

# Unexpected Surrender

October 18, 2020



## Daily Devotionals Introduction

As you read about Jesus in the Gospels, you might see some things that perhaps you weren't expecting. For this 13-week series, we'll open the Book of Mark together and study the life of Jesus—The Unexpected King. During this series, we will gain a better understanding of who Jesus is and what it really means to be his disciple.

As an individual or as a family, use these daily devotionals and reflection questions to connect with Jesus each day this week.

Each day, there will be a thought stemming from our Scripture passage along with 2-3 questions. Our hope is that as we journey together through the book of Mark, we'll be able to come out the other side knowing more about the life of Jesus.

Be sure to prayerfully consider each day's truth, passages, and each of the questions. If you are a part of a life group, let these devotionals stir your thinking and be the foundation for your group conversation.

## Day 1—Control

“Father, not my will, but yours be done.”

These are simple words to read, but the process of these words taking root in our hearts and becoming true as we pray them is far from easy. Jesus spoke these words to the Father as he cried, sweat drops of blood, and struggled to let go of his own desire to embrace what God wanted.

While I’m certain you’re not being asked to die for the sins of the world on a cross, I am certain there are places in your life where Jesus invites you to die to your own will. This is the work of becoming a disciple—that we would surrender our own will to the will of the Father.

As we look at Jesus’ experience in Gethsemane this week, we’re going to dwell in five different words that will help us to choose God’s will over our own—control, trust, indifference, submission, and suffering.

Here’s what I know: you won’t be able to completely submit to the will of God in just five days. It’s just not possible. It takes time. It’s slow work that requires the movement and action of the Holy Spirit in your life. I also know, however, that if you sit with these five words, God will reveal to you a path of choosing his will over your own.

Let’s dig into the first of our words today: **control**.

Control plays an interesting role in our relationship with God and with others. In the beginning, God created us with agency, which led to putting us in charge of caring for creation. The problem of sin entered when we forgot who was ultimately in control.

We all desire to be in control, don’t we? I know I do. I want to see what’s coming, but really only in an effort to somehow control it—to ensure it will look like I want. We try to control our relationships, our careers, our finances, our situations, our health, our futures—we’re trying to build the life we envision by sitting in the driver’s seat. But only one person can sit in the driver’s seat. We weren’t made for it.

We’ve built an idol out of control.

Here’s what we need to understand about idolatry: it includes any ultimate confidence in something other than God himself.<sup>1</sup> When we put our confidence in anything other than Jesus, we have chosen idolatry. In other words, you and I craft idols any time we place our trust in something other than God. When we choose a comforter other than Jesus, we choose idolatry. When we take control of our situation instead of waiting on God, we choose idolatry.

In our passage for this week, it’s clear Jesus gave control over to the Father. While he spoke honestly before him and wrestled in a real way to do so, he ultimately relinquished control to his loving Father.

**Read Mark 14:32-42. As you read, notice specifically how Jesus gives over control of the situation to others.**

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<sup>1</sup> Allen C. Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 512.

**What do you think that was like for Jesus, the Son of God?**

**Read Colossians 1:15-20.**

**As you read this passage, notice the control Jesus has over creation and created things. How does this passage inform your understanding of what happened in Gethsemane?**

**How hard is it for you to give up control? Are there certain things you like to control? If so, what are they?**

**What would relinquishing control to God the Father look like for you in this season? Where might God be inviting you to let go of control?**

**Take a moment to pray through this prayer written by Richard Foster:**

***O Lord, I really want to be in control. No, I need to be in control.  
That's it, isn't it? I'm afraid to give up control, afraid of what might happen.  
Heal my fear, Lord. How good of You to reveal my blind spots even  
in the midst of my stumbling attempts to pray. Thank You!  
But now what do I do? How do I give up control?  
Jesus, please teach me Your way of relinquishment. Amen.***

Take some time to pray through the places of letting go God has revealed to you today. Share them with a trusted friend and them to pray for you.

Ultimately, we can only give up control to someone we can trust...

## Day 2—Trust

Standing on top of the picnic table, I could feel the fear in my whole body. Would someone actually catch me if I fell backward? I was *terrified*. It was the ultimate late 80's youth group game: the trust fall. I had to stand on top of the picnic table with my back to the rest of the group of gangly middle schoolers, trusting that if I fell with my legs straight, they would catch me.

Not happening.

I froze. I just couldn't bring myself to let go of the fear. To *trust* they wouldn't let me fall.

We won't spend time dissecting the many issues in this illustration for middle schoolers as it relates to God, but what I can tell you I learned is that fear and trust go hand in hand. When fear has a grip on us, trust can be hard.

Trust is already hard for us and yet, we are in a culture of rapidly declining trust. In 2016, *Psychology Today* reported, "With each succeeding generation we are becoming less trustful. We are becoming less trustful of government, business, media, and each other."<sup>2</sup> No wonder it's difficult for us to trust fully in God.

But how can we give control to someone we don't fully trust? How can we respond like Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane without trusting the Father?

Read through how *The Jesus Storybook Bible* conveys this story of the dark night in the garden from Mark 14:

*The wind was picking up now, blowing clouds across the moon, shrouding the garden in darkness.*

*"Stay up with me?" Jesus asked his friends. They said yes and waited under the olive trees, but they were tired and soon they fell asleep.*

*Jesus walked ahead alone, into the dark. He needed to talk to his heavenly Father.*

*He knew it was time for him to die. They had planned it long ago, he and his Father. Jesus was going to take the punishment for all the wrong things anybody had ever done, or ever would do.*

*"Papa! Father!" Jesus cried. And he fell to the ground. "Is there any other way to get your children back? To heal their hearts? To get rid of the poison?"*

*But Jesus knew—there was no other way. All the poison of sin was going to have to go into his own heart.*

*God was going to pour into Jesus' heart all the sadness and brokenness in people's hearts. He was going to pour into Jesus' body all the sickness in*

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/anxiety-files/201610/the-decline-trust> accessed October 7, 2020.

*people's bodies. God was going to have to blame his son for everything that had gone wrong. It would crush Jesus.*

*But there was something else, something even more horrible. When people ran away from God, they lost God—it was what happened when they ran away. No being close to God was like a punishment. Jesus was going to take that punishment. Jesus knew what that meant. He was going to lose his Father—and that, Jesus knew, would break his heart in two.*

*Violent sobs shook Jesus' whole body.*

*Then Jesus was quiet. Like a lamb. "I trust you, Papa," he said. "Whatever you say, I will do."<sup>3</sup>*

What a picture of trust. Jesus the Son had full trust in God the Father, so much so that Jesus could whisper, "Whatever you say, I will do."

I trust the outcome more than the pain. I trust your heart over the fear. I trust your love to heal.

**As you picture Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, what role do you think trust played in this moment?**

Many times we put our trust in things other than God, including our own ability to control the situation.

**Read Proverbs 3:5-6 and Psalm 20:7 slowly a couple of times. Invite God to help you take an honest assessment. Where are you *really* putting your trust these days?**

**Read Psalm 25:1-11. Write a prayer from the words of this Psalm. Invite God to show you how to truly trust him.**

Prayer for today:

I will trust in You, Lord, with all my heart  
And lean not on my own understanding;  
In all my ways I will acknowledge You,  
And You will make my paths straight.  
I will not be wise in my own eyes,  
But I will fear You, Lord, and depart from evil. (from Proverbs 3:5–7)

Lord, when I lean on my own understanding it leads me toward this...  
But when I acknowledge You and I am directed this way... Amen.<sup>4</sup>

As we relinquish control to the One we're learning to trust, we must realize we can't let go without indifference...

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<sup>3</sup> Lloyd-Jones, Sally, *The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name*

<sup>4</sup> Bjorklund, Kurt. *Prayers for Today: A Yearlong Journey of Devotional Prayer* (p. 83). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

### Day 3—Indifference

I remember dreaming about it when I was little. I think the dreaming began when I had the distinct privilege of being a beloved flower girl in a family friend's wedding. The dress twirled and sported the hottest color combination of the early 1980s—dusty rose and powder gray. It was a magical combination. I remember imagining what it would be like when I got to be the bride. I think that's the thought pattern of every little girl as she attends her first wedding. From that moment on, the dreaming doesn't stop.

I'm sure the same was true for Mary. I'm sure she had dreamed about her future, just like every other girl. But things changed drastically. I can't imagine what the moment was like for her. I'm sure it wasn't what she had dreamed.

There she was, envisioning her upcoming wedding day. Like every little girl and like most brides, she was thinking about everything the day would hold. Would she feel like a princess? Would marriage be everything she imagined it would be? What would life with Joseph be like?

In the middle of this dreamy moment, an unlikely messenger appears, proclaiming an unbelievable message that changed the course of her life.

#### **Read Luke 1:26-38**

In an instant, Mary's entire world as she knew it turned upside down. All she'd dreamt of crumbled around her. Or at least, that's what I would have felt if I'd received that news.

But Mary's response is so very different. She listens and only asks a single question of the messenger.

*"How can this be since I am a virgin?" (Luke 1:34)*

I would have queried a million questions of Gabriel. How will Joseph respond? How will I explain this situation to my parents? What are my friends going to think? Was I even going to have any friends anymore? What will the town talk be? Who will even speak to me after they discover this? Would I be able to live through the scandal of it all? Who will ever marry me now?

But that's just me...trying to grasp ahold of control.

She asks her simple, singular question. Gabriel replies with the answer explaining to Mary that nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37).

That is enough for her.

She responds, "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said" (Luke 1:38). She goes from having one question to full submission to the will of God. Full surrender is something I've not achieved in my entire lifetime. Ever. First, I'm typically not satisfied with only asking one question. Second, full surrender is extremely difficult. It takes a great deal of trust and something I don't often have: *indifference*.

Ruth Haley Barton describes indifference this way: "Most of us don't think of indifference as being very positive. In fact, we tend to identify indifference as an attitude of apathy or not caring—exactly the opposite of the passion and drive we associate with good leadership.

However, in the spiritual life, indifference can be a very positive term, one that is rich with spiritual significance. It means 'I am indifferent to anything but God's will.'<sup>5</sup>

Mary's response demonstrates this definition so perfectly. Barton says, "Mary's response to the angel's announcement about what would take place in her life was a true prayer of indifference in that she expressed a profound readiness to set aside her own personal concerns in order to participate in the will of God as it unfolded in human history. Mary was more than just an available womb; she was a person willing to receive Christ into the very depths of her being, allowing his presence to incubate there in the darkness until the fullness of time when God's will would be completely revealed. It was this 'indifference' to anything but the will of God that prepared her to participate so fully in God's plan for the redemption of humankind."<sup>6</sup>

Indifference is what allows us to let go of anything but the will of God. Only with indifference can we truly say, "Not my will, but Yours be done." It's how God's kingdom comes instead of our own.

But we cannot come to indifference through our own effort. God has to pour his grace over us, giving indifference as a gift. We must first pray *for* indifference in order to pray the prayer *of* indifference. Invite God to give you indifference to anything but his will in your life.

**What would your questions have been if you had received the news Mary or Joseph received regarding Jesus' birth? Would you have been indifferent so quickly? Why or why not?**

**How do you see Jesus demonstrating indifference in the Garden of Gethsemane? How do you think his indifference affected the outcome?**

**Where do you need to pray *for* indifference today?**

**Prayer for the day:**

***Today, O Lord, I yield myself to you.  
May your will be my delight.  
May your love be the pattern of my living.  
I surrender to you my hopes, my dreams, my ambitions.  
Do with them what you will, when you will, as you will.  
I place into your loving care my family, my friends, my future.  
Care for them with a care that I can never give.  
I release into your hands my need to control, my craving for status, my craving for  
obscurity.  
Eradicate the evil, purify the good and establish your kingdom on earth.  
For Jesus' sake, Amen.***<sup>7</sup>

As we give over control to the One we trust with indifference, we step into submission...

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<sup>5</sup> <https://transformingcenter.org/2011/12/advent-4-mary-and-the-prayer-of-indifference/>  
accessed October 7, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Foster, *Prayers from the Heart*, (Harper: San Francisco, 1994).

## Day 4—Submission

The “S” word.

Not a word we like to talk about, mostly because we like to be the ones in charge of our own lives. We typically prefer surrender, but there is a nuance in the word surrender that implies defeat or resignation. Submission paints a picture of freely giving over our own will to the will of another.

Adele Ahlberg Calhoun writes, “Submission is an unpopular, repugnant concept these days. The notion of giving away power conjures up images of becoming a doormat, a weak-willed nonentity or a brainwashed cult follower. But this perception is miles away from the biblical model of submission. True biblical submission is not linked solely to hierarchy and roles. It begins in the very center of the Trinity where the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit all mutually honor and defer to one another. Christ’s submission to the Father did not make him less than the Father. It was a way the Son gave glory to the Father.”<sup>8</sup>

**With this definition in mind, read Mark 14:32-42.**

**How does Christ bring glory to the Father by submitting to the Father’s will in this scene?**

**Read Philippians 2:5-10. How do you see Christ’s submission bringing glory to the Father in this passage?**

Jesus’ submission to God brought God glory. It reflected the nature of God’s goodness back to the world. This is an important distinction to make. Our submission to God is rooted in God’s goodness. It’s a response to the loving nature of a good Father.

Calhoun explains, “Godly submission is rooted in God’s good and loving intentions for each one of us. Submission is not something God forces down our throats—because forcing people to submit is oppression. Therefore, biblical submission does not trap people in abusive relationships that rob them of their freedom. Submission is a way we allow God’s kingdom agenda to shape our choices, relationships and vocations. And it always works in conjunction with our personal freedom. Scripture makes it clear that God has a plan and knows the best way for people to live. Submission is trusting that God’s instructions concerning this life are good for us. Instructions to forgive, serve and love are not given to abuse us but to set us free to be who you were meant to be.”<sup>9</sup>

God gives us the freedom to choose whether we will submit to him. He invites us and then leaves the response in our court. Submission is perhaps the most important step as we move toward God’s will, leaving our own behind.

**What is your reaction to the word *submission*?**

**What submitting experiences have you had?**

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<sup>8</sup> Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* (Intervarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL, 2005), 136.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



**What is Jesus asking you to submit to in your life right now?**

**Take a few moments to pray this prayer penned by Charles de Foucauld:**

*Father,  
I abandon myself into your hands;  
do with me what you will.  
Whatever you may do, I thank you;  
I am ready for all, I accept all.*

*Let only your will be done in me,  
and in all your creatures—  
I wish no more than this, O Lord.  
Into your hands I commend my soul:  
I offer it to you with all the love of my heart,  
for I love you, Lord, and so need  
to give myself, to surrender myself into your hands  
without reserve and with boundless confidence,  
for you are my Father. Amen.*

As we give over control to the One we trust with indifference and step into submission, we move toward dying to ourselves...

## Day 5—Willing to Die

Evening had already fallen. The meal was over. Their bellies were full. But Jesus knew. He knew what was coming. The darkness swirled around him, reminding him of the suffering ahead.

But beyond the suffering was a beautiful hope—the hope of resurrection. This was Jesus’ “YES.” His yes to the Father was going to bring new life into the world.

As we let go of control, trusting and fully submitting to God our own will with indifference, we will have to die to ourselves. But death is always a part of the resurrection equation. Nothing can be raised to life without first dying.

Ronald Rolheiser shares of the two types of death: “there is *terminal* death and there is *paschal* (pas-kal) death. Terminal death is a death that ends life and ends possibilities. Paschal death, like terminal death, is real. However, paschal death is a death that, while ending one kind of life, opens the person undergoing it to receive a deeper and richer form of life.”<sup>10</sup> He goes on to explain paschal death as the image of the grain of wheat falling to the ground in death so it can produce new life. Something has to die in order to produce new life.

Rolheiser also shares of two types of life: “There is *resuscitated* life and there is *resurrected* life. Resuscitated life is when one is restored to one’s former life and health, as is the case with someone who has been clinically dead and is brought back to life. Resurrected life is not this. It is not a restoration of one’s old life but the reception of a radically new life.”<sup>11</sup> He uses the difference between the resurrection of Jesus versus the resuscitation of Lazarus in scripture. The outcomes of each of these were very diverse.

This is the vision of why we truly die to ourselves. We want to die a “paschal” death so a richer, deeper life in Christ can be formed. Every time we surrender to the will of the Father, something else in us dies, so new life can come.

A few weeks ago, in Mark 8:34, we saw Jesus calling to the crowd and his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” We talked about how truly denying ourselves through self-control alone isn’t possible. Just as we cannot white-knuckle our way to the cross, we cannot white-knuckle our way to truly submitting to the will of God. This work has to be the work of the Spirit at work in us.

**Read Mark 8:31-9:1 with these life and death definitions in mind. What do you notice?**

**What new insights do you notice about this passage that you didn’t see before?**

**How do you view it differently in light of this week’s passage (Mark 14:32-42)?**

**Read Philippians 3:7-11.**

**What would it look like right now for you “to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings?”**

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<sup>10</sup> Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing* (Crown Publishing Group: New York, NY, 2014), 146.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

How has control, trust, indifference, and submission shown up for you this week? How have you been changed this week as a result of sitting with Jesus?

Where do you need to die to self so you can experience resurrection?

Spend a few moments sitting with this prayer by German pastor, Dietrich Bonhoeffer

*Lord, whatsoever this day may bring, Thy name be praised.*

*Be gracious unto me and help me.*

*Grant me strength to bear whatsoever Thou dost send,*

*And let not fear overrule me.*

*I trust Thy grace, and commit my life wholly into Thy Hands.*

*Whether I live or whether I die, I am with Thee and Thou are with me.*

*Lord, I wait for Thy salvation, and for the coming of Thy Kingdom. Amen.*