



I
Surrender
My
Dreams

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me (Matthew 16:24).

Judson W. Van DeVenter gave his heart to the Lord at the age of 17. He attended Hillsdale College in Michigan, graduating with a degree in art. He began his career as a teacher and administrator of art. He also had a love for music; he became an expert at 13 different instruments. His music ministry at his church began to grow, and soon he found himself torn between his professional art career and his desire to share the Gospel through music. He struggled with this for many years before surrendering his future and career completely to God in 1896. After making this decision, the lyrics began to flow from his heart, and he wrote, "I Surrender All."

"What do you want to be when you grow up?" This is one of the most-asked questions to children and youth. When we think back to our childhood we probably have a variety of answers: a teacher, princess, nurse, mom, accountant, hairdresser. Or maybe your answer was similar to mine: a basketball coach. Our childhood passions often fuel our career aspirations. "Choose a job you love, and you will never work a day in your life—" that is the advice guidance counselors give their students.

What happens when God intercedes, like with Judson, and asks you to step away from comfort and security to surrender your professional career to His will? It becomes a little more challenging to live the idea of complete surrender when we start juggling the thought of comfort zone and financial security with the unknown (Luke 18:28-30).

I fell in love with basketball in the back of the church parking lot where all the kids would gather after church. I played any time I could. In fact, I played for three different recreational centers because each of their games and practices were on different nights. It was never a problem, until it came time for the All-Star game when each team picked me to represent them.

When I graduated from high school, injuries forced my focus to go from playing to coaching. I chose my post-secondary institution based on who offered me the best coaching opportunities. Before classes even started, I got a job as a student manager for the women's team. I traveled the country sitting in practices, film sessions, half-time talks, and having a front row seat to my future.

At the start of my junior year, God began stirring my heart in a way I did not want to hear. I knew He had unveiled my eyes and this

life was no longer where He was leading me. I finished my degree, but no longer actively pursued the advancements necessary to continue that career. I surrendered my future to Him, even though I had no idea where He was leading me.

Matthew the tax collector became a disciple. David the shepherd became a warrior and king. Moses went from prince to shepherd to activist to the country's leader. Esther, a young Jewish girl, became Queen of Persia. Deborah, the homemaker, became a judge. Peter, Andrew, James, and John went from fishermen to fishers of men. God has a reputation for intervening when it comes to career paths. He also has a great success rate. So, when God asks for control of your career, even if the path He takes you down is uncertain, remember you can trust Him and live daily in His service.

*All to Jesus I surrender, all to Him I freely give.
I will ever love and trust Him, in His service daily live.
I surrender all. I surrender all.
All to thee my blessed Savior, I surrender all.*



Reflective Questions:

How are you actively living Matthew 16:24?

If not, why are you holding onto them?

If so, how has that surrendering affected your life?

Can you look at your past employments and see the hand of God intervening?

Many Bible figures were mentioned where God intervened in their careers. Whom do you personally relate to most? Why?

Read Romans 8:28-29. How does your career path align with these verses?

For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, saith the
LORD. For as the heavens are higher than
the earth, so are my ways higher than your
ways, and my thoughts than your
thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Higher Thoughts

Think back to your childhood and the stories you were read, the imaginary games you played, the baby dolls and stuffed animals you cared for while playing house. “Once upon a time” and “happily ever afters” are the messages we transferred from days of play to expectations for the future whether subliminally or deliberately.

Most of us remember dreaming about what our future would look like. Your dream future may have started with an education and a fun career. Maybe it grew personal once you realized that boys did not in fact have cooties. You dreamed about your own personal Prince Charming coming into your life and sweeping you off your feet. You imagined a white picket fence around your little country house.

You could just see yourself sitting on the front porch sipping on a glass of sweet tea, while your children played in the yard, with-

out fighting, of course, because this is your dream future.

As we think about our childhood in this context, it does not take long before we realize that our dreams for the future started at an early age and carried on throughout our lives.

Now, take a moment and really ask yourself: have you completely surrendered your future to God? Don't just give the quick church answer and say yes, of course, I was saved and surrendered my life to God back in (fill in the date). Really think about it. Your dreams for your future, the life you daily live, the future you are working for—is it really surrendered to God? Does He have full authority to make your future the future His will needs it to be?

The idea of surrendering your future to God may have you crippled by fear. You are holding tightly to your ideal future because your life today does not look exactly like you envisioned. Where you live may not be the

ideal house with the picket fence. You wanted a yard full of children, and instead you are on the “Sarah/Rebekah/Rachel” barren plan.

You wanted with all of your heart to be the Proverbs 31 wife, and you are still single. On the other hand, maybe you got the education, house, family, and husband you wanted, but are having a hard time surrendering the unknown future completely to God.

Cancer or some other sickness is threatening the future of your loved one. Word of layoffs and downsizing is threatening your employment and financial livelihood. Whatever your personal circumstances may be, you need to fully surrender your future to God.

If you have accepted Christ as your personal Savior and are living for Him, you have already made a giant leap in the right direction. You completely surrendered your eternal future under the blood of Christ. Just like a snowball grows as you roll it around, allow the surrender of your eternal future to start influencing the submission of your earthly future.

The future can be safely trusted to the One who knows not only what the future holds, but also His plans for us in that

future (Jeremiah 29:11a). God is standing with open arms, willing to lead you if you will simply surrender and follow Him (Proverbs 3:5-6).

When chaos and fear of the future creep into the heart and mind, simply turn to God in prayer and find guidance through His Word (Romans 8:26; Joshua 1:8). There, find comfort in Him and direction for His will for the future (Proverbs 16:9).

In March 2007, I attended a district Women Active for Christ conference. The speaker challenged the congregation to make a unique commitment to God. If we were willing to follow God in anything, anywhere, anytime, at any cost, we were to sign and date an index card stating so.

In preparation for this Bible study, I picked up an old Bible I no longer carry and found that index card. I realized I had surrendered my dreams and my future to God the day I signed that card. That does not mean I have not struggled from time to time. I think we have to remind ourselves daily of the commitment we have made to give God everything. When we seek Him and His will, He will never disappoint.

*All to Jesus I surrender, humbly at His feet I bow.
Worldly pleasures all forsaken, Take me, Jesus, take me now.
I surrender all. I surrender all.
All to thee my blessed Savior, I surrender all.*



Reflective Questions

Our key verse assures us that God has bigger plans for us than our dreams. How has God exceeded your dreams from childhood?

Reflect on a time when you gave God full control of a circumstance, and He guided you to a great outcome. If He has not changed (Hebrews 13:8), won't He do the same with your unknown future?

Read Psalm 46:10. How can this promise help you surrender your future to God?

Read Matthew 6:19. Is the future you are holding onto tightly, solely earthly minded?

Are you willing to take the same challenge mentioned in the study?

****Anything! Anywhere! Anytime! At any cost!**

Are you willing to follow God in all these areas?

Signature

Date

****Note:** Make this same commitment on an index card and place it in your Bible or on your mirror to see daily. I pray God will remind you of this commitment just when you need it, as He did me.

About the Writer: Sarah Sargent is the youngest woman to serve as Ohio's WAC state president and the youngest member of WNAC's Board of Trustees. She is a pastor's kid, saved at age seven, and has spent her whole life in a Free Will Baptist church. She is a proud alumnus of Ohio State University.