

# **Letting Go and Letting God: Finding Freedom in Surrender**

By Jaylene Garau

This first page sat blank for a long time. I couldn't think of a way to start this short writing. I finally surrendered. I gave up trying to figure out what to write and I wrote what came to me. This is it...

“Choose faith over fear.”

It's ironic that I felt compelled to write about surrendering and wanted to control my writing right from the start! I am slowly learning that it's when we let go, that we find our way. It's in the surrender that we tap into the power of God and His guidance. This book is not an attempt to share a five-step approach to overcoming fear, perfectionism or control issues. This is what it comes down to...a choice. You either choose faith or you choose fear. You don't make this choice one time in your life. At least for me, it's a choice I face nearly every day. Some days, it's a decision I have to make many times throughout the day.

One afternoon, I was terribly worried about my daughter's health. I recall washing the dishes and I was so deep in my worrying thoughts that I was feeling anxious. I couldn't even still my mind long enough to pray. Then I had this thought that interrupted my worrying. For me, it was God who told me...“You either choose fear or faith...you can't choose both.”

During my entire life, I existed in two worlds...one ruled by fear and the other by faith. Now, I was being encouraged to choose one or the other. The two can't coexist. In fact, whichever you choose cancels the other one out. Faith can override fear or fear can override your faith. Does faith make you fearless? No! You will likely always feel fear to some degree. What faith does is that it gives you the courage to move forward in spite of the fear you feel.

In life, we walk down many paths and in times of trouble, we often find a fork in the road. Imagine a road in your mind that splits off into two directions. One road is signed “Faith” and the other one “Fear.” You can't physically walk down both roads at the same time. You have to choose one direction. That's where I struggled. I believed in God. I prayed but when it

came down to it whenever I was challenged, I often chose fear over faith. I chose controlling the situation rather than surrendering it to God.

Fear creeps into our lives in many forms. Do you find yourself asking “what if?” What are you afraid of? Losing your job, do you fear what others think of you, do you fear failure, are your bills hanging over your head, do you fear becoming ill, are you afraid of your child’s decisions in life? Whatever it is, call on God and give that fear to Him. Surrender it and it will no longer have power over you.

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.” 2 Timothy 1:7.

### **God the Provider**

God is not only a creator, He is also a provider. In Matthew 6: 25-27, Jesus says “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, *as to* what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, *as to* what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and *yet* your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a *single* hour to his life?”

Jesus reminds us in this verse that we need to seek God first above all else and the rest will fall into place. This verse is interesting to me because if you sit down and think about it, we find many answers in nature. The squirrels, birds, rabbits, coyotes and other wild animals that dwell in my neighborhood are thriving. I have never seen wild animals on the side of the road dying of starvation. As long as we humans don't destroy their natural environment, all animals are provided for.

What does this mean for us? It doesn't mean that we can sit on the couch and pray for God to pay our bills. It means that if we do all that we can with the resources we have, we should trust that God will do the rest. It means that we live within our means and show restraint when we want things that we can't afford. When we don't live within the provision that God has provided for us, we can easily get into debt. A God-centered approach to finances, would include a balance between earning, saving and giving. A wonderful resource that provides guidance in this area is a short book called *Earn*.

*Save. Give: Wesley's Simple Rules for Money* by James Harnish.

This approach to finances helps us to avoid being stingy or irresponsible when it comes to money, which are the extremes. God wants us to have a mentality of plenty and not a mentality of scarcity. I have several friends who are constantly worried about money. This preoccupation with money has seeped into many facets of their lives. It has become the primary reason they fight with their spouse. In many cases causing a rift in their marriage. Money in itself is not evil. What has the potential for evil is our preoccupation with money. We must stop obsessing over money. Lusting after it or lamenting we don't have enough of it. Be grateful for what you have, do what you can with what you have and trust that God will provide the rest. In other words take your focus off of your finances and put your focus on God. When you make that shift, your finances will fall into place.

## **SURRENDER**

I could see how this approach, this idea of surrendering, may seem a little idealistic to some. You may say, so if I surrender to God, He will like a genie in a bottle, make all of my problems go away? No, the problem will not necessarily just go away but you will be better equipped to deal with it. Surrendering your problem to God, unleashes His power in you. God's Spirit is in you; it is a Spirit of love, faith, strength, courage, wisdom and peace. The problem is we often override the Spirit in us with negative emotions like worry, guilt, anger, regret or whatever else we feel. We feed those negative feelings and therefore starve God's Spirit in us. Those negative feelings silence our inner compass and pull us further away from the direction God wants us to go. This is why we often feel confused and sometimes even lost.

God wants to help you. He wants to guide you in the direction you should go but you have to be willing to step out of the driver's seat and become the passenger in your life journey. Your goal then is to simply observe, learn and grow from your experiences. You shift from always "doing" to simply "being." After all, we are called human **beings**. This approach to life takes the pressure off of you to always "know the direction" you should be going. You are now free to enjoy the scenery as you take in the view from the passenger seat. All of a sudden, you can now relish in the present moment with your loved ones trusting that everything is unfolding as it should. You can relax and actually enjoy life rather than judge everything and everyone

in your midst. This is when you shift from asking, “Why is this happening to me?” to “What am I supposed to learn from this person or this situation?”

When someone irritates us or a situation frustrates us, we so easily discard him or her. We must be mindful that every person on our path and every situation are meant to teach us something. From some, we learn to become more compassionate and from others we learn to become more courageous or patient. Often times, our most challenging moments, impart the greatest lessons.

This doesn't mean that you take a passive approach to your life and never plan for the future or allow others to walk all over you. God wants us to have ambitions, to be bold and to have a zest for life! However, our planning and expectations should be flexible so when things don't go according to our plan, we can trust that things are unfolding and manifesting in our life according to God's plan.

How do you know what God's plan is for your life? Open the door to your heart to God...always. Come to Him in prayer often for the big things and for the little things. So often, we run to God when we need help. I heard someone once say that we must take God out of our emergency box. In other words, yes, God wants to help you in your time of need but He also wants to be with you in your daily life. When things are good, thank God. When you are confused, seek guidance.

Christian Author Matthew Kelly made an interesting point in a video I watched; he said most of us just want God to tweak things in our life for us. For example, God can you please help me get this job? God, help my spouse with this or that. Kelly says, God wants to do more than just tweak your life here and there...He wants to transform you. The way to open your life completely to God is to surrender to Him. I hope that reading this doesn't scare you. If it does, it's ok. I found the idea of surrendering to God kind of scary too at one time in my life. Find comfort in knowing that God's plans are always to prosper us and never to hurt us. When I opened my life to Him, I began to notice areas in my life that needed improvement. As I worked on those areas, I began to notice I felt more at peace and more joyful. God wants to have a relationship with all of us and prayer is a wonderful way to begin. (For more on developing your prayer/spiritual life, you can download *Awakening the Spirit Within* for free).

I have never written publicly about a health issue with my daughter but I think it's a story worth sharing because not receiving what I had asked for in prayer turned out to be a saving grace.

We were getting ready for my daughter's six-year-old wellness check. I recall feeling anxious. There were some minor but out of the ordinary symptoms I had noticed affecting my daughter that I needed to share with her doctor. I was hoping that I was just being an overly cautious mom. These were the words I was hoping to hear from my daughter's doctor..."You have nothing to worry about, she is fine, we will just continue to observe her."

Before the appointment, I asked God to please speak through the doctor. While I was surrendering this to God, in my heart, I was holding on to a particular outcome. I wanted nothing to be wrong with my daughter. Clearly, I hadn't completely surrendered.

When her pediatrician suggested we look further into the symptoms with the help of a specialist and a series of tests...I was scared. Then I remembered to trust God and move forward so we did.

After a long wait, the test results were finally in. In my heart, I wanted the doctors to say that my daughter was fine and they would just observe her. That would not be the case. My daughter was diagnosed with a congenital illness that affects her adrenal gland. Upon receiving the diagnosis, I initially felt disappointed with God. The thought kept coming to me that I had prayed and pleaded for my daughter to have no issues and here she was diagnosed with a condition.

The pediatric endocrinologist proceeded to explain the condition. She drew a chart and explained how the adrenal gland works and tried to explain what was wrong with my daughter's gland. I sat there with a blank stare not understanding any of it. I never thought of my daughter's glands let alone think that one wasn't working properly. My head was spinning. She told my husband and I that my daughter would have to take a steroid twice a day indefinitely. Thoughts began to swirl in my head, why had God not answered my prayer? I wanted nothing to be wrong with my daughter. Here I had been choosing "organic" foods her whole life protecting her from toxins and hormones whenever I could and now I would have to give her a steroid twice a day for who knows how long! Frightened by the potential

side effects and trying to understand this condition that I had never heard of prior to this visit was overwhelming.

The next day, rather than turn away from God, I came to Him in prayer. I prayed about my worries and disappointments. I am so grateful that I came to Him in prayer rather than run from Him when I didn't get my way. It was during that time that I began to see things so differently. My eyes were opened to all of the good in our situation. Yes, in the midst of not getting exactly what I wanted, I noticed all of the grace that I had received. Faith is not about getting the outcome you desire but trusting that God will be with you every step of the way...in your joys and in your sorrows.

Although undetected, my daughter has likely had this condition since she was born. By the grace of God, my eyes were opened to some symptoms that I could have easily missed for more years. The Lord put doctors on our path at just the right time to investigate, care for my daughter and determine a course of action that would help her before the condition could have led to some irreversible long term effects. Had my prayer been answered, the one where I asked repeatedly that the doctors would brush us off and say, "we will just observe her"...my daughter would have gone on without the medicine that is helping her adrenal gland function properly.

My point in sharing this story is that yes, I didn't get the answer I was looking for in prayer. However, God was there for us gently guiding her doctors and us until we were provided with answers to help my daughter. What I saw through the eyes of disappointment, I could now see through eyes of gratitude in those moments of prayer. My daughter has a condition that is manageable. Although it is potentially a serious condition, my daughter has a mild form of it and it will not worsen. She takes a tiny pill twice a day that is not as uncomfortable as the injections other children have to undergo for this condition. There is no such thing as a life free of suffering. We must know suffering, to appreciate happiness. We must know illness to appreciate good health. In the midst of our darkness, there is light and that light shines bright to help us see our way out of the darkness. "My God turns my darkness into light." Psalm 18:28.

I want to close this section with the words from the song *Just be Held* by Casting Crowns. You can find this song on YouTube.

Hold it all together  
Everybody needs you strong  
But life hits you out of nowhere  
And barely leaves you holding on

And when you're tired of fighting  
Chained by your control  
There's freedom in surrender  
Lay it down and let it go

So when you're on your knees and answers seem so far away  
You're not alone, stop holding on and just be held  
Your world's not falling apart, it's falling into place  
I'm on the throne, stop holding on and just be held  
Just be held, just be held

If your eyes are on the storm  
You'll wonder if I love you still  
But if your eyes are on the cross  
You'll know I always have and I always will

And not a tear is wasted  
In time, you'll understand  
I'm painting beauty with the ashes  
Your life is in My hands

Lift your hands, lift your eyes  
In the storm is where you'll find Me  
And where you are, I'll hold your heart  
I'll hold your heart  
Come to Me, find your rest  
In the arms of the God who won't let go

I find comfort and guidance in Proverbs 3:5-6. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."

## **Law of Attraction**

God is the source of good...always. You can attract good into your life by keeping your focus on God, His commandments and His word. God is a God of order. He restores order where there is chaos but He also created order and we can see it clearly in nature. The laws of nature are uniform. Every living thing in the universe is bound by them. We see order each day. The sun signaling day and the moon lighting the night. Everything is part of this natural order like the ocean tide, the seasons and all living creatures that instinctively know how to care for themselves and procreate.

We can't circumvent physical laws like gravity for example. You can't decide to wake up one day and defy gravity. Just like there are universal physical laws there are also spiritual laws. We bring turmoil to our lives when we try to circumvent those spiritual laws. When we don't want to be bound by them and we defy them, we bring unrest upon ourselves. We are quick to become angry with God when bad comes to us but I feel that we are often the ones who welcome darkness into our life when we refute God's light through our poor choices.

For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Newton's Third Law has to do with motion but I believe that some physical laws also apply in the spiritual realm. I started to notice this when I began to observe that so often what we obsess over and what we try so hard to avoid, is the very thing that we attract. For example, you constantly think about not wanting to get sick but your obsession can actually cause you to become sick. You obsess over obtaining money and often you attract the opposite, which is either losing or not having enough money.

“What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me.” Job 3:25

Christian author and speaker Joyce Meyer says, “You can't have a negative mouth and a positive life.”

When I was a television reporter in Miami, Florida, I covered several drownings at the beach. In each of the stories I covered, the swimmers were caught in a rip current. In most cases, they fought the current and they were pulled under. When we interviewed the lifeguards each time, they would tell



us that the best way to get out of a rip current is to swim with it, surrender to it and don't fight it.

That stayed with me and it's something that can serve as an analogy for life. When you are going through a hard time and it threatens to pull you in, don't get sucked in. Roll with it and soon you will find your way out. If you resist it, you will likely fall further into it. If something is occurring in your life, there is a purpose to it. Resist the urge to fight it. When you surrender, you will learn the lesson the experience has come to teach you.

### **Missing Miracles in Our Lives**

People say, show me and then I will believe. God says, believe and then I will show you.

Not long ago, as I was driving out of my neighborhood with my six-year-old daughter in the backseat, we were nearly involved in a head-on collision. The driver in the other car got in our lane and drove right toward us head-on, I quickly stopped and the other driver swerved. We missed each other by inches.

I was stunned and when I looked up at the driver, she shouted at me as she drove by. I was furious by her reaction. People make mistakes. I was willing to forgive her for nearly running me off the road but when I saw that she was mad at me when it was clearly her fault, I was irate.

I went about my afternoon and headed to a local blueberry farm where we were meeting some friends to pick blueberries. As we were making our way down the dirt road to the farm, we came across an accident that had just occurred. We could see glass shattered everywhere. The drivers and passengers were slowly emerging from their cars stunned by what had just occurred. On this remote country road, you could see no one for miles and here these cars collided. As I drove by, I asked if everyone was ok and if they needed help. The people told me they were ok and were already calling for help.

My daughter and I proceeded to the farm and picked blueberries with our friends. That night, exhausted from the day's events, I recall telling my husband that it was such a bad day. I told him about the driver who nearly

hit us head-on as we left our neighborhood. I told him about the other accident that I had witnessed on the dirt road no more than 15 minutes later.

I went to bed feeling drained and relieved that the eventful day was over. It wasn't until the following day in prayer that I saw the miracles that occurred the previous day. I was spared from the head-on collision. That near-collision that resulted in the woman shouting at me, slowed me down by just a few minutes likely sparing us from the accident on the country road on the way to the blueberry farm.

Miracles abound. Do we stop to appreciate them or do we rush through life missing them? Do we pause from the busyness to give thanks to God or do we only pause when things don't go our way. If we take the time to look, we may find that when things didn't go according to plan, there was a greater purpose at work. A delay, a missed opportunity even an illness can turn into a blessing in disguise. Purposefully set out to see the blessings in your life and give thanks. Sometimes our greatest disappointments offer us the clearest view of God's grace and love.

### **The Power of the Present Moment**

I don't know about you but I often read books with great information; I attend classes to learn more and in the end I become overwhelmed with so much information. I ask, "How will I ever remember all of this information let alone put what I have learned into action when I need it most?"

I have found that the greatest teacher is God and you access Him in the present moment. Keep your heart open to Him. He speaks; you just have to be willing to quiet your mind and listen.

I enjoy practicing yoga. It's an activity that helps quiet my mind and relieves tension in my body. One day when I was practicing yoga, the instructor said,

Depression is living in the past.

Anxiety is living in the future.

Peace is living in the present.

We always have access to peace because we always have access to the present moment. One of my favorite verses about stillness is, “Be still and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:10

I believe that God is in us all and therefore within each of us there is goodness. However, we are also capable of malice. We must choose to feed the good in us. We must choose kindness. Choose forgiveness. Choose love. Choose peace. Choose God.

Praying and reading God’s word daily brings us closer to God. We must be intentional about connecting to God daily so that we can get better at discerning His will for us. I have found that one of the most powerful ways to grow in our faith, is when we help others through hard times by showing kindness, praying or sharing God’s word with them. In my training to become a Stephen Minister I learned something powerful that has stayed with me when I want to help someone in need. I was told, “God is the cure giver. You are the caregiver.” We are called to care for one another. We have not been called to change people or fix their problems.

Stop fighting with your own hands trying to solve everything yourself. You are not alone. You were designed to live this life with God. His power is within you. Let God fight for you and guide you. Surrender and find rest in Him.

One closing thought, whatever you focus on in your life becomes magnified. You give power to it by focusing on it. Knowing that, don’t focus on the negative things in your life because when you do, you give them power and they become magnified. When your mind wanders to your troubles, turn your attention to God. You can’t always choose your thoughts but you can choose which thoughts to follow and which ones not to follow.

**Closing Prayer:** Heavenly Father, help me to keep my focus on you and help me to trust that your plans for me are good. Help me to make good choices in my life with an awareness of your Spirit guiding me. Father, give me courage to choose faith over fear. Amen.