

Total Surrender

by Lewis Gregory

Total surrender involves giving up everything to God, including our old way of living, our thoughts, and our actions, in order to experience His abundant provision and purpose.

Duration: 34:11

Scripture: Matthew 4:17, Luke 5:1-3

Topics: "Surrender"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Jesus and Peter in Luke 5:1-11. Jesus asks Peter to take his boat out into the water so that he can preach to the people from there. After Jesus finishes speaking, he tells Peter to launch out into the deep and let down his nets. Peter initially hesitates, but eventually obeys and experiences a miraculous catch of fish. Overwhelmed by this display of God's provision, Peter falls at Jesus' feet and acknowledges his own sinfulness. The preacher emphasizes the importance of fully surrendering to God and going all the way with Him, rather than just going out a little ways.

Transcript

Let me lead us in prayer as we begin. Lord, we welcome this time together in your name. Thank you, Holy Spirit, that you're our teacher.

You will now lead us and guide us into all truth. And praise you, Lord Jesus, for your wonderful presence. We thank you, Lord, for life more abundantly.

Now open our eyes that we might behold wondrous things from your word. And cause us to be quick to receive and quick to believe. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Earlier this year, as I was ministering the word in another church, a lady began to sob and then more intently began to weep. And as she did, it became so strong that Lou went back and took her out and began to minister to her during that time. And after it was over, she was still sobbing and weeping.

And so Lou and I went to another room with her and we began to pray and minister to her. And her story went something like this. She was overwhelmed because of all the various pressures and problems in her life.

She didn't have the best of income. In fact, she had to work two jobs. Her daughter had to move back home.

She had a live-in boyfriend and she had a child by that person. And then in the apartment above her was her son and his wife and their couple of children. And really none of them seemed to be much of parents.

And so she had to come home and end up parenting these three grandchildren. And her heart was grieved for their well-being. And on top of that, then the son and wife from the one upstairs were in conflict.

And they were about to at least separate, if not divorce. She was just overwhelmed by it all. And the pressure was so great.

And so she was wanting us to pray for these different family members. And I said, but you know, really, I sense that you're the one that needs prayer. Not just for the pressure that it's put upon you, but because of the burden you've taken upon yourself.

And so as we began to talk and pray and share with her, and from the Word of God point out to her, the necessity that she had to give this to the Lord. She said, well, I've done that before. I've tried that.

I think I'm doing that. But no, you're not. Because look at the effect it has on you.

Yes, these are sad and grievous circumstances you're in. And yes, it's painful. And you will feel the pain.

But the weight of the burden of the responsibility is something you're trying to carry and it's a load you're not able to bear. And that's what Christ has come to do. That's why He's here.

That's what He wants to do. He says, I'm the burden bearer. And so cast your care upon Me.

Today I want to look at that from the life of Peter and Andrew, some of Jesus' disciples, later apostles. And I want us to go first to Matthew chapter 4. What we're talking about here is total surrender. Total surrender.

Now in Matthew chapter 4, one of the early times in which Jesus interacted with Andrew and with Peter, actually I think the second, perhaps, account of this, the second time they met. And in verse 17, Matthew 4, 17, From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, and this is His message, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother.

They were cast in a net into the sea, for they were fishers. And He said unto them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they immediately left their nets and followed Him.

Now this word repent generally conjures up specific sins in our life. And to be sure that's part of what's involved. I want us to think about repent today as it is in the context here.

And as we'll see in the next passage, it has to do with change your ways. Change direction in your life, yes, but change the way you live your life. And it requires a change of thinking in order for there to be a change of action.

But the repent is what's happening here, and we're going to see that. Now let's look again. Jesus comes and brings forth the message.

God's kingdom is here, it's now. Because of course the King was present. King Jesus had arrived on the scene.

And so He's saying the kingdom of heaven is at hand. We're going to move you from that realm of the kingdom of God on the earthly plane, Israel, Jerusalem. No, I'm bringing you into the heavenly kingdom.

The spiritual realm of God's divine presence and power. And so He says now that kingdom is here and now. And so He addressed these two, Peter and Andrew, they're fishers.

That means they're fishermen. And they were fishing. And so Jesus spoke very deliberately to them.

And this is what He said, short and to the point, verse 19. Follow me. Follow me.

Now the follow me is an important statement. And we're going to see that it means much more than what they thought it meant. And it requires much more than what they initially offered.

But here's what He said. Follow me and I will make you. He says look, you let me take care of things and I'll take care of you and yours.

But you must follow me. And I will make you fishers of men. And immediately it says they did what? What did they do? Left their nets.

Followed Him. Immediately left their nets. Followed Him.

Now that's called instant obedience. Immediately. There was no discussion.

No debate. No analyzing. No excusing or explaining.

Or postponing for a later date. But immediately left their nets and followed Him. When the Lord speaks, dear friends, it's time to respond.

It's not a waiting game with the Lord. It's now. God's time is now.

And when He speaks, He wants a response from us. He wants us to act on His Word. And that requires faith.

Faith. Now we'll come back to that word faith later. And we'll look at it more as we get into the next passage.

But look here now further. So immediately they left their nets. And they followed Him.

So there's a leaving. And there's a cleaving. The phrase used in the book of Genesis.

For the husband and the wife. Who are to leave parents. And cleave one to another.

But there is a leaving first of all. See in repentance there's got to be a leaving. Before there can be a cleaving.

Cleave is a word that means grab, embrace. Take hold of it. Do not let go.

It means with all you've got and all you are. You take Him. You embrace Him.

So these two men. Simon called Peter. Peter the name Jesus gave him.

Simon his birth name. And his brother Andrew. And they immediately left their nets.

And then they followed Him. So they had to make a decision here. And they had to make a choice.

But it was an exercise of faith. This is not just about willpower or mind control. It's about a deliberate heart response to the Lord.

And to His Word for your life. And so He says to them. You follow Me.

So following Him we see entails this whole idea of repentance. And repentance means you turn from the one. And you turn to the other.

So you leave your old way of living. And your old way of doing business. And you turn to Him and His way.

But you've got to turn from. And you've got to turn to. That's repentance.

So you turn from the old way. And you turn to the new way. So that's what they did.

Or so it seems. They did it as far as they understood. And that's where we all start.

You go on the basis of what you know. And so as God shows you. You respond.

As God speaks to you. You obey. All right.

So that's where we are. We've got the understanding of repentance. We've got the understanding of the necessity of following Him.

Which means leave your nets. That's how they interpreted it. It means leaving.

And it certainly means cleaving. So this is the starting point. Okay.

Now time marches on. Days pass. And we see them again.

In a different setting. And yet in the same setting. Different in one way.

Same in another. Now we go to Luke chapter 5. In Luke chapter 5. And here we find the disciples again. And more specifically.

We find Peter and his brother Andrew. With some of their friends. Their fisherman buddies.

And what are they doing? They're fishing again. So verse 1 of Luke 5. And it came to pass that as the people pressed upon Jesus. To hear the word of God.

See that's. Are you pressing upon Jesus to hear the word of God? I mean consider this. These people who had only gotten a glimpse of the Lord.

Had no full awareness of Him. As we do with the wonderful words of life. That are available to us through the Bible.

Or through the Holy Spirit. And yet what little they saw and heard of Him. They pressed on Him.

Because they knew He had the words of life. And they wanted to hear the word of God. So we need to cultivate a hard hunger.

To know Him. And to hear His word. Well that's what they were doing.

And Jesus was standing by the lake of Gennesaret. And He saw two ships. Out there in the lake.

The fishermen had gone out of them. They were washing their nets. Well that implies they had been fishing.

And now they're cleaning up. So verse 3 tells us. Jesus entered into one of the ships.

Which just happened to be Simon Peter's. And He asked Peter if he would. Put the ship out a little into the.

From the shore. He says just go out a little into the water there. And Jesus had a plan.

And so after they got out a ways from land. It says Jesus sat down. And He taught the people out of the ship.

Now what we see in process here. Is what we call a divine set up. God is about to set the stage for Peter.

Through the Lord Jesus. To have a realization of what it really means to follow Him. And what it really means to forsake.

To leave. To cleave. So let's look at what's about to happen.

The story unfolds. So Jesus delivers His message. He preaches a sermon.

A message from God. He gives them a word from the Lord. The word they were pressing to hear.

He gave it. Now in verse 4. When Jesus had finished speaking. He said unto Simon.

Launch out into the deep. And that's good. But not nearly good enough.

It's time to launch out into the deep. You see. In our life we're kind of like.

What Peter and Andrew did at the first. We leave a little bit. But we don't leave it all.

We go out a little ways. But we don't go all the way. And that's what God is calling us to here.

Is leave it all. And go all the way with Him. So He said now look.

The first time you went out. You've got to go out where it's deep. You've got to go out into the deep things of God.

You've got to get into the depths of God. You've got to plumb the depths in the Lord. And so.

He said now launch out into the deep. Now let down your nets. Now it's interesting.

In the first instance. When He called them to follow Him. They left their nets.

Now He doesn't chide them that they're fishing. In fact He says. Let's go a little further.

Now put your nets back out in the water. Just out here in the deep. Just okay that's far enough.
That's good enough. Okay now put them down in the water. And so they did.
He says just put your nets down. And you're going to catch some fish. But now Peter answered.
Now this is not necessarily a debate. Or an argument. It's an explanation.
Of course he doesn't understand. The Lord already knows what's going on. But anyway.
He responds by saying this. Nothing. We've been at this.
All night long. We've been fishing long and hard. And we've not caught one thing.
Not one. Lou's dad. Used to have a second job.
As a fisherman. He specifically went. Shrimping.
I love shrimp. That was one of the things that. Got my attention about this good looking woman.
I was dating. And I went over. Because they knew I loved shrimp.
And we would get a lot of shrimp. Well I went. Shrimping with him.
We would put out that big net. And we'd drag it behind the boat. And we'd catch some shrimp.
We'd catch a lot of stuff. There'd be crabs in there. There'd be all kinds of fish.
And we'd have to go through. And they called it calling it out. Until we got exactly what we wanted.
But the one thing I noticed is. It wasn't just cold fish. The ones you'd throw away.
Or a few crabs. Or a few shrimp. But there'd always be a few.
But here were these men. These seasoned trained professional fishermen. Who fished all night.
They didn't catch a single thing. And now Jesus has the audacity. But then again he is the Lord and the master.
But he said to them. Go on out there. And cast your nets just one more time.
And Peter's going. I'm exhausted. And more than that we're discouraged.
But okay you said it so we'll do it. And so they did. And of course you know the rest of the story.
They caught some fish. I dare say it was the greatest catch on record. They caught so many fish.
Their net almost broke. They started loading up the boat. It filled up to overflowing.
Almost sunk. They called their partners in. They brought another boat.
Loaded it up. And they were down shaking together. Running over.

That's the abundant provision of God for our life. That's why he offers the abundant life. But these guys hadn't got it yet.

But they're about to. Because we're going to see Peter's response. In fact the response of all of them.

So they go through this process. And then in verse 8. When Simon Peter saw what was happening. He fell down at Jesus feet.

And he said to him. And depart from me. For I am a sinful man.

Oh Lord. Oh Lord. He said I didn't have a clue.

I had no idea who you were. And what you could do. I had no idea what you really were calling me to.

When you said follow me. But now that I see it. I realize I'm nothing.

You're everything. When he says I'm a sinful man. He's not talking about the fact.

That somehow he became aware. That he had made a few mistakes. And committed a few sins in his life.

He's saying whoa. I'm nothing. You're everything.

I'm the master seaman. I'm the master fisherman. And yet look at you.

In one word. You pointed out a place to throw my net. And I caught all these fish.

And I've never done that in my entire life. I'm the one that knows all about everything. And I'm the expert at everything.

And if you'll let me I'll make you. But you've got to let me. You've got to let me.

And that means you've got to forsake all. So you can take all in him. You've got to forsake all.

And then he'll make you. So Peter's thinking about this. Man I'm a sinful man.

He stood in awe of the Lord. We sing I stand in awe of you. He saw the Lord in a way he had never known him before.

He saw him as the true master of all things. And he was overwhelmed. He was astonished it says here.

He was amazed. Amazing. We use these words.

But boy they don't carry the punch they once did. And they sure took it in him. Because Peter was stunned in the presence of the Lord.

Just fell at his feet. And began to really that's an expression of worship. Began to truly worship him.

Truly humble himself before the Lord. And in saying I'm a sinful man. He was saying look I'm nothing.

You're everything. I'm weak. You're strong.

I'm hopeless. But you're almighty. And my hope is in you Lord.

And then Jesus put him at ease. Look I know you don't measure up. I know you're unworthy.

I know you're incapable. But that's what I'm here for. That's what I tried to tell you.

You don't have to try to measure up to me. You don't have to try to compensate for all your past faults and failures. Just follow me and I'll take care of the rest.

Just embrace me as your all in all. I'll do it. I'm here for you.

I'll take care of you. But you've got to forsake all and follow me. You've got to embrace me.

You've got to cleave to me. Now this is their response. This is their response.

Verse 10. And so James and John felt the same way. They were partners with Peter.

And Jesus said to Peter. And the message is for us today. Don't fear.

Don't be afraid of me. Don't do like Adam and Eve did when they ran in the garden. When they saw their sinfulness.

Their utter hopeless helplessness. Don't run and hide from me. Now is the time to fully embrace me.

Now you see even more the relevance and necessity of fully following me. Of totally leaving all and taking me. So he's saying look.

Here's what I say to you. Don't fear. From henceforth you will catch men.

I'm going to make you just like I promised I would. And now it's time for you to do what I asked you to do in the first place. And that is forsaking all.

Take me. I call you to repent. Turn from all of your dependency upon yourself.

Now look. As humans all we've got is ourselves. We have family and friends sometimes.

We have other natural resources and human provisions and finances and whatever. But it's all very limited. Now Peter had a ship.

And he had nets. And he had expertise. And he had experience.

And he was the best of the best. But it wasn't good enough. Because only the master fisherman, the master craftsman, the master of it all knows best and can do it all.

And he had to come to see that as do we all. Do not fear. You will catch men.

Your life will count. It will make a difference. It will accomplish my purpose.

Catching men was his state of purpose for Peter and for Andrew. And he says you need not be concerned. I will enable you to accomplish my purposes for your life whatever those are.

Whatever these purposes for your life are I'll take care of all that. I'll ensure that you are effective in achieving and accomplishing your goals and objectives that I have set for you. I'll make it happen.

That's what I do. Yes I am the master. And as the master I will ensure the job gets done right.

I'll do it in you and through you and by means of you. But it will be in the power of the spirit of the living God. But I will make it happen.

So he puts Peter at ease. But he also puts him in his place. In a loving way.

In a gentle way. But a very definite way to let him see I'm the master. And you are the servant.

I'm the Lord and you are the subject. Now he knows. And he understands.

And so look now at Peter's further response. Verse 11. This is the clincher.

And when they had brought their ships back to the shore, back to land, what did they do this time? They what? Now they forsook how much? All. Not just the nets. Not just a momentary temporary pause.

But they forsook all. And then what did they do? Then they really followed him. They thought they followed him before.

Some of us have thought we've been following the Lord. You know ten years into my Christian walk, through a time where I hit the wall and a growing level of dissatisfaction, frustration, failure and defeat, I realized you know I thought I was trusting God with my life. I thought I had given him total control of my life.

I thought I had totally surrendered and yet I realize now I really hadn't. I had given him areas of my deficiency, areas of my weakness, areas of my problems, but I hadn't totally surrendered. You know there's a man who was a missionary in Africa many years ago in South Africa named Andrew Murray.

And he was very instrumental and very active during the time of Great Awakening and during the era of the Second Great Awakening that we have so-called in the world. And during this great move of God's Spirit in which many people's lives were changed radically and many people were saved, met the Lord, he came to this conclusion. He said this, God is ready to assume the full responsibility for the life that is totally or wholly yielded to him.

God is ready to assume full responsibility for the life that is wholly or completely and totally yielded to him, surrendered to him, given over to him. God is ready to do that. That's what Jesus was saying to these disciples, I'm ready, I'm here, it's now, it's for you.

But you've got to surrender all. You've got to totally give up. There's a way of saying this that is an acrostic which is a term used for if you take a word and you take the first letter and you make another word out of it.

And what we have illustrated here, and I touched on it earlier, is it requires faith on your part. And the acrostic goes like this, and you may have heard it but I just want to say it because it's one of the best I've heard. I'm not usually big on things like that but it's a great memory crutch and it's an excellent way of describing it.

The word faith, so let's take F. Forsaking all I take him. Forsaking all I take him. Faith.

Think about it. Forsaking all. Now that's what these fishermen finally came to realize it means to follow him.

That's when they finally understood what repentance is all about. It's I'm forsaking all. And what am I doing then? Not just forsaking all, that's the leaving.

But what about the cleaving side? The cleaving side is I take him. And there you go. That completes it.

Now we've got the circuit is complete now. We forsake all on the one hand and we take him on the other hand. And the all has to do not just with the leaving of our faults and failures, our sins, our mistakes, our problems.

It has to do with the leaving of everything we thought near and dear. Everything we thought made us who we were. Everything we thought was important or gave us significance, value, or worth.

But the beauty of it is when we forsake it all and take him as we see from the disciples, later he's still letting him go fishing from time to time. And he's still letting him have a life as it were in terms of other interactions. In fact, he even cooks a meal for him.

So it doesn't mean you suddenly become some stoic person, some stiff, formal fuddy-duddy, you know. It means you suddenly begin to come alive in the truest sense of the word. But you've got to forsake all and take him.

And that's what the disciples did at that point. They forsook all and they followed Jesus Christ. Forsaking all, I take him.

And that's total surrender. A number of years ago I was invited to be a part of a ministry team that went to a place in Alabama where there was a great move of God's Spirit. And it lasted for about six weeks.

I spent two weeks there myself. And during that time, the word got out throughout the surrounding area of what God was doing. And people began to just come from all over, various churches.

And there would be 3,000 people or so gathered at the convention center every night, every night for six weeks. And it was on radio. And some of the prisoners at the state prison in that city began to hear.

And they said, we want to get in on this. Well, there happened to be a pastor that ministered in the prisons that he and I had gotten to be friends. And he said, these prisoners have a real hunger to know God.

They want to hear the Word of God. They are eager to get in on this revival, this outpouring of God's Spirit, this time of spiritual awakening. They want to be a part of it.

I said, I'll go. So I began to go up there to the prisons with him. On one occasion, we gathered in this room.

They gave us a certain prison area that they had. And they could lock us in this one section. And it was about the size of this room, actually.

And there were some beds in there and some chairs. So we were in this room. And the ones that were eager to learn and know, they were in there.

And there was probably, I don't know, 15. But there was one man who that was his cell area. That's where he had to stay.

So he couldn't leave. But he wasn't exactly excited about being there. But that's all right.

Because he needed to hear. He definitely needed to hear. And so I began to teach them and explain to them about what it means to give your life to the Lord.

And a number of them in there have professed to be Christian, that they had accepted Christ either before or during their time in prison. So they knew the Lord, but they didn't really know the Lord. They knew some things about Him, but they didn't know the Lord.

So as I got to that point, I said, no, wait a minute. Let me see if I can help you understand what it means to forsake all and take Him. What does it mean to totally surrender? Well, let's go back.

At some point before you got in prison, you were arrested. The arresting officers, the authorities, they came to you, as it were. Let's say that maybe they had to use force or had to use a weapon.

They pulled out their gun. And without hesitation, you did what? You gave up. And yes, you put your hands up.

Why? Because you knew the authority was here. And when the authorities spoke, what did you do? You acted. Instant obedience.

You didn't argue with them. I've heard some guys argue with the authorities before. It's not a good scene.

I've seen what the authorities can and will do if you give them any kind of trouble. And they have the right to because you are a criminal or at least you're suspected of a crime. And I said, so hands up and what are you doing? In effect, you're saying to them, I surrender.

Then they take you into custody. They probably put the handcuffs on you. But now you're their prisoner.

You have no more authority, no more say. It's totally up to them now. And in a similar way, we have to come to that place with the Lord where we realize we're powerless and He's almighty.

He's the authority here and not us. And so what we do? We say, hands up. I give up.

I give up. I surrender. You see, in the leaving, there has to be a giving up of our dependency on all the other stuff.

There has to be a giving up of looking at who I am and what I can do and begin to look at who He is and what He can do. And so in that state of surrender, we say, Lord, I give up. And so I said, okay, guys, it's time to give up.

And they began to just raise their hands and surrender to the Lord. In total surrender. In complete surrender.

And wholly yielded their lives to Him. Lord, I give all to You. And I had to come to that place because, you see, I had realized that while I had surrendered in certain areas, my problem areas, my weaknesses, my deficiencies, I had not fully surrendered all to Him.

I had not yet given myself to Him. In 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and verse 4 and 5, it says there that the Macedonians first gave themselves to the Lord. They gave up totally and entrusted their life to Him.

And our privilege is to do the same. Forsaking all, I take Him. All to Jesus, I surrender.

I surrender all. Just bow your heads. I'm going to have a prayer about that.

Then I want us to pray about other needs here today and give some testimony. So, Father, as that old song says, All to You, I surrender. I surrender all.

So, Lord, we say to You now, Yes, Lord, as the disciples of old had to come to the place where they thought they had forsaken all, but really had just forsaken their nets and things, and just for a short period of time and gone a short distance with You, Lord, we want to go all the way with You, Lord. We want to go to the depths with You, Lord God. We want to go full speed ahead with You, Lord Jesus Christ.

You are the Master. And so, in our mind's eye, we kneel before You now, Lord, and we say, Yes, Lord, I do follow You. I follow You all the way, totally and completely.

I choose now, in Jesus' name, to leave all and forsake all and follow You. I choose to cleave to You, Lord Jesus, forsaking all, I take You. I take You as my Lord and my life and my all.

I do totally surrender, Lord Jesus. And thank You that You take me. And You will make me.

You will make me what You want me to be. In Your time and in Your way. But You will do it.

And I trust You with that, Lord. And thank You for that. And Father, I pray for family and friends that are in need of that very same thing, that in Jesus' name, You would do a work in their lives and cause them, as Peter and Andrew and the others did, cause them, Lord, to see that there must be a total and complete surrender, of forsaking all and taking of You.

And thank You, Lord, that You will do that. And we trust You for their lives and their well-being as well. In Jesus' name.

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