

Daystar Television Network's co-host of *Celebration* and talk show host of *JONI*

# JONILAMB

# SURRENDER



YOUR ANSWER TO LIVING

*with* PEACE,

POWER & PURPOSE

# SURRENDER

*All*

YOUR ANSWER *to* LIVING  
*with* PEACE,  
POWER & PURPOSE

# JONI LAMB



WATERBROOK  
P R E S S

SURRENDER ALL

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television personality **Joni Lamb** is executive producer and host of the daily *JONI* show, a talk show on Daystar Television, which earned the National Religious Broadcasters Talk Show of the Year award in 2004.

A lively and sometimes unpredictable half-hour talk show, broadcast twice a day, the *JONI* show covers a wide range of relevant issues, controversial subjects, and hard-hitting news topics with candor and wit. It features life-changing testimonies and expert opinions, an array of notable guests, and a fresh perspective on issues ranging from health and nutrition to divorce and raising children. The show reaches a broad, multicultural audience that transcends denomination and race by focusing on the importance and relevance of the gospel in today's society.

Joni and her husband, Marcus Lamb, president/CEO of Daystar Television Network, built and founded Daystar, which owns more than fifty television stations, reaches approximately 75 million homes in the U.S., and goes into every country of the world.

The Lambs live in Dallas, Texas, and are the parents of three children: Jonathan, Rachel, and Rebecca. Their family ministers frequently throughout the country.

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## Foreword

Joni Lamb is a remarkable woman! Many of you know this from seeing her on television. But did you know that one of the remarkable things about her is that “what you see, is what you get”? The way Joni is on television is the way she is at home, at the grocery store, at the service station, and at a ball game, and that is one of her charms. She is genuine—and she is as beautiful on the inside as she is on the outside.

I know because I’ve been blessed to be married to her for twenty-five incredible years. And I’m more in love with her today than ever. Though at times our journey has been difficult, Joni and I have both learned to surrender. And that’s what drove Joni to write this book. You see, it wasn’t Joni’s idea to write a book, especially about herself. She was asked to do this. After praying, God spoke to her heart: *Surrender*.

That one word is truly the story of her life. Again, I know because I have been right there with her every step of the way. Joni and I are strong believers in destiny and purpose. If we weren’t, there wouldn’t be a Daystar Television Network reaching millions of people around the world! We know that God does have a plan and a purpose for your life. You have only to surrender to Him to see His best plan fulfilled in your life.

In this book, Joni will give you many examples of how to surrender—examples from her own life and the lives of the many others she’s interviewed on television. (True to her nature, Joni doesn’t keep the book just about herself, but allows many other wonderful people to be shared as well.) These are true life stories, and you will identify with many of them. You will laugh and cry and rejoice—and you will be inspired to apply

many of the lessons learned to your own life. You also will want to share this book with family and friends and refer back to many of its stories again and again.

For now, sit back, get comfortable, grab a pillow, a cup of coffee, and some tissues and get ready to go on a ride of adventure as Joni Lamb leads you down the road of surrender. At the end of the road, you will find God's best plan for you—and you will not be disappointed!

Marcus D. Lamb, founder and president  
Daystar Television Network  
Dallas, Texas

## Preface

*I* was six years old when I first became aware of God's presence. My friend Laurie Pierce and I were playing at her house a few miles from mine in Greenville, South Carolina. We were in her wooded backyard, on the swing set. I don't remember what Laurie said or did that made me angry, but I responded by pushing my best friend off her swing. She fell hard and ran to the house crying. I stood there feeling guilty and afraid until Laurie's mother came outside and knelt down beside me.

"Did you push Laurie off the swing?" she asked.

I stared at the ground where my toe was making little circles in the dirt.

"Now, Joni, I wasn't out here to see what happened, but *you* know what happened. And there is someone else who also knows what happened because He sees everything," she said. "So let's just pray and ask Him about it."

Immediately I experienced, for the very first time, an overwhelming sensation and realization of God's presence. I comprehended His omnipresence and omniscience. And I grasped the fact that I was accountable to Him.

"I did it," I said to Laurie's mother—then promptly started crying, not so much in fear as in gratitude for the wonderful gift she had given me.

Laurie's mother sat on one of the swings and pulled me into a gentle hug. She shared with me the story of Jesus, the Son of God. Best of all, she told me that He loved me. I grew up in a Christian family, so I had heard of God's love before; but on that day, the truth of those words resonated in my young brain, my consciousness, and my soul.



Laurie's mother must have sensed that something spiritual and profound had occurred. "Let's pray and ask Jesus to forgive you," she said.

That prayer marked my first step in the lifelong process of surrendering in every aspect of my life to Jesus, the Son of God. I was instilled with a reverential fear of God. I realized that God loved me, but He was also aware of my every action and my every thought. I realized that if I did something hurtful, I not only disappointed Him, I hurt Him.

Surrendering control of my life to my Creator began as an act of reverence, but it resulted in exciting joy and wonderful comfort. From my earliest realization of God's existence, to my full surrender to God at age twenty, to my continued walk with the Holy Spirit now as a middle-aged woman, I have placed my life in the Lord's hands.

I share my story and the stories of others who have surrendered to the Lord in hopes that you will grasp the simple yet profound importance of surrendering your life to the One who created us all. Surrender doesn't guarantee a worry-free life. We are still faced with struggles and trials along with our daily victories and moments of great hope. My desire, most of all, is to help you find your place in a world full of chaos and human suffering. There is a place of peace, power, and purpose in this world—and it begins with one word. *Surrender.*

# Introduction

The desert surrounding the holy city of Jerusalem seems like a romantic place to get a call from God, but it's not as glamorous as it sounds. The ground is hard and unforgiving, full of deep and deadly crevices, as if a giant creature had carved the land with massive fingernails to trap unsuspecting travelers—much like the Path of Surrender we followed to obey that call. But here is where my husband, Marcus, and I began the journey that brought us through “crevices” deeper than any we saw in the Sinai Desert as we traveled through Egypt.

We had only been in the Bedouin region for a short time, when Marcus noticed something unusual: a satellite antenna poked up from the top of each tent in this dry and barren landscape. It seemed incongruous, this modern technology in so simple and harsh a land. Marcus realized that God had been planting a vision in his heart and mind, telling him that television is a tool for spreading the Lord's teachings to a vast audience—anywhere in the world, day and night.

God had come up with a very tall order for us in the Holy Land. At that point, in March 1983, we were newly married. We were on the road constantly, preaching and ministering with revivals in twenty states. We knew nothing about operating a television station, Christian or otherwise. So when the Lord spoke to Marcus while he was standing on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem about moving to Montgomery, Alabama, he said three things to God.

1. *Why would You ask me to stop doing something You were blessing—evangelism!—in order to go and build a Christian TV station?*
2. *Lord, I don't know how to build a Christian TV station.*
3. *Lord, I don't have a million dollars to build a Christian TV station!*

You might think that God would respond with a lengthy dialogue to answer all those questions after giving Marcus such a tall order. But all He did was repeat the assignment: *Go to Montgomery and build a Christian television station.*

Marcus and I were excited by this, but we were also flustered and more than a little clueless about how to get started. We puzzled over it for several months. Then, in the fall of 1983, Marcus decided that we needed to seriously focus on it. He suggested that we go on a three-day fast to make sure we were clear on what the Lord wanted us to do.

Like most other women, I'd done my share of dieting, even back when I really didn't need to diet. But I'd never gone on a three-day fast where you didn't eat even a carrot stick or a bran muffin. Let me tell you, it is no walk in the park. I thought I was going to die! After the first day, the headaches were excruciating. But we both persevered through prayer, and when it was over, Marcus felt the Lord had made it very clear that we were to find a way to start a Christian television station.

By the following January, we were in Montgomery.

## Risking All

A few years before, Marcus had been helping a Montgomery minister in his efforts to build a television station—long before we had any thoughts of doing it ourselves. This minister, whom Marcus and I had preached for, had gotten a permit for a broadcast license. He'd raised quite a bit of money, but the Federal Communications Commission sets a time limit when it issues permits, and the funds weren't coming in fast enough for him to make the deadline. If you don't build your station within the allotted time, you lose your permit. Our friend was facing that predicament, so he'd decided to sell his permit.

Again, at that point, we were ministering around the country and not at all thinking about starting a television station. So Marcus had helped our Montgomery friend sell his permit to another group of Christians we knew from Kentucky who'd been looking for a broadcast license. It was strange because Marcus kept getting pulled back into this deal, investing money into the project, even though he wasn't part of the ownership. It was as if we were being prepared for a role that we could not foresee.

As it turned out, the Kentucky group couldn't get their deal put together to build a station in Montgomery. By the time they went looking for a buyer, God had clued us in on His plan for us. Suddenly, we were ready to take on the mission ourselves. We entered into an agreement to buy the Montgomery permit. The FCC gave us the same deadline, which was about eighteen months, to get the station up and running.

We gave it our best shot, but we were a couple of newlywed evangelists, still in our twenties. We weren't venture capitalists. Neither of us even knew what venture capitalists were. Back then, we'd seen our share of church bake sales, but we'd never had to raise such serious capital. Initially we borrowed money from family members. We borrowed against our

home. We took money out of savings and sold investments. I'm not sure, but Marcus may have taken a paper route and sold lemonade on street corners, trying to make it happen. As the deadline approached, the vultures were circling. Other groups were trying to buy the permit out from under us because they didn't think we could pull it off. And we had doubts about it too.

We'd surrendered it to God and did the best we could to follow His plan for us, but as that deadline loomed it sure seemed like we were going to come up short. Marcus told me we were running out of time and money. Finally one day in exasperation he asked me: "Joni, are you willing to lose all that we have and everything our friends and family have given us because we believe God wants us to build this Christian television station?"

I was still new at the wife thing, but I stood by my man as best as I could, and I really believed we had a mandate from God as well. "Whatever you think we should do, Marcus, I'm with you," I said. At that point, we realized that we could lose everything, but we were willing to take that risk because we knew God had spoken to us.

Marcus felt God had called us to start this Christian station in Montgomery and that we had to do whatever it took to fulfill that mission. "The money belongs to Him, not us. And if I have to work a secular job the rest of my life to pay it back, I'm willing to do that," he said.

And so we surrendered our finances to the Lord. We risked it all, and we very easily could have lost it all.

## Community Effort

As a first grader, Marcus got fifty cents a week for allowance, which covered his recess Popsicle habit since they were only ten cents back then. But

then Marcus learned about tithing 10 percent, which meant that he should give a nickel to the collection box at church. He did the math and figured he'd be a nickel short one day a week at Popsicle time. It was one of his first big challenges of faith. Did he tithe or did he keep the nickel so he could continue having a Popsicle at recess every day?

“Even as a little boy, the Devil tried to challenge me about finances,” Marcus says. “He said that a nickel wouldn't make any difference to our church. The Devil tried to reason that it probably cost the church five cents just to provide an envelope for the tithe. But I put God first then and I always have, especially when it comes to finances.”

Marcus and I have seen, both in our personal finances and in the ministry's finances, that if we put God first and surrender our finances to the Lord, then He will take care of us. And God was certainly working on our behalf once we surrendered our finances to Him. A miracle occurred. When we fully committed ourselves to God's will, others invested in that commitment with their own money.

One Sunday afternoon, a man drove by and saw the bumper sticker on our car that said WMCF-TV “45 Alive!” We couldn't have felt more that the opposite—“45 Dead!”—was true. Curious what “45 Alive!” was about, the man stopped and came into our studio to see what we were doing. I was seven months pregnant with our first child, pushing Marcus around on double-decker scaffolding so he could work on raising the drop ceiling for TV lights. Our landlord had the air conditioning turned off to save money, even though it was summer and more than 100 degrees in the room. Seeing our dedication and realizing we were working in this hot building all alone, this man's heart was touched. He wrote a check for \$1,000, and said he would be back the next morning with his pickup truck and tools to help us do the work. We were like little kids building a tree

house out of scrap lumber, but eventually others caught the vision for Christian television and joined in to help us.

We built our first television station with borrowed money, baling wire, duct tape, and papier-mâché. I'm serious about that. We got the station up and running and on the air thanks largely to the fact that two other local stations were updating their equipment. They were throwing out all of their old electronics, including a transmitter made for black-and-white television that was being sent to the dump. Whatever they put on the curb, including that transmitter, we took. We had three cameras that looked like they'd been part of Dr. Frankenstein's laboratory; our castoff transmitter was the oldest model in the country. I'm surprised it didn't have a hand-crank starter.

But we had the Lord on our broadcast team. His plan—and a whole lot of duct tape and silicone—got WMCF-TV 45 on the air on October 12, 1985, as the first full-power Christian television station ever built in Alabama. Someone told us we were the youngest couple ever to build a television station in the United States, but we knew better. We knew that it was the Lord's station and the result of His work through us and the many, many other people who pitched in with their money, skills, time, prayers, and support.

## Personal Cost

Even though Marcus and I believed our new television station was God's plan, that didn't mean God stepped in and made every production something heavenly. We were definitely Christian broadcasters-in-training for a long, long time. Once the station was on the air, we somehow kept it going, but it was amateur hour. And it wasn't always pretty to watch. Our part-time accountant made a mistake and our check to the power company

bounced—so the studio’s electricity was cut off during one show. Our three very old rummage sale cameras had lenses that somehow made Marcus’s eyes look like a raccoon’s. It may have been an act of God when all three cameras blew up on the same day.

While we were struggling to get our seat-of-the-pants Christian broadcast operation going with only one paid engineer and a bunch of volunteers, we didn’t have any income to speak of, so we had to surrender our personal financial situation to God too. We needed a second car for Marcus, so he bought an old rust-bucket Datsun for \$400. (There was no extra charge for the hole in the floorboard.) The car was such a junker that its engine once burst into flames while he was driving it on the highway.

Our vehicles and broadcast equipment weren’t the only problems in the early days of WMCF-TV. When I first started appearing on the air with Marcus, I was so nervous I’d get nauseous before every show and my mouth would dry up so much that I could hardly talk. As a result I didn’t say much at first. Finally, one afternoon when I was getting ready, the Holy Spirit said, “Just go and be yourself, and I’ll go with you. I’ll tell you what to say and even give you the questions to ask.” I still follow His guidance today. I am totally dependent on Him. He has been my teacher, and we’ve been working together ever since.

Thanks to another blessing, I also became quite adept at multitasking at our first television station. Our son Jonathan was born in the early days of WMCF-TV, and I often kept him in a baby carrier just off the studio set after I joined Marcus on the air. If Jonathan started crying, I would walk off the set, feed him, rock him to sleep, or change his diaper. God showed us that we had to nurture, love, and protect our newborn TV station just like our newborn son, who was born October 19, 1985, seven days after we first went on the air.

Of course, just as we began to feel as if we knew what we were doing in Montgomery, the Lord came a-knocking with a new plan for us. He



began to deal with Marcus about going to Dallas and acquiring a broadcast license there, which set off a bit of a mad scramble as we tried to figure out how to pull off that new mission. God's goal for us was to reach ten times as many people with the good news of the gospel. We couldn't see how to accomplish that while also keeping the station in Montgomery, so we decided to sell WMCF.

It quickly became apparent that the wisest money move would be to sell the station to one of the secular groups bidding to buy it from us for big sums of cash so they could turn it into a network affiliate. We could have justified that move easily enough by saying that the additional dollars from the sale would give us more funds to reach a bigger audience in Dallas. But God let Marcus know that He wanted the Montgomery station to remain a voice for Christian broadcasting. He told Marcus that even if we sell our station to a Christian group for less money that He would make up for every lost dollar after we got to Dallas. In 1990 we sold the Montgomery station for just the debt owed on it, ensuring that it would continue to broadcast Christian content twenty-four hours a day just as God wanted. Basically, we sold that station for about one fourth of what we could have gotten from a secular group.

But the biggest act of financial surrender came in the fact that we had to sign a no-compete clause with the buyers. The deal demanded that for at least five years we could not have a program on television or build another Christian television station within a hundred miles. That was a great surrender because we had been doing the daily program in Montgomery for almost seven years. People had watched our children and our ministry grow up over that time.

We were torn about giving up the daily ministry program and television station in order to follow the Lord's plan in Dallas. Marcus said he felt like

King Solomon confronted with the two women who both claimed the baby was theirs. But the true mother was willing to give up her baby to ensure its survival. Marcus only hoped that we'd made as wise a decision in giving up our "baby" in Montgomery for the unknown undertaking awaiting us in Dallas. We gave up a great deal in Montgomery. Plus, the Christian buyers required us to do seller financing, so we struggled for several years to pay off all our creditors. We also surrendered the daily ministry program and the pulpit it provided for reaching so many people with God's Word.

When Marcus first told me about the Lord's plan for us in Dallas, I was willing to do it; but neither of us had any idea where we would get the financing that such a move would require, especially since we'd made no money on the Montgomery sale. It seemed impossible at first. We had the faith, but the bankers needed more than that.

We learned that there was a permit for a station in the Dallas area for sale, but it was priced at over a million dollars. We needed \$10,000 just to bind the contract to purchase the permit—and we didn't have that either. To add to the pressure, we had only a week to come up with the \$10,000 because the guy selling the permit said he had another potential buyer.

Again we surrendered this grand plan and all of the financial requirements to the Lord, figuring He was going to lead us to this station in Dallas in His own good time, through His own means. It seemed a little crazy then to enter into a contract for more than a million dollars when we didn't even have the \$10,000 for the earnest money, and it still does today. But Marcus knew the Lord would guide us penny by penny. We prayed and the answer came. The Lord reminded Marcus that, as a college graduation present from his parents, he had been given five acres of rural land that was a part of his family's homestead outside Macon, Georgia. Marcus had never dreamed of selling the land because it was part of his family's

heritage. There was even a road named Marcus Road that cut through it. But the Lord had His own road in mind.

We talked about selling the land to raise the earnest money, but it didn't seem possible to pull off a transaction quickly enough to meet the one-week deadline. It takes time to survey the land, list with a Realtor, and complete all the other steps involved in getting property on the market. Even if we could quickly find a buyer, he or she would have to get approval for a loan and set up a closing, which usually takes more than a month.

But when you surrender your finances to the Lord's plan, some amazing things can happen. Marcus learned that his parents' neighbor had expressed an interest in adding to her property. He called her and asked if she would be interested in buying his five acres for \$10,000.

"I'll buy it," she said.

Amazingly, she wrote a check for the full amount, and the deal was done in just a few days.

Ten thousand dollars was a lot of money for us to have in 1986, but there was no talk of doing anything but putting it toward the purchase of the station permit in Dallas. This was a surrender not only of that money, but also of Marcus's portion of the family homestead. The \$10,000 allowed us to secure the permit to buy the station in Dallas that became the foundation of the Daystar Television Network. If we hadn't been willing to surrender the family land and the money that came from it, we might never have built what we have today.

## Obstacles

We had to sell our house in Montgomery before we could move to Dallas and start building a television station there. We needed the money from

that sale to finance a home in Dallas. We had a nice house in a good neighborhood, and we felt sad about leaving it. Still, we gladly followed the Lord's direction and put up a For Sale sign. We found a buyer and prepared to close. But on the very day we were supposed to close, the Alabama Department of Revenue garnished the equity from the sale of our home.

Several weeks before this closing, a man and woman came knocking on our door. Marcus greeted them, only to be informed that they were agents from the Alabama Department of Revenue, the state's version of the federal Internal Revenue Service. The revenue agents later informed Marcus that they were putting a lien on our house for \$22,000 because they claimed we owed that much in back taxes. Marcus said it was one of the most difficult moments of his life when he had to tell me about the state's allegations. He was afraid I'd feel he had failed us somehow. But I know my husband. I had faith that Marcus always took care of business in an honest and upright manner.

The investigation meant we couldn't receive the proceeds from the sale of our own house until we got the matter straightened out. It also meant that we had to prove our innocence—that we did not owe any back taxes. We had received no prior warning of this. A letter giving notice came in the mail a few days *after* the revenue agents showed up on our doorstep. We had to wonder if the Enemy wasn't trying to block us from following the Lord's plan in Dallas, especially when the revenue agents informed us that they planned to audit all of our finances for the past five years.

It was embarrassing, frustrating, and scary, but we knew we had nothing to hide. So once again, we surrendered to God's will—and a very good accountant. The accountant told us that the state's revenue agents weren't even following their own tax laws in their claims against us. Apparently, they arbitrarily had disallowed exemptions that were legally ours to claim

under state and federal laws. The accountant was outraged. He felt that we had been singled out because we were on Christian television.

While the accountants and lawyers fought it out, we struggled with what to do. We sold our home, but we couldn't collect our equity until this mess was straightened out. We had to get to Dallas where God had called us. So we ended up renting a U-Haul because we didn't have the money to hire a moving company. We drove to Dallas, pulling the U-Haul trailer behind our Honda Accord with our two kids in the back seat. Once there, we rented a two-bedroom apartment in Euless, outside Dallas, as a temporary home. It was tough because we were basically starting all over again, and this time we would be farther away from our families in South Carolina and Georgia; but we committed ourselves to the surrender, trusting that the Lord would work it out for us.

In the meantime, we had no money coming in, which was a real challenge. We got through that difficult time by remembering God's promise to Marcus: we would be blessed for selling our Montgomery station to the Christian buyers for the debt that was owed on it versus selling it for more money to a secular businessman, who would have turned it into a secular TV station. We kept the faith even as we struggled in the first few years in the Dallas area.

## God Provides

In a God-ordained turn of events, our Alabama accountant became so incensed with the state's disregard for its own laws and regulations that he called the state tax commissioner and informed him that he would do whatever it took to see justice in our case and would not be charging us further for his services. Furthermore, he went to state officials with the evi-

dence and all of our documentation. In the end the state agreed we had done nothing wrong. Marcus had always prepared all of our taxes, and the state found that he'd done them honestly and correctly. We didn't owe them a dollar. As a result, the Alabama Department of Revenue sent us a check for 100 percent of the money they garnished, plus interest.

Once our tax troubles were cleared up, we were able to start looking for a home and focus on our new life in suburban Dallas. Again, we had a struggle to get our new station, KMPX-TV 29, on the air. Our biggest challenge was getting a broadcast tower; but finally, after three years, we began broadcasting in 1993, from a leased studio in the Dallas Communications Complex.

God had sent us into the broadcast world at a time of great change in the industry. We bought KMPX just as federal deregulation was making more channels available in the market. The increased number of stations on the market resulted in lower prices. Just as the Lord guided us into Christian broadcasting, it became far less expensive to get into the market. At the same time, ownership restrictions were eased and UHF stations were made more equal to other broadcast entities. Another factor worked in our favor—cable television companies were required to carry local stations, giving us access to their subscribers. Even though it took us years to see it, the Lord's plan was working.

In August of 1997, our Dallas area ministry moved into a new 32,000-square-foot office facility. Then, on New Year's Eve, we officially launched the Daystar Television Network with our first live broadcast featuring Bishop T. D. Jakes preaching from The Potter's House in Dallas. With our success in Dallas, we were able to purchase a UHF station in Macon—Marcus's hometown—and then a noncommercial station in Denver. Those three stations were the foundation for Daystar.

In the year 2000, the FCC allowed twenty-four-hour religious programming on noncommercial television stations that could not sell advertising. Such stations are not as expensive to purchase, which made it possible for us to keep growing our network in major markets, gaining access to more viewers for the Lord's work. By late 2001, Daystar had grown to include eighteen television stations. By the end of 2002, we were broadcasting nationally on Direct TV and the Dish Network.

In March of 2003, Daystar launched on the Hot Bird 6 satellite, broadcasting into seventy-four countries, and on the Thaicom 3 satellite, broadcasting into fifty-nine countries. That December, we moved our headquarters into a new 90,000-square-foot International Ministry Center with two state-of-the-art production studios. Our new facility was located on a major freeway near the Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport.

By 2004 our broadcast ministry had become a network with TV stations in thirty-six cities around the country. Our satellite broadcasts also beamed into Europe and Asia. It took nearly ten years of challenging times, but God's plan finally began to work for us in amazing and wondrous ways. That same year, after a long period of negotiation and some brilliant decisions that Marcus made with the Lord's guidance, we did a simultaneous transaction that proved to be the blessing that God had promised us back in Montgomery.

KMPX-TV 29 was a full-power UHF commercial station with a limited broadcast range, so it wasn't exactly the perfect fit to cover all of the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. But the Lord showed Marcus how to leverage KMPX to buy what was a much better station for us. We sold KMPX for \$37 million and then used just \$19.5 million of those proceeds to purchase KDTN, a more powerful noncommercial VHF station that could

broadcast to a half million more viewers. It even came with the perfect call letters, KDTN, for the Daystar Television Network. Plus we were able to bank the \$17.5 million difference, which funded our efforts to reach even more people with God's Word.

One of the challenges of surrender is that you have to be patient and wait for God to work His plan on His schedule. Often, as mere mortals, we cannot understand His ways. We grow impatient and confused and even angry when we lack understanding. But many times Marcus and I have been blessed when we have trusted and waited.

In our efforts to reach more people with Christian programming, we had filed with the FCC in September of 1996 for a permit to build another television station in a high-growth area, Phoenix, Arizona. It took more than three years for that process to unfold. We finally got the permit in December of 1999. This noncommercial station, which had strong coverage in the market, came to us at a bargain. It cost us only a few thousand dollars to apply and less than \$1 million to build the station. (Isn't it funny how our perspectives change?)

Within a few short years, we were approached by several groups about selling that station because of the explosive growth in Phoenix. We didn't want to leave the Phoenix market because we felt it needed a voice for Christian broadcasting, so we ended up doing a deal with NBC, which is owned by General Electric, one of the five largest companies in the world! NBC, which was eager to reach more Hispanic viewers, needed a bigger broadcast presence in the booming region. In June of 2006, NBC traded us three smaller television stations in the Phoenix area for our single, larger, noncommercial station. It worked out well for both sides since we each obtained the stations that were best suited to our needs. Financially, it was an even better deal. They gave us \$50 million plus the three TV stations for a



combined value of \$76 million, which was a pretty nice trade for our station, in which we'd only invested about \$1 million.

As Marcus says, there is no way that we were ever smart enough or talented enough to pull off that kind of deal on our own. It was God's hand. He rewarded us for our faith and our surrender in financial matters to His will.

Marcus and I believe that all of the ministry's money and all of our personal money belongs to God and that we have to be good stewards with what the Lord has given us. We had many lean years when we lived as traveling evangelists, totally dependent on the Lord to meet our needs. And we have had many fruitful years. We have learned, in either case, to surrender all of our financial matters to His will and to always be aboveboard in our dealings. We are open about our finances and have our books audited by an independent accounting firm yearly. We always stress that our mission is not to make money; it is to do good works, to minister to people as an extension of the church, and to spread the good news of the gospel.

Now that we have more money coming in, we consider it our responsibility to give more away or to spend it in ways that honor and glorify the Lord and add to His kingdom. Daystar has given more than \$21 million over the last few years to help people across America and around the world, including victims of 9/11, the tsunami, and Hurricane Katrina. We encourage our viewers to tithe to their local churches, not to send tithes to us. If they want to make a freewill and faith offering to us, then we will use that money to try to reach more people with God's Word. We want donations to Daystar to come from the heart, not out of compulsion or need. We have already been given so much from God; we want people to give only if they wish to partner with us and join in reaching others for Christ.

The process of financial surrender never ends. It only grows greater

with the more blessings you have. Financial surrender can't be for your own glory. It must be for His. Some people believe that as they prosper they don't need to lean on God anymore, but He always wants us to be dependent upon Him. He always wants us to look to Him as our source. Isaiah 1:19 tells us, "If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land."



# The Path of Surrender

*S*urrender simply means to give up control. For many people, the thought of giving up control is a scary one. Who doesn't like to be in control, make their own decisions, and choose what the future holds?

That all sounds good, but I'd like to ask you a question before you run off deciding what you want to do with your life: do you believe there is a God?

I want to challenge you with the thought that God is concerned about you and your life.

There are always those naysayers who will tell you, "God doesn't care about me, nor is He concerned about my life." But for a moment, stop trying to figure out God.

This is a moment you should stop to consider the word *surrender* and at the same time catch a glimpse of the One who desires to be an intimate

part of your life. It leads you to the place where you'll find the peace that you've wanted.

You have nothing to lose but fear, disappointment, and a lack of purpose, so take a journey in exploring this question:

Are you ready to live with more peace, power, and purpose?

## A Beginning

Start by looking at the word *surrender*. The word has many powerful connotations. For some, the idea evokes fear. For others, it's a sign of weakness. Many consider surrender a failure and associate it with shame.

Surrender to God doesn't mean you will have to do something you are afraid of doing. He puts the dreams and desires in your heart so that you know whatever comes is right. If being a missionary in a third-world country isn't a dream or desire of yours, God won't ask you to do that. He will find the best way to use you to advance the kingdom of God.

Surrendering to God is not an act of weakness. God uses your submission to bring great power into your life.

There is a wonderful historical and biblical account about a woman named Esther—an account that I think of when I picture what the power in surrender means. Esther gives us a perfect example of a surrendered life. As a young, orphaned Jewish girl in a society that wasn't keen on her heritage, she accepted the assignment to prepare herself as a possible candidate to be queen. The king was looking for a wife, and there would be many young ladies that would go before him. Although the chances looked pretty slim that Esther would be chosen, she followed God's Path of Surrender. She had no idea that her God-given positioning would eventually give her the opportunity to save her people. But when Esther did become queen,

she not only stepped up to what God called her to do but also touched the heart of the king, and she gained influence in a time and season that was pivotal for the Jewish people. Esther would later agree with her mentor and only surviving family member, Mordecai, who knew she was born “for such a time as this.”

Today Esther is remembered as a woman who obeyed God with her future and in the process became a woman of great power and influence, whose bravery is forever etched in the hearts of the Jewish people.

Her example speaks to all of us that surrendering to God does not mean failure. She reminds us that God’s laws are diametrically opposed to our carnal flesh. For instance, God says to love your enemies. Man says to hate your enemies. God says to forgive. Man says to not forgive. God says to bless those that curse you. Man says to curse those who curse you (see Luke 6:27–35). There are spiritual laws that supersede what our carnal flesh wants to do. The Bible says a carnal mind cannot understand the things of the Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 2:14). So your flesh will tell you that surrendering to God is failing or giving up, when in reality you are gaining everything in life that holds true value or significance. The truth is that instead of failing, you will succeed, and in the process you will find peace that passes all understanding.

Surrendering to God means allowing Him to do what He wants to do with your life; it puts you smack-dab in the center of God’s will. There is no finer or more fulfilling experience than to be doing what He wants us to do.

All of us have impaired vision—not the sort of impairment that requires glasses, contacts, or laser surgery; but a limitation due to our humanity. We can’t see what God sees. Most of us can hardly look ahead a month or two. It is difficult for me to plan a few weeks out because of our family’s hectic

schedule. Yet the Lord's view is infinite. God knows each of us before we appear in our mother's womb (see Jeremiah 1:5). He created us, from our toes to our talents. That difference between our vision and God's vision is what Texans call a "whoppin' difference."

## The Path of Surrender

When we agree to follow God's plan, the impact is eternal. Surrender takes us out of the earthly realm and beyond our own capacity to understand the vast implications and puts us on a path to eternity. Giving our gifts back to God frees Him to put them to their highest use with His infinite power and wisdom.

### *Step 1: Acknowledge Your Need for God*

The first step in the Path of Surrender is to believe in God and to acknowledge that there is a void in you that only He can fill.

Think of yourself as a puzzle and God as the four important edge pieces. If God is not a part of your life, you feel an aching emptiness and a lack of direction, which can affect your relationships, your career, your emotions, your health. Some have never considered framing their lives with God's plan; others lost God's purpose by falling into ungodly living.

At the ripe old age of eighteen, I'd reached that critical first step in the Path of Surrender. I was a believer and I loved God, but I didn't know how desperately I needed Him. All my attention was on the young man I had met and would continue to date for two years.

This guy, a popular guy a bit older than I, first saw me at homecoming when I was a high school senior, and he called me for a date. I was performing in a church play that night and invited him to come along. To my

surprise, he agreed. He got all dressed up and sat with my mom and dad. It must have been way out of his comfort zone, and I had to give him credit for doing it. After the production, however, when he asked me to get something to eat, I turned him down. He was nice looking, but I just didn't feel comfortable around him. I told him that the cast was going out and that I'd better go with them.

I didn't hear from him for three months. Then one day he called me again and asked if I would go out with him. I wasn't dating anyone at the time, and I'd felt a little guilty about how I'd treated him, so we went out and the courtship began. I grew comfortable with him. He was a perfect gentleman who went to church with me and called me every day. He was kind and considerate.

Six months later I thought I was in love with this young man. Some of my friends questioned the relationship. My parents, who liked him initially, began to doubt his sincerity. I told my doubting friends and parents that they had no proof he was a bad person, and I ignored my own growing sense of unease.

I had never partied or smoked or drank or done drugs. My social life had always been centered on family, friends, church, and youth group activities. My love for God was very strong. I knew it wasn't the same for my boyfriend, but I thought men had to be a certain way until they finally settled down. He didn't hide the fact that when he was away from me, he smoked, drank, and partied—and I knew he was pushing and pulling me in ways that conflicted with my value system. I consoled myself with the fact that he claimed to be a Christian, he went to church with me, and he treated me well. Plus, like so many young women, I thought I could fix the man in my life.

Finally, God decided that I needed a wake-up call. One night we went

with another couple to a restaurant where they also had music and dancing. I loved to dance. When we sat down to dinner, the other girl's boyfriend asked me to keep his car keys in my purse because his date had left her purse in the car. We ate and then danced until it was time for me to get home. I had an earlier curfew, at 11:00 p.m., so my boyfriend took me in his car and dropped me off.

Just as I walked in the side door, the other girl's date called and said that I still had his car keys in my purse. It was a pretty long drive back to the restaurant, so I thought I'd just jump in my car and catch up to my boyfriend, give him the keys, and let him take them back to our friend. I drove toward my boyfriend's house, thinking that's where he had gone, but on the way I noticed his Camaro parked in front of a pool hall and bar. I pulled up next to it, and there he was standing next to his car with his arm around a girl.

You can imagine the look on his face when he saw me. He pushed her away and asked me what I was doing there. I threw our friend's car keys at him, but before I could drive away, he put his head in my window and started talking to me to keep me from leaving. I threatened to run him over, and he stepped back. My little Mustang had never been driven so fast in reverse.

The next day he called and of course had every excuse. He told me he really wasn't doing anything and confessed his undying love for me. My eyes had been opened, but my heart needed more convincing. The trust was gone, but he persisted, giving me all the typical excuses and professing his love for me. We argued, made up, and argued some more in a cycle that kept repeating itself in the weeks that followed.

I had been trying so hard to fix my relationship with this young man, but what I really needed to do was to fix my relationship with the Lord.



And that's when I took my first step on the Path of Surrender: I realized my boyfriend would never fill the emptiness inside of me—and, more importantly—that only God could.

*Step 2: Offer a Prayer of Surrender*

Once you realize how much you need the Lord, the next step is to ask for God's help and intervention. You can't surrender to His will until you invite the Lord to forgive your sins and to come into your heart and your life. This isn't a one-time deal. It needs to be repeated every time you face a challenge in any aspect of your life.

The first time I took this step in the process I was twenty, shortly after the night I saw my boyfriend for what he really was and not what I had wanted him to be. I wrote a letter to the Lord, pouring out my heart and telling Him that I needed help getting back on the proper path:

*July 21, 1980*

*11:26 p.m.*

*I really don't have any idea why I'm writing this, except that I have so much in my heart that I need to say. I wonder over and over again what my life holds and where I'm going. I feel so confused about everything, especially my feelings. I wonder deep in my heart if I'll ever be able to love any man the way I loved him. Deep inside, I know it's better we're apart, but, oh, how my heart burns with pain. I thank the Lord for helping me this far. I pray He'll help me further.*

*Sometimes I pray the Lord just let me die and go to heaven to be with Him. I'm so tired of this old world full of sin. But, oh, how*

*selfish I sound. There are so many other people that need to hear about Jesus.*

*Dear Lord, take my life, use me in whatever way, and I pray You show me the path to follow. I know I don't always understand, but Lord I know You loved me enough to die for me. Oh God, I put my faith in You, and I know with Your hand, my life can be in Your perfect will. I pray I can be close to You always—I love You, Lord Jesus. Thank You for hearing my prayer.*

This letter was my spontaneous Prayer of Surrender; I put that letter under my mattress.

God's call to you may be different than His to me, but if you are listening, you will hear your spiritual alarm going off. When you do, offer your own Prayer of Surrender. It is the proper and only response. Your prayer can be spoken, sung, or delivered in whatever form works best for you—as long as it is heartfelt. It can be as simple as saying: “I ask Your forgiveness of my sins. I believe You sent Your Son to die on the cross for my sins. I commit to doing Your will by surrendering my life to You.”

I encourage you to write your own Prayer of Surrender in the form of a letter. At the end of this book, there is a page for you to write your personal letter to the Lord, if you choose. Of course, there is not one correct way to do this, but a guideline I suggest is to follow the ABCs:

**A**sk for God's forgiveness for your sins.

**B**elieve that His Son died on the cross for your sins.

**C**ommit to surrendering your life to His will.

A lot of people know of God, just as most people know who our president is. Imagine, though, if you were to go up the White House steps,

knock on the door, and say, “I’m here to see the president.” Chances are the president doesn’t know you personally, and you’ll be escorted off the grounds. Likewise, many people know who God is, but they don’t know Him personally. They haven’t invited Him into their hearts and into their lives.

To know God in your heart and soul, you have to ask for His forgiveness, believing that He sent His Son to die on the cross for your sins. And then you have to commit to following the path that He sends you upon.

It is one thing to know the Lord’s name; it is an entirely different matter to put your life in His hands. In Matthew 7:21–23, Jesus tells us: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (NIV).

Many throw around the name of God in a show of piety, but He knows the difference between a name-dropper and a believer. When we get to heaven we will probably all be surprised to find that some who appeared pious were not godly in their hearts, while others who did not sit in the first pews in church are granted entrance to His kingdom because of where they sat with the Lord.

### *Step 3: Use Your Gifts*

After you offer your Prayer of Surrender, the next step is to wait, watch, and pray for God’s plan to reveal itself to you. God most likely won’t send a lightning bolt or open the heavens to speak from above. God is more subtle than that. The way He often works is by giving gifts and talents. Turn on the GPS or your “Gifts Positioning System.” Follow your gifts down the road and see what blessings come.

God endowed you with unique gifts and dreams and desires, and He is not going to let them go to waste, especially once you have surrendered your will to His. For instance, He would not bless you with a brilliant mind for mathematics, if He didn't have a plan for using that gift. Nor would God bless you with a gorgeous singing voice if He didn't want to use it to bless and encourage others. Instead, He will put you in a position to use your talents to His highest glory and to live the dreams He's given you.

When you find yourself on a path that fulfills you, brings you joy, and maximizes your abilities to put God's gifts to work, you can be confident that the Lord is lighting the way.

The Bible says, "A gift opens the way for the giver and ushers him into the presence of the great" (Proverbs 18:16, NIV). Will those blessings come in the form of money in the bank and material things piling up in the garage? Not necessarily. God may bless you with things that money can't buy, such as good health, loving children, service to others, a blessed marriage.

In 3 John 2–4, Jesus says: "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."

You are born with your gifts, but sometimes they lie dormant or undiscovered until you surrender to God's plan for you. Once you have surrendered, you will find your talents blossoming and doors opening to undreamed of opportunities. God may present new dreams to you as well, taking you places that were beyond your ability to see. In Psalm 37:4–6, we are told: "Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do

this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun” (NIV). Best of all, you will experience peace and joy in these new ventures because you know God’s plan is good.

I surrendered in my letter to the Lord, but I still did not know the desires of my own heart. I felt that my relationship with my boyfriend wasn’t going anywhere unless he changed dramatically, but I didn’t take any action yet. I watched, waited, and prayed. During this transition time, I should have been at wit’s end, but knowing I was in God’s hands, I felt an amazing sense of peace.

I was out of school and working in the office of an engineering firm. I started at the bottom of the company as a “runner” for the engineers and eventually was promoted to a data technician position in the purchasing department, working for several of the buyers. Now I realize how God used that season in my life to hone my secretarial skills—skills that I would use again and again in my present-day world with e-mail, letters, and now writing a book.

You may feel like you’re spinning your wheels, but let me assure you that God will use every one of your life experiences in preparation for what He has for you. Within just a few months of writing my own personal surrender letter to the Lord at age twenty, He put me on a path that I had never imagined for myself. In fact, while rereading my letter, I had to chuckle. There I was at twenty years of age wanting to go be with the Lord. Ah, the drama. I can say that, laughing, now. But I couldn’t have said or heard that then, because then I felt like my life was out of order and the choices I’d made weren’t working. The inner struggle was real, and I knew that God was trying to show me something. The problem was I couldn’t see what my future held, and what I saw and what God saw were vastly different things. It would have been easy to surrender if I could have looked

through the telescope of time and viewed the awesome plan God had for me. But I couldn't see the future, and it was time for God to see if he could trust me to trust Him...and there, my friend, is the key.

Are you ready to trust God? Can He trust you to put Him first, even when you don't know what the future holds?

When I wrote that letter of surrender, my life changed. Not overnight, but over time—and forever. The words “Take my life... I put my faith in You, and I know with Your hand, my life can be in Your perfect will” were some of the most powerful I ever uttered. That was my moment of total surrender to God. I was saying in essence, “Take my life and do what You want to do with it”—and guess what?

God did. He took me at my word, and I had no idea what the future held—but it would be beyond my wildest dreams.

Just a few months after I wrote that letter, on a Sunday morning in October 1980, our church had a revival. I was sitting way in the back of the church, but the young evangelist was so dynamic that he had my full attention. At this point I was still hoping I could somehow “fix” my boyfriend, and I thought this evangelist might be able to reach him. I decided to ask him to go to the revival with me that evening. I prepared a little speech about how I wanted him to go to help our relationship. I called him on the telephone to ask him, but before I could get into my pitch about how good this evangelist would be for him, he said he wasn't interested.

“I have plans. I'm going to watch a ballgame with the guys,” he said.

I persisted. He resisted.

“Joni, please, I go to church things with you all the time, but I have plans tonight so just drop it. I'm not going.”

It certainly wasn't our worst disagreement, but he made it clear to me in that conversation that he wasn't at all committed to putting God at the

center of his life. I knew we were at the end of our relationship. It was time to break up. I had no idea what I would do with myself once our relationship was over, but I felt determined to put an end to it.

He was already at his friend's house, so I grabbed my car keys and headed over there. My mom told me later that she had never seen such determination on my face as when I walked through the kitchen and out the side door. When I showed up, he was shocked to see me, of course. I'd never been confrontational or big on drama in our relationship—and I'm sure he never expected me to be the one to call it quits.

"I can't believe you are getting so mad over this," he said, after getting in my car to talk.

I explained that it wasn't just his refusal to go to church with me that night. "Our relationship isn't going to work," I told him. "We are so different. I want to follow God's path. You don't. If we ever got married and raised kids, we would have two different sets of values. There is no way it would work out."

That was it for him. "If you want to break up that's fine," he said angrily. "You can take your God and shove Him." He got out of the car, slammed the door, and walked away.

It was a dramatic moment, and really, a crossroads. As I drove home, crying, I bawled, "It's just You and me, Lord."

God must have been tickled at that. I was only twenty years old, so I'm sure He understood that my life was hardly as bad as it seemed. Still, I cried and prayed all night, missing the revival meeting. I worked late the next two nights, trying to keep myself occupied, but on Wednesday my mother called and asked me to go to the service that night at the church. The same young evangelist was speaking, and the revival was to continue the rest of the week.

“This has just been the most amazing revival,” she said. “It’ll do you good.”

I was glad to go and pray and have my spirits lifted. I sat about halfway back this time, on the right side; and though there was a good crowd in the church, I had a little better view of the preacher standing up onstage. He looked even younger and more handsome than I remembered, and his message spoke even more powerfully to me than last time.

After the sermon that night, hot dogs were served in the church fellowship hall. I was helping out in the kitchen, surprised at how happy I felt so soon after the breakup. I knew I was on the right path. “Joni,” said one of the girls as she came into the kitchen, “I’m supposed to ask you if you would like to come out and talk to the evangelist. He said he’d like to meet you.”

I smiled. The poor guy was probably tired of talking to all the old folks who were hovering around him all the time. Because the services were going so well, the revival was extended for another week, so this would give him an opportunity to connect with some of the younger people. I finished what I was doing, and then went out to the fellowship hall to meet him. We exchanged handshakes and greetings, but he was surrounded by people, so we didn’t talk much.

In recounting this story, it’s funny to think about that very first Sunday morning service we attended where this young evangelist had been speaking. I had ridden to church with my parents, and after the service we started to leave. I was sitting in the back of the car when the evangelist saw my parents and waved to them across the parking lot.

“He’s so friendly,” my mother said. “Isn’t he handsome?” She turned around and gave me one of those motherly looks and said, “Would you ever consider dating someone like him?”



“Mother!” I couldn’t believe it. “I don’t even know if he’s single; besides, he’s too short!”

But my mother’s intuition proved to be right. After the Wednesday night service, the young man called my house. My four-year-old brother answered the phone and told him that I was working late, so I didn’t get the message. After the revival service the next night, the evangelist motioned me over to the piano. As I stood there, he reached his hand across the piano and said, “Would you like to go get something to eat?”

It was a little uncomfortable for me to be singled out with all the other people around, and I really didn’t know what to think about being asked to dinner by a preacher, even if he was young and good looking, but I agreed.

When we met up after the service and stood face to face—me in my four-inch-heel black boots—I realized we had a problem. As charming and handsome as this man was, he was not tall. At all. At that age, I had a big hang-up about height. I’m five feet eight inches tall, which isn’t especially tall, but I’d always dated guys who were more than six feet. My father and grandfather were about six foot four. But it was too late to back out now.

He went out to get his car and then picked me up at the church door. As we drove to Mr. Gaddy’s, a pizza place, I was fixated on the fact that he was short. But as we walked in and stood in line to order our pizza, he didn’t seem so short after all—he was actually the same height as I was. I looked down and saw that he’d made a quick change into a pair of high-heeled cowboy boots!

Marcus likes to say that’s when I fell head over “heels” for him! And it’s certainly true that he had all my attention. But to be entirely truthful, even though Marcus elevated his game by putting on his boots, I didn’t realize that God had put me on a new path. Marcus intimidated me. He

was definitely much more a man of God than I'd ever dated. He had a theology degree, even though he was only three years older than I. His commitment and his knowledge of the Bible were far greater than mine. Going from my previous boyfriend to him was like spiritual whiplash.

On that first night he did his best to put me at ease. We didn't talk about Jesus nearly as much as we laughed and talked about the usual getting-to-know-you stuff. He had a great sense of humor, which was refreshing and helped me relax. He even joked about the fact that other girls had tried to impress him on first dates by showing him how many Bible verses they could quote. I liked that he seemed to have a lot of ambition and drive. He'd graduated from high school at sixteen and got his theological degree from Lee University three years later, graduating magna cum laude. He was definitely a guy with big plans and a lot of energy and charisma.

After that first date, Marcus asked me out every night after the revival. I'd told him about my recent breakup, and Marcus made no bones about the fact that he wanted to make certain I didn't stray back—and seemed determined to keep me occupied.

Dating someone with the same value system who was willing to talk openly about his love of God was a whole new thing for me. And it was such a relief to no longer feel pressured with the carnal things. Even with all this, there was nothing “holier than thou” about Marcus. He talked a lot about his decision to enter the ministry and how he'd been conflicted. He'd wanted to be a doctor or a lawyer in his younger days. He'd even “argued” with God about it, but once he had surrendered to God's will, there was no doubt what God's plan was for Marcus.

My surrender to the Lord had led to our paths crossing, but it took me longer to surrender to Marcus.

*Step 4: Be Prepared to Surrender Again and Again*

When you have surrendered once, you will find that the next step is to surrender again. And again. And again. Along the Path of Surrender you will experience great joy as well as sweet salvation, but don't be fooled into thinking one surrender will cover all the challenges that lie along the road to heaven. The Christian life is one of continual surrender. You will need to go through this process at every crossroads, every bump in the road, every challenge in your life.

At the first moment of surrender, the Lord doesn't usually reveal the entire path to us—which is a good thing. We often have to grow into the roles that He designs for us. It might be too scary to get the whole picture right out of the box. We have to be patient and let God work His way. The Lord had a lot in store for me, and He is still revealing things to me more than twenty-five years after my initial surrender.

With my first surrender, I put my trust in God and told myself that He would make a way for me. After I met Marcus, my head was spinning. With my old boyfriend, it was as if I had been standing on a table trying to pull him up to my spiritual level. The weight of his reluctance eventually made me weary until, in the end, he was pulling me down and away from my faith. Now Marcus was on the table, pulling me back up. I was willing, so I wasn't pulling Marcus down, but it wasn't easy either. Now we were basically on the same level with the same goals, the same love for God, and a deep desire to be used by God—but to remain in Marcus's life, I had to be willing to surrender my entire life to the Lord. Marcus felt he had to be certain about me because the relationships of ministers are so scrutinized. He didn't want to make a mistake and neither did I.

Also, I had to be willing to let go of my old boyfriend, but that wasn't very difficult to do, because once you've experienced someone with your

same passion, you don't want to go backward and settle for less. After the revival was over, Marcus moved on to the next revival in another state, and we began a long-distance relationship. We were drawn to each other, and we both felt that we were falling in love, but it was difficult for us to forge strong bonds when we were apart so much of the time. We dated from that October through the month of May, and I began to get frustrated. We talked on the telephone nearly every day, and we saw each other whenever Marcus could get back into town, but he didn't seem capable of committing to our relationship for the long term.

Later, Marcus would tell me that he was genuinely scared of a commitment, but at this point we both loved each other and there was nowhere to go except to the next step of an engagement. He was fearful of that next step, and I was unwilling to sit around and wait, so we agreed to break up—which was another surrender. I had no idea what the future held for me, and at times I questioned God, wondering where my life was going.

Marcus and I still talked regularly and saw each other occasionally, but I dated some other guys that summer. Feeling unsettled was difficult for me, but God was teaching me how to look to Him. The hard thing about surrender is that you don't always know what is going on. You have to trust God when everything isn't going perfect. Later, my mother-in-law told me that she knew Marcus and I would eventually get married. She had prayed and was assured that we would one day be together. I kidded her later, "Why didn't you tell me that?"

After we broke up, Marcus had a change of heart. He worried that his failure to commit had been a mistake and that he might lose me. He signed up for a cheap long-distance phone service so he could call me all the time for a flat fee. However, the reception was staticky and he'd get cut off after fifteen minutes with no notice, which drove us both a little crazy. Then he

went overboard! He started calling my mother and my best friend and my siblings—anyone who could keep him updated on whether any other guy had caught my eye.

Three months later, Marcus couldn't take it anymore. He'd lost about fifteen pounds, and he didn't really have fifteen pounds to spare. We got together one weekend, and he poured out his heart, saying that he missed me too much—and I felt the same way. On the following Valentine's Day we went to a Chinese restaurant. By some miracle—or crafty planning by a certain evangelist—my fortune cookie contained a message that read: "Joni Lynn, will you marry me?" Marcus sealed the deal with a box of candy featuring a diamond as the centerpiece!

I was ready. I felt my love and I felt Marcus's love, but I trusted and depended on the Lord.

I had to surrender to the Lord many more times, of course. Even when it was obvious to both Marcus and me that we were made for each other, we had challenges. That's life. That is why it is so critical to understand the Path of Surrender. In your surrender, you will feel His presence and your faith will see you through.



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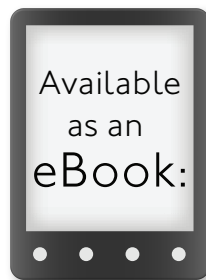
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