

INTRODUCTION

During these series of lessons entitled “S2W–Surrender to Win” we are talking about the absolute necessity of surrendering to God. In many life situations you should never surrender. For instance, don’t surrender to temptation; don’t surrender to discouragement and doubt. Don’t surrender to despair and despondency. But when it comes to your relationship with God, surrender is the only way to win.

History provides many good examples of unconditional surrender. At the end of WWII, Germany was surrounded by the Allied forces from all sides. A few days after Adolph Hitler committed suicide, the Germans surrendered to the Allies.

Their surrender documents declared: The German Command agrees for all German forces to lay down their arms and to surrender unconditionally. All hostilities on land, on sea, or in the air by German forces to cease at 0800 hrs. British Double Summer Time on Saturday 5 May 1945. The German command to carry out at once, and without argument or comment, all further orders that will be issued by the Allied Powers on any subject.

Three days later President Harry Truman issued the following proclamation. In a time when some voices are trying to remove God from our public life, we need to be reminded of Truman’s words:

The Allied armies, through sacrifice and devotion and with God’s help, have wrung from Germany a final and unconditional surrender. The western world has been freed of the evil forces which for five years and longer have imprisoned the bodies and broken the lives of millions upon millions of free-born men. They have violated their churches, destroyed their homes, corrupted their children, and murdered their loved ones. Our Armies of Liberation have restored freedom to these suffering peoples, whose spirit and will the oppressors could never enslave. For the triumph of spirit and of arms which we have won, it is fitting that we, as a nation, give thanks to Almighty God, who has strengthened us and given us the victory. Now, therefore, I, Harry S. Truman, President of the United States of America, do hereby appoint Sunday, May 13, 1945 to be a day of prayer. I call upon the people of the United States to unite in offering joyful thanks to God for the victory we have won and to pray that He will support us to the end of our present struggle and guide us into the way of peace.

The German forces laid down their arms and said, “What ever the Allies tell us to do, we’ll do it.” That’s what unconditional surrender is. If you want to have a living, dynamic relationship with God, you must do the same thing. Surrender is another word to describe making Jesus the Lord of your life. You must say, “Lord, I give up. I lay down my rights, my abilities, and my control. Whatever you tell me to do, I will do it.”

Our theme passage for this series is Proverbs 3. In this lesson we are going to consider how important it is for you to surrender your trust to God. The Bible says in Proverbs 3:5-6: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”

God really does want you to succeed. He wants you to be a real winner. But the world has a different definition of success and what it means to be a winner. In God’s estimation, success is not spelled M-O-N-E-Y. It is not spelled F-A-M-E. According to the Bible success (winning) is finding and doing God’s Will. This passage of scripture contains the secret of attaining success. If you want to be a winner, you must understand the meaning of every key word or phrase in this passage:

1. “Trust...” TRUST IS LEARNED BEHAVIOR

It is not our tendency to trust. When most people see a sign that says, “Wet paint” they usually touch it to see if the sign is true. We have to learn to trust. Most children grow up trusting their parents because they learn they feed us and clothe us. Then if children aren’t careful, they start trusting other adults, and that can lead to all kinds of problems. Our parents have to teach us not to talk to strangers.

Whenever you drive across a bridge, you trust that bridge because you have learned most bridges built on public highways are designed to support the weight of your vehicle. When you walked into this building for the first time, you looked at the construction of the seat, and you made a decision that it would support your weight, so you sat down. You trusted it. Then, after the first time, you didn’t even look at it. What would you have done if the first time you entered this room, the seat had been made of paper? You would have made an evaluation that it would not support your weight, so you wouldn’t trust it.

We make trust evaluations all the time. How many of you have ever seen someone bungee jump off a bridge? That’s trust! A bungee jumper has to evaluate the strength of the bungee cord, and trust it. They have to evaluate the skill of the guy who measures the cord so it snaps before they hit bottom, and trust him.

You can watch bungee jumping, and even know people who have done it. But you don’t really *trust* it until you let them strap you in and you fall off that bridge. Bungee jumping, like all trust, doesn’t come naturally. It is a learned behavior.

The only way to approach God is by faith. The Bible says, “Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6)

Like bungee jumping, you can believe there is a God and you can even believe He can make life better and take people to heaven when they die. But for many people, God is like watching people bungee jump. You know it’s done, but you’ve never done it. Trust is when you place yourself in God’s hands.

2. “...in the Lord...” THE OBJECT OF YOUR TRUST IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE AMOUNT OF YOUR TRUST

As I said earlier, we express trust every day of our lives. When you mail a letter, you are putting

your trust in the postal system to deliver it. When you write a check, you are putting your trust in your bank to provide the funds. The key component in this verse is the *object* of your trust—the Lord. It’s possible to have a strong faith in the wrong thing.

I recall reading about a terrible train wreck that occurred in the 20th century. A passenger train collided with a freight train outside Philadelphia. When officials arrived at the scene they found many casualties. The engineer of the passenger train was fatally injured. When they reached him in the crumbled engine car, he had crawled over and grabbed a sheet of paper that contained his directions. His last words were, “Somebody gave me the wrong directions.”

I wonder how many people will face eternity saying the same thing? “Somebody gave me the wrong directions.”

You often hear the statement, it doesn’t matter *what* you believe, as long as you’re sincere. Not really. You can be sincerely wrong. In other words, you can have a great faith in the wrong thing, and it won’t help you. But a little faith in the right object of your trust can make all the difference.

Jesus said, “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you.” (Luke 17:6-7)

A mustard seed is a tiny thing—but in God’s economy, it’s more valuable than a diamond because a diamond is a dead rock, and a mustard seed contains life. You plant it, and it will grow and produce mustard, and more mustard seeds. It’s better to have an ounce of living faith in a living God than to have a ton of faith in something dead.

3. “...with all your heart...” GOD EXPECTS YOUR TOTAL SURRENDER

You can trust God, but if your trust is experimental or reluctant, it will do you little good. You must be willing to trust God with *all* your heart. There are no half-hearted bungee jumpers! A bungee jumper is totally committed. God says, “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” (Jeremiah 29:13)

If you’re having difficulty fully trusting in God, it may be that you don’t love Him. You can’t trust someone if you don’t love them. If a stranger came up to me and said, “I want to ask you to do something for me” I would say, “Well, what is it you want me to do?” Then, what if they said, “I’m going to tell you what it is. Just trust me. Tell me you’ll do it first, and then I’ll tell you what it is.” I’d say, “You’re crazy. I don’t trust you because I don’t know you.”

But if my wife, Cindy, came to me and said, “David will you do something for me.” My response is going to be, “Sure, darling, what is it?” If she says, “Never mind, just trust me.” I would say, “Okay.” I know she loves me, and I know she would never ask me to do anything that would be harmful or bad for me.

Infatuation doesn’t produce trust. There’s no trust from love at first sight. Trust is built as love grows and develops. And as you spend time with God and get to know Him, you come to love

Him more dearly and you’re able to trust Him more confidently.

Years ago, I read a formula that develops this thought: To know Him is to love Him; to love Him is to trust Him; to trust Him is to obey him; to obey God is to be a winner!

4. “...lean not on your own understanding;” ATTEMPTS TO FIGURE OUT PUZZLING CIRCUMSTANCES PRODUCE WORRY INSTEAD OF TRUST

This verse doesn’t tell us to totally lay aside our intelligence. The whole book of Proverbs is about how to gain wisdom. Proverbs also teaches there is great value in common sense—which makes common sense very uncommon. We need to have what people used to call “horse sense.” Because horse sense is actually stable thinking.

This verse addresses the tendency people have to want to figure out everything before they trust it. Missouri is called the “show me” state because they have an inbred attitude of skepticism that demands proof. The attitude of some people is, “I’ll believe it when I see it.” God never promises you’ll see Him before you trust Him. He is invisible.

If you try to reduce everything about God down to your five senses, then you fall into the trap of thinking you must understand the *reason* for everything that happens to you. On a calm Sunday morning two weeks ago, thousands of people were suddenly drowned by the tidal waves that crashed into the shores along the Indian Ocean. One newscaster called it a “disaster of Biblical proportions.” You may wonder why he would use “Biblical” to describe this event. It’s because disasters like this aren’t new. The Bible contains stories of the death of thousands of people from famine, earthquakes and floods.

If you rely only on your understanding, you’ll spend most of your time in frustrated worry instead of trusting God. People often ask, “Why do these things happen?” Part of the answer is that we live in a messed-up world. We’re the ones who messed it up. But to try to blame God or accuse God is a dead-end argument—literally. That’s what the entire book of Job is about. Job and his friends spend 37 chapters trying to figure out *why* there is human suffering. Finally God breaks in and basically asks them, “Who are you to think you’re smart enough figure out what’s going on. Were you around when I created this universe?”

If you think you have to understand everything, you will fall into the trap of worry instead of trust. There is a mystery about God and His ways we can never totally comprehend. That’s what makes Him God. That’s why He says, “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:9)

If God wanted to, He could lift the roof off this building right now and say, “Boo!” And if He did, there would be a lot more people here next Sunday, but that’s not faith—that’s sight. And everyone coming next week would want Him to do it again, or something better.

5. “...in all your ways acknowledge him...” SURRENDER IS ACKNOWLEDGING THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS OVER EVERY AREA OF YOUR LIFE

When you trust in the Lord with all your heart, you’ll also bring Him into every area of your life. If Jesus is your Lord, you can’t cram Him into a box for six days of the week, and then bring Him out for an hour or two on Sunday.

The word “acknowledge” basically means to “recognize the presence.” The opposite of “acknowledge” would be “to ignore.” Imagine you decided to spend tomorrow with me, and I took you with me wherever I went. When I arrive at my office, I would introduce you to my assistant—in other words, I would acknowledge you. When staff meeting begins, I would introduce you to all the people present. If I ignored you, someone might say, “Who is that with you?” It would be rude of me not to introduce you to everyone I meet.

In the same way, when Jesus is your Lord, you will recognize His presence with you at all times. His presence will affect the way you live and the way you talk. You will want to introduce His presence to others.

Let me give you one example. Like many of you, before I eat, I always bow and pray. This is the not the extent of my prayer life, but what I’m doing is pausing to acknowledge God. I am acknowledging His presence with me and I’m acknowledging that He has supplied the food, and the money to buy the food. In the same way, the Bible says we must acknowledge His Lordship over us in every area. Are you acknowledging Jesus in your family life? Your private life? Your work life? Your leisure life?

The Apostle Paul was a great example of man who totally surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus. There was a time when Paul was the enemy of Christ. He even had people arrested and put to death because they were followers of Jesus. But when Paul met Jesus, He raised the white flag of surrender and said, “What would you have me do, Lord?”

That’s why Paul could write these powerful words of surrender: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

Like Paul, most of us have an “I” problem. In our human nature, we all want “I” to be in charge. We want our Ego, the big “I” to be in control. So, Paul recognized that “I” was crucified—dead. And instead of “I” living, Christ was living in and through Paul.

Just as Jesus went to the cross and was crucified for us, so we must also recognize that in order for Him to be our Lord, the big “I” must be put to death. And we must say like Paul, “I die daily.”

6. “...he will make your paths straight.” GOD’S PATHWAY LEADS STRAIGHT TO BLESSING

In Matthew 7, Jesus said there are two basic pathways in this life. There is a broad superhighway leading to destruction, and many people are on it. But there is also a narrow, straight pathway leading to life eternal and only a few are on it. Which pathway are you on? Within that pathway to eternal life, God also has a special pathway for you. He has a plan for your life. You may be

afraid to surrender to the Lord because you think when you do God is going to say, “Okay, I’ve got you now! I’m going to make your life miserable!” But God’s pathway for you doesn’t lead to misery; it leads to joy and blessing. The Bible says, “You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.” (Psalm 16:11)

My friend, Jack Taylor, used to joke and say as a teenager he was afraid to surrender to God because he was certain the moment He gave in to the Lord God would make him marry a cross-eyed fat girl and send him to Africa to be a missionary.

Remember, God loves you and He wants the very best for you. God’s will is what you would choose for yourself if you had enough sense to choose it. The Lord has a plan for the plumber just like He does for the preacher. He calls some to be electricians just as he calls some to be evangelists. His plan is for some to be mechanics and for others to be missionaries. And if God has called you to be a plumber, and you end up being a preacher, you’re settling for second best!

CONCLUSION

One of my heroes in the ministry is Stephen Olford. Olford was born and raised in Angola to parents who were missionaries. He grew up receiving a classical education and proved to be a brilliant student. He was a Christian, but he determined at a young age he didn’t want to follow in the footsteps of his father. His dream was to study engineering, and become rich. He attended a prominent University in England, and proved to be a top student, making the best grades.

He had a knack for mechanical thinking, and his college thesis was on carburetion. He designed and built a new, powerful motorcycle carburetor. He took up motorcycle racing to demonstrate the efficiency of his design. One night while riding home after the races he had a motorcycle wreck and lay injured in the cold rainy night for hours.

When he was finally found and taken to a hospital, he was diagnosed with a severe case of pneumonia. The doctor told him he has less than two weeks to live. His young life caved in around him. While lying on his deathbed, he received a letter from his missionary father. Because of the time delay for overseas mail, his father had written the letter before Stephen’s accident and illness. But the letter contained words that would change his life. His father wrote: “Only one life, ‘Twill soon be past. Only what’s done for Christ will last.”

In that lonely hospital room, Stephen Olford realized he had been running from God’s will. With the remaining strength he had, he knelt beside his hospital bed and prayed a prayer that changed his life. He said, “Lord, anytime, anywhere, any cost. Amen.”

And of course, Stephen Olford didn’t die in that hospital. For the next sixty years he crossed the globe preaching the gospel and encouraging pastors to preach the Word of God verse after verse. His was still preaching vigorously at the age of 86. In August, 2004, he suffered a stroke and instantly went to be with His Savior. He surrendered it all to Jesus, and now he knows for sure, “Only one life; ‘twill soon be past. Only what’s done for Christ will last.” Have you discovered that? Would you ever pray a prayer like he prayed? “Anytime, anywhere, at any cost?” That’s

what surrender is. Will you trust Him? You can't really trust Him unless you're willing to surrender everything to Him. It would be like taking your car to the garage and saying, “Here, fix my car, but don't touch the engine.” You can't come to God and say, “God I'm in trouble, I need your help, but don't mess with my habits, or my relationships, or my mind.”

You must surrender to win. If you are not absolutely certain you would go to heaven if you died today, you need to surrender to God and trust Him to forgive your sins.

If you're afraid of the future, you need to surrender to Him and say, “Lord, I don't know what's going to happen—but whatever happens, I'm going to trust you.”

Remember, to know Him is to love Him. To love Him is to trust Him; to trust Him is to Obey Him. And as the old song says: Trust and obey; There's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey!

OUTLINE

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes