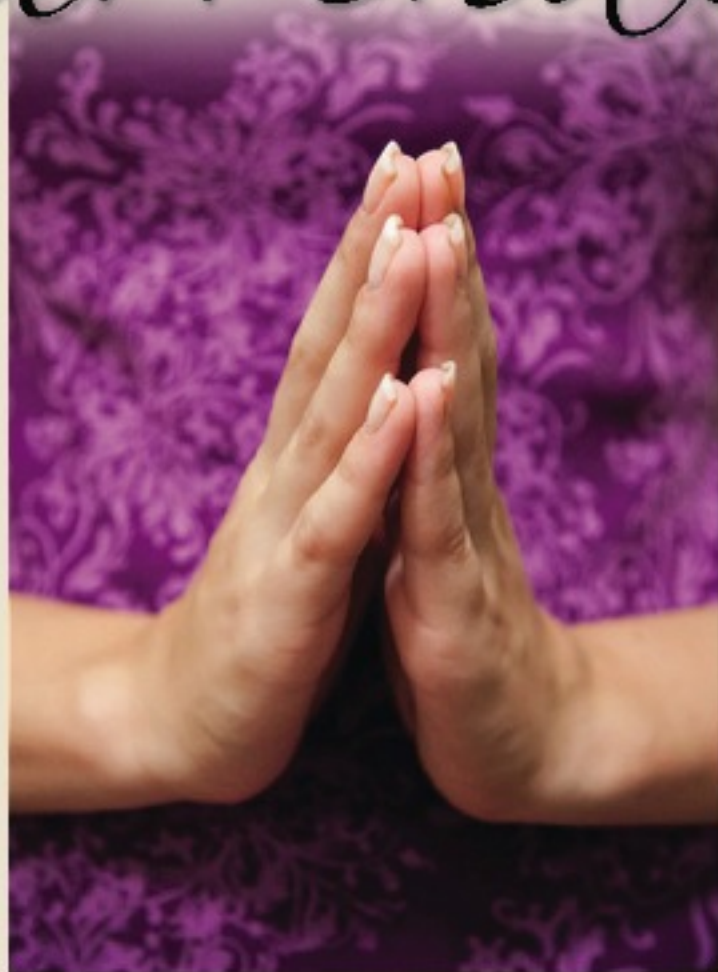
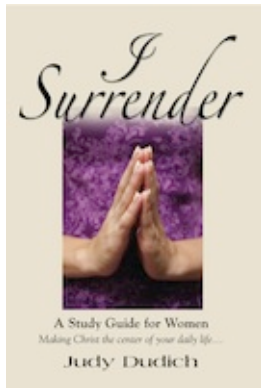


I Surrender



A Study Guide for Women
Making Christ the center of your daily life...

Judy Dudich



***I Surrender** encourages women to make Christ the center of their daily lives, based on Scripture Verse Joshua 24:15, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord". Each chapter discusses "giving it all" to God in marriage, family life, homeschooling, friendships and more, and includes writing space for journaling, and a Study Guide to use in conjunction with the book. Perfect for individual use or participation in a group.*

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I Surrender!

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**Thoughts on making Christ
the center of your daily life**

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INTRODUCTION



"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Joshua said it well.

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" ~Joshua 24:15~

As Christians, many of us stake a claim to the prophet's words, and heed his advice; saying that, we too, live out our daily lives seeking to do all for the glory of God. If we are true to this statement, this calling, it means that we are making choices; some difficult and some of which we are unaware at the time.

It means that we are promising to do certain things, while promising not to do others. This book is written for all women; most particularly, the home-schooling mother. In our quest to educate our children, we sometimes forget ourselves and neglect our relationship with Christ. The following pages are meant to be an encouragement for your journey. We will take a look at the message contained in the Scripture verse (Joshua 24:15) and, hopefully, these reflections will give you pause to ponder and ask, "Am I being true to my claim?"

Many of us have heard the saying, "Die to self and live in Christ". This, it could be said, is a goal of all Christians: to rid our souls of all that is "us" and fill it, instead, with all that is "Him". To do this, we must surrender. We must freely give all to the Lord and realize that without Him we are capable of nothing. We must surrender every thought, every word, and every act; giving it to God so that He might purify it and give it back, renewed in His name.

What does this mean for a wife and mother? It can be the difference between a happy and peaceful home environment and one that is wrought with stress and chaos. More importantly, surrendering to the Lord encourages us to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The value lies in our ability to look at the reality of our state-in-life, recognize the hidden areas that need improvement, and act on these in an effort to change and grow in holiness.

"I Surrender" will help point out the areas in life that affect us daily. We will examine six crucial segments which are pertinent to all people; but most importantly, wives and mothers. Each chapter will focus on the home-school day, family life, marriage, and friendships, as well as personal schedules and faith life.

Please read this book with careful thought and take notes on ways that you can improve your relationship with Christ (and your family) and enrich your daily life experience. Begin with prayer to invite our Lord and Savior to help you learn to surrender.

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" ~Joshua 24:15~

Designed to be enjoyed with a group or individually, "I Surrender" includes space for journal-keeping and a complete study guide to enhance your reading pleasure and personal reflection. (If you have purchased this book in a digital form, you will need to print its pages in order to keep a journal, or simply write your thoughts in a blank journal or notepad of your own while you read your e-book.)

The study guide is located at the back of the book and should be consulted before reading the rest of the chapters.

Decide if you'd like to work through the study guide chapter by chapter or after you have read the book in its entirety.

Chapter 3

Surrender in Marriage



An extraordinary, ordinary life!

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" ~Joshua 24:15~

For those of us who are married, we have, at our disposal, tremendous graces and blessings through the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. All that we need to live in love, charity, forgiveness, peace, joy, and harmony is there for us. Our Father in Heaven, whose existence and love is evident in The Holy Trinity, is the model for the existence of and love within our marriages.

Surrender in marriage is crucial if we are to live with another person for the rest of our lives; joining our two beings as one flesh. Made in His image and likeness, yet each given an ordained role and unique purpose, we are one another's helpmate; a friend, a loved one, to have by our side along the way as we travel this journey of life, reaching always toward our Heavenly goal.

Unfortunately, our frail human nature and our ugly sins (especially pride) get in the way of the beautiful things God is trying to work through us in marriage. We want our own way.

Keeping a few thoughts in mind can help us build up this sacred relationship rather than tear it down. Let us explore some of the ideas that can help us strengthen our marriages, enabling us to enjoy a close, loving bond with our spouse and share a peaceful and amicable relationship.

Surrendering ourselves to Christ in marriage assures us of His aid as we strive to fulfill our vows and find joy in our life together. The Lord will not forsake us. Although the road will have obstacles, and sometimes grave trials along the way, we must try to remember that there are "three" in our marriage: Our spouse, ourselves, and God.

Our marriage means as much to Him as it does to us and we are incapable of achieving the goals we have set and the ideals we hold in our hearts without His help. Still, God wants us to apply practical means as we strive to enrich, nurture, and live out our married life.

Upon my own wedding day, my sister thought that a comment my father made to me was rather morbid and perhaps not appropriate for a day of celebration. However, I knew that my Dad was offering his thoughts with a pure and loving intention, and thankfully, I took his words to heart and have carried them with me all through my life. They have served my marriage well.

What was his advice that day? He said, "I want you to remember that marriage is not about the wedding. It's not about the reception. It's not about the great celebration you will have today. It's about waking up day after day, month after month, and year after year, for the rest of your life, next to the same person, and still finding something to say".

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" ~Joshua 24:15~

Some might find that comment a bit dry for a wedding day. To me, it was wisdom and insight that has proven invaluable.

Consider how the following might help you in your marriage:

THE LAST SHALL BE FIRST

Today's world (and the enemy) would have us believe that we need to look inward and consider our own needs before those of others, or that we "deserve" this or that. Slogans like "It's all about me" are painted on coffee mugs and t-shirts. The world tempts us to be self-indulgent and responsibility-free in our attempts to satisfy our personal desires and seek immediate gratification and pleasure.

Falling into this trap can be deadly to a marriage. To surrender our marriage to Christ means that we are willing to put our spouse's needs before our own. Christ, who came as a servant, is to be our model.

We must be willing to serve in our marriages. Many say that marriage must be give and take; 100% from each side in order to work. If we surrender all to Christ, then we come to understand and accept that there will be times when the giving is up to us 75% to 25% or 100% to nothing. To keep our marriage strong, we must be willing to give that 100% when our spouse is incapable of giving at all.

This is completely opposite of what the world tells us. As we travel on in the journey of married life, we each will have times when the road gets tough. We will stumble and fall. We will be nearly paralyzed and stuck in a rut. We will question and doubt and sometimes not feel like giving anything of ourselves to our mate.

In Christian love, when our spouse is faced with dark times, we must be willing to continue placing him first; to keep giving when nothing is given in return.

A friend of mine once taught that true giving begins when we feel as though we have nothing left to give but continue to give in spite of our own struggle.

In all things, remember that it is Christ to whom we are giving first and it is for the glory of God that we love in our marriages.

Doing little things in daily life that show your spouse that his needs and desires are a priority to you enriches not only your married life, but family life in general. When we tend to our spouse with Christ's love,

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without thought of our own wants or needs, we are serving the Lord. We are truly surrendering when we trust in God (and God, alone) to meet our own needs.

If we tend to our spouse before ourselves, then God will bless us. He will see to it that those yearnings and needs within us are met in His time and in His way. He will provide.

BE OPEN TO GOD'S BLESSING OF NEW LIFE

By its very nature, the intimate act of marriage has been created and designed by God in order to bless our families with new life. (Genesis 1:28, Hebrews 13:4)

Yet, not every family will welcome little ones through birth. Some families are made by adoption or by opening our homes to those in need of foster care.

Regardless of "how" the children come to us, marriage, itself, truly resembles The Trinity in that God loves the Son, who loves the Father, and their love is poured out to be shown in the Spirit. So too, a man and wife love one another so dearly and so closely, that their love brings forth a brand new life.

Love holds nothing back. To fully love another means that we are willing to give our all.

Christ instituted the Sacrament of Matrimony and we are honoring that Sacrament when we surrender it to Him so that He may bless it according to the Father's plan. The natural end to the intimate marital act is that of procreation.

We must ask ourselves if we are truly loving our spouse (and God) if we are unwilling to allow our marriage to be blessed with children.

Surrendering our marriage to God means that we are willing to give it all to Him. We are to be His instruments by which He can do His holy work and share His love with the world. He has willed and created each new life with a special purpose and mission.

In marriage, we are free to be open to those blessings and allow God to send us His precious new creations. He blesses our marriage with the fruits of His love and our love. He trusts us to bring forth and nurture the little ones He has given. Not even angels have been so privileged!

In a house that serves the Lord, we will do well to be completely honest with ourselves, as married couples, in asking if we have done

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" ~Joshua 24:15~

everything we can to generously open ourselves to the blessings of children that God might wish to send.

Remember, Love holds nothing back. Love is freely given. Our marriages are naturally designed to give a love that is fruitful and "keeps on giving". We bless each other when we are willing to be open to new life.

Pray for the guidance of the Spirit and ask Him to open your heart. To be in complete surrender to God involves all facets of our lives, and sadly, many Christians surrender in every area except the openness and willingness to have additional children. Please, seriously consider asking the Lord for His will and decision in this area for your family. Pray with your spouse, read the Scriptures, and listen to your heart. Know that the Lord is in control of your family, your finances, and your life. He will only bless and never forsake you.

LIVE IN JOY

Remember that special day when you exchanged your marriage vows? Can you close your eyes and still see the sparkle in the eyes of your beloved; the smile upon his face? Can you remember the joy you both had in your hearts?

After babies arrive and years wane, slim figures might give way to a few extra pounds and wrinkles. As years of bills, repairs, and issues pile up, it is easy to become entrenched in the negatives and lose sight of the joy that marriage can bring.

By surrendering our marriage to Christ each day, we are asking His joy to permeate our hearts so that we can continue to uplift, encourage, and support our spouse well into the Golden Years.

Looking for a few ways to express joy in your marriage and keep things refreshing and new?

1) Make an effort to research and learn about something which interests your spouse but isn't necessarily a favorite of yours. Showing interest will illustrate that you care about and appreciate your loved one. Sharing interests also helps you to take an active part in conversations or activities your spouse enjoys involving that particular topic. For example, I have spent years learning the workings and products of underground irrigation systems because it delights my husband when he wants to discuss his work and I can actually understand what he is saying.

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2) Dress up once in a while. We all enjoy our comfy "house clothes", but let's face it: No one wants to be greeted by a frump each day! Ladies, put on a little make up (if that's something you enjoy wearing) and don an outfit a little brighter and more attractive than your husband's t-shirt and a pair of old sweat pants. If we work outside the home, or attend a meeting or dinner, we willingly "dress the part". Why not dress up for our spouse, as well? My mother always taught me to "freshen up", put on a clean shirt or dress, if needed, and fix my hair before my husband arrives home each day.

Her mother taught her the same thing. I have taken the wisdom of these beautiful women to heart and have tried my best to live by it. Now, I invite you to do the same.

3) Compliment your mate! We ladies love to hear our husbands tell us that we are beautiful, don't we? So too, dear wives, do men love to hear that their efforts are appreciated. (Telling your spouse that he makes your heart skip a beat when he enters a room won't hurt either!)

Expressing gratitude for his many sacrifices and affirming his efforts builds him up and encourages him to keep trying.

Especially in a marriage of many years, it's easy to fall into the habit of having conversations pertaining to what needs fixing, which person needs to go where, when the next phone bill is due, or how many times little Joey has been asked to take out the garbage without complying.

However, if we wish to surrender ourselves to the Lord in our marriage, we will speak in ways that are pleasing to Him and edify our beloved. We will offer a kind word and a pleasant comment that makes our spouse feel special.

4) A little service goes a long way. Bring your husband a nice tall glass of ice water or prepare the coffee pot to perk a fresh pot for him before he starts the day. Clear his plate at the dinner table, or leave a note on his pillow listing five things you love about him. Perhaps you can have his favorite lounging clothes all laid out with a chocolate bar to the side if he enjoys a sweet treat now and then. It is nice to have a surprise at the end of a long day. You might light some candles and get the bathroom all ready for a refreshing shower. Acts of love needn't be elaborate, or costly. The point is to offer little gestures that say, "I think of you" and "You matter to me".

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BE FAITHFUL

Marriage is a precious and sacred gift from God. It is crucial that we remain faithful to our spouse. The integrity and fidelity of a marriage should be a top priority for a couple. Each must always be mindful of and alert to ideas and actions that will build up and strengthen the union; while remaining ready to flee from people, circumstances, or relationships that threaten the marital bond.

The following suggestions might take a little time and effort, but they can help to enrich your marriage and keep it strong:

1) Pray for your own fidelity. Ask Jesus to help you keep your eyes on your own spouse and your thoughts and desires pure and focused on your marriage. Ask for courage in rejecting anyone or anything that tempts you toward the sins of lust or infidelity. Seek God's grace to acquire the virtues of chastity, modesty, and faithfulness according to your state in life.

2) Pray for your spouse! Ask God to grant the graces needed so that your spouse's attraction will remain toward you and you alone. Ask God to protect him from all snares of the enemy's temptations toward infidelity in this world. Do your best, as mentioned in the previous section, to maintain a healthy and attractive appearance.

As the owner of a website that is meant to encourage others in their daily family life, I am blessed to hear from women all over the world. My heart aches at how many of these women write to me to ask for prayers because their husbands are addicted to pornography or are having an affair. These are Christian men, who have fallen under the weight of Satan's lures. We must pray for our husbands and these other men. They need our prayers!

3) Choose only activities and friendships that support a faithful relationship. Do not allow anything or anyone in your life that attempts to break the bonds of your marriage or tempt you to sin. (This goes for books, magazines, movies, and computer activity, as well.)

PRAY TOGETHER

If we want our marriages to reflect our desire to serve the Lord, then we will make sure that we spend time together with our spouse in prayer. Whether we pray at the family dinner table, by our beds at night, or while

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" ~Joshua 24:15~

walking along the way, simply joining as a couple in the presence of God to thank Him for his blessings and ask His help in all things strengthens the marital union.

We are not capable of sustaining a happy marriage on our own. However, our good and gracious God bestows an abundance of graces through the Sacrament of Matrimony. These graces allow us not only to remain together for life, but to live in peace, joy, and love. His grace also helps us withstand the trials and sufferings which come our way.

FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER

As imperfect human beings, every person that enters marriage should understand that there will be times when our spouse will sin against us and we will sin against him. Sometimes, these sins are immensely grave and detrimental to the integrity and foundation of marriage.

If we truly want to surrender all to Christ then we must take on the heart of our forgiving Lord. Just as the Father in Heaven forgives us, no matter how great our sin, so too, must we forgive the one we love even when the hurt has been driven deep.

With God, all things are possible, and that includes healing and restoring a marriage that is on the brink of disaster. Though not an easy undertaking, forgiveness is possible if we center ourselves in Christ and surrender to the Lord.

DO NOT FORGET:

1) Your spouse is a beloved Child of God. Even if your spouse is an unbeliever, he is still consecrated through your belief. (1 Corinthians 7:14) We must try to look at our spouse the way the loving and forgiving Father sees him.

2) We have failed our spouse and sinned against him more than once in our marriage. Therefore, we need to be willing to forgive as we hope to be forgiven.

3) The love and grace of Christ enables us to restore our marriage and recover from all injury. Some hurts are great and might take time and considerable effort to heal, but God's grace is sufficient.

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" ~Joshua 24:15~

AS WE SURRENDER TO CHRIST IN MARRIAGE WE ARE PROMISING TO

- 1) Place the needs and desires of our spouse before our own.
- 2) Live in such a way that our joy is visible.
- 3) Stay true to our vows of fidelity in marriage.
- 4) Pray for the strength and endurance of our union.
- 5) Forgive each other when offended.

WE ARE PROMISING NOT TO

- 1) Engage in self-indulgent activities and pleasures at the expense of the needs and desires of our spouse.
- 2) Give in to discouragement or adopt a gloomy disposition due to the weight of the burdens life can bring.
- 3) Take part in any thoughts, words, or actions that can lead us to sin against the fidelity of our marriage.
- 4) Live without Jesus as the center of our marriage.
- 5) Bear grudges and harbor resentment for wrong-doings.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- 1) Do you, as a couple, take time to make each other feel wanted, needed, and appreciated? In what specific ways do you do this?

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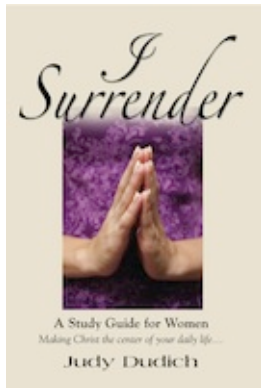
2) In what ways have you neglected your spouse?

3) What changes are you willing to make as amends for your neglect?

4) Do you surround yourselves with friends and entertainment that build and strengthen your union in Christ?

5) Are you giving 100%? What areas are most in need of your attention at this time?

6) Are you living in forgiveness of each other's sins and faults, or are you allowing resentment to infiltrate other areas of your life? What things do you need to forgive?



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