tell David. They think, *“If he was this inconsolable when the boy was alive, what’s he going to do now that the boy is dead?”*

But David figures it out and says, *“Did the boy die?”*

They answer, *“Yes.”*

David gets up, cleans himself, sits down, and says, *“Bring me some food to eat.”*

His attendants are confused. They ask, *“What gives? You were crazy when the boy was alive, but now that he’s died, you’re okay?”*

David says, *“When the boy was alive, there was hope that God might change His mind. But now, the only hope is that someday I will go to where my boy is.”*

There are consequences to our actions.

But having a surrendered life allows us to **move forward and accept God’s will—even when it’s hard.**

Job’s Statement

What about Job’s statement?

Naked I came into the world, and naked I shall return. The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane

What about Jesus’ example in the Garden of Gethsemane?

He prays:

“Lord, this is a lot. God, this is a lot. Take this from me. But if there’s no other way, I will do Your will.”

If we’re expected to live a life as a follower of Christ, we must first surrender to Him.

Without surrender, He's not our Lord and Savior. He must **rule in your heart** for there to be surrender.

Reflection

Have you surrendered your whole life to God?

A lot of times, we surrender *most* of it.

But we say, *"Over here, this one little thing? This is just for me. You can have all of this, but I just want to keep this."*

Is that surrender?

How would your spouse feel if you said, *"I'm not going to go out with any more women—except this one over here."*

Is that going to fly? *No.*

Yeah, fly away.

Is there something you're hanging on to?

Challenge

Our challenge is to **surrender your will to God** and begin by praying for **His will to be done**.

Now, this is going to change the way you pray.

Most of us pray to **change God's will**.

We come to God with our list:

"God, Sister Mary is sick. Make her well. God, Grandma is sick. Make her well. God, my relationship with my spouse is bad. Please fix that."

These may be good requests. But all we're doing is asking God to change reality.

What if we prayed like this:

"God, Grandma's sick. Lord, I would love to see Grandma get better. Please be present in Grandma's life. Let her feel Your presence. And if it's Your will, please heal her."

That's a different prayer.

We're not treating God like a vending machine—insert prayer, punch the button, get results.

We're praying for God's will.

Closing Prayer

Let's pray:

*"Heavenly Father, help us to be in tune with Your will. Help us to surrender everything to You, Lord. It's hard—it's so hard—because we have things we want to do, things that appeal to us. But help us to look through Your eyes. Help us to love the people in this world and to recognize what matters: the other souls here and whether they will spend eternity with You or not.

"Help us to be willing to give it all up to do Your will and to make sure more people are in heaven.

"Our goal should be to make heaven crowded.

"Be with us this week, Lord. Give us the courage to do this. Give us the courage to ask You to help us do this.

"Nothing is impossible with You.

"Be with us now. In Jesus' name, amen."