

I Give Up

STUDY GUIDE | FIVE SESSIONS



LAURA STORY

WITH KEVIN AND SHERRY HARNEY



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I Give Up Study Guide

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Published in Nashville, Tennessee, by Thomas Nelson. Thomas Nelson is a registered trademark of HarperCollins Christian Publishing, Inc.

Published in association with Creative Trust Literary Group, www.creativetrust.com, 201 Jamestown Park Dr. STE 200, Brentwood, TN 37027.

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ISBN 978-0-310-103875 (softcover)

ISBN 978-0-310-103882 (ebook)

First Printing June 2019 / Printed in the United States of America



Contents

<i>How to Use This Guide</i>	9
<i>Introduction: We All Love Happy Endings</i>	11
SESSION 1: What Is Surrender Anyway?	13
SESSION 2: God's Character Matters.	29
SESSION 3: Giving In and Up	45
SESSION 4: Being Transformed	61
SESSION 5: The Ripple Effect of Surrender	79
<i>Small Group Leader Helps.</i>	97



Of Note

The quotations interspersed throughout this study guide and the Between Sessions materials are from the book *I Give Up* and the video curriculum *I Give Up* by Laura Story. All other resources, including the small group questions and session introductions, have been written by Kevin and Sherry Harney in collaboration with Laura Story.



We All Love Happy Endings

From our youngest days we love stories. Even if we don't think about it consciously, we each have a sense of the story arc. If the story begins, "Once upon a time," we expect it to end with the words, "And they lived happily ever after." Stories that end in victory inspire us and capture our hearts and imaginations.

Most of are not drawn to books, movies, or stories that are sure to end in defeat or disaster. We are not drawn to

a narrative that focuses on surrender. We want epic victory. We celebrate winning.

When it comes to the story of Jesus, we all know it ends in a story of victory and overcoming—but that isn't the way his story begins. The path to his victory was marked by surrender, suffering, and loss. In the beginning of the Jesus' earthly ministry everyone knew that being a Christian demanded these same things. Jesus made this clear when he called people to become his followers.

Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it."

LUKE 9:23-24 NIV

I GIVE UP

Think about the vision Jesus placed before common fishermen, tax collectors, farmers, and people from every walk of life. Be ready to deny yourself! Prepare to take up a cross . . . the tool of execution used in the Roman empire in the time of Jesus. Follow my will and plan, not your own. Be willing to lose your life. Wow! This sounds like a call to radical surrender.

These days there are many renditions of what people think following Jesus looks like. Some people see him as the one who promises to meet all of their earthly needs, fulfill their dreams, and assure them of painless days filled with endless delight.

But the call of Jesus has not changed. To be his follower is to pray, “Your will be done,” as Jesus taught. To walk in maturity as a Christian is to echo the words of John the Baptist, “He must increase, I must decrease.” Being a Jesus follower still means taking up his cross daily as we deny ourselves for the sake of saying yes to Jesus and his will.

God cares about the condition of our heart and the actions in our life. What delights our heavenly Father is when we say, “I give up! I surrender! I am ready to follow God’s will over my own.”

SESSION 1

What Is Surrender Anyway?

— INTRODUCTION —

Tisha is a cute baby girl. Curly jet-black hair, dimples, and a smile that lights up a room. She also has a grip like a bear trap, and when she gets hold of a toy, she won't let go. Her young vocabulary is limited, but one word she has mastered is "Mine!" Daddy and Mommy are trying to teach her to share, but she finds it much more natural to cling on to everything for herself. This skill was not taught; it seems to come naturally.

Gerrit is nine and loves soccer. His coach has explained to the whole team (and the parents) that this level of soccer is all about learning the game and *not* about keeping score. But Gerrit and the other kids on the team are good at basic math and they tally every goal in their minds.

They quietly whisper, "We are ahead by two," or "That was my third goal," and with clear disappointment, "We lost by twelve goals today!" No matter what the coach says, these kids keep score, want to win, and never wave the white flag.

Ashleigh wants to be on the homecoming court. She is not conducting a formal campaign; that would be too obvious. What she is doing is exerting all of her charm and social skills to get the other kids to like her enough to cast a vote in her direction. She is leveraging every friendship and relational connection to tip the scales in her favor and help her wear that sparkling crown at halftime during the upcoming football game.

Sure, kids act this way because they

are still in that formational time of life when they are learning how the world works. Once we become adults we cast aside childish ways and live with humility, gracious generosity, and natural surrender. We spontaneously and naturally serve people, put God first, and stop expecting and demanding our own way.

Right?

Wrong!

The truth is, grown up people can look just like bigger versions of Tisha, Gerrit, and Ashleigh. We want what we want.

Winning still matters. We navigate ways to get the crown, end up first, and gain the praise of our peers.

Living with humility does not come naturally to any of us. Willingly putting ourselves second or third does not seem to make sense. Surrendering to God's will is a learned skill that takes a lifetime to develop. If we are honest, the idea of surrender can seem foreign, unnatural, even unattractive. At this very moment, you might even be wondering, *Why am I doing a five-session study about surrender?*

The more we take our lives and place
them before God, the more we will
be changed from the inside out.



— TALK ABOUT IT —

Tell about a time in your childhood, teenage years, or adult life when you were not willing to surrender. As you look back, how was this effort to resist surrender a good choice or poor choice?

or

What moved you to choose taking part in this study about surrender?

We think we know what is best
so we ask God to help us with
our plans on **our** terms.



— VIDEO TEACHING NOTES —

As you watch the video teaching segment for this session, use the following outline to record anything that stands out to you.

An invitation to surrender

We like to be in control



I GIVE UP

What is surrender and why do it?

Unexpected, uninvited, and unavoidable surrender

A powerful biblical example of surrender: the apostle Paul

What is your “every situation”?

There are moments when our
careful plans are wrecked
and our detailed blueprints for the
future are tossed out the window.





— GROUP DISCUSSION —

Read each question and take time for group members to give honest and thoughtful responses.

1. What comes to your mind when you hear the word *surrender*? What are some possible negative connotations and what are some possible positive meanings?

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A decision to study God's
Word is an investment in your
spiritual life and an active
choice to nourish your soul.



Select volunteers to read the following passages aloud to the group and discuss the questions with each:

ROMANS 12:1-2 NIV

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

I GIVE UP

2. What does it mean to renew our minds so that they are not lining up with the ways of the world that are relentless and all around us? What is one way you have learned to renew, change, or reorient your thinking to line up with God's ways of thinking?

3. What are some of the things that clamor for your time and attention that keep you from reading the Bible regularly and growing deeper in your faith? What could you do to control or tame some of these things so you can spend more regular time reading God's Word and growing in faith?

EPHESIANS 2:8 NIV

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.

4. What are some of the things you surrendered, gave up, or quit when you received the grace of Jesus? This surrender was not an effort to gain God's grace by works, but a humble response to God's free gift of love, friendship, and forgiveness. How has your life been better because you surrendered one of these things?



When we let go we discover
that our plans for the
future, security, and certain
health were all a façade.



5. Tell about some of the ways you try to be in control of your life, your present, and your future. How can these attitudes and actions be dangerous for your life and faith?

6. What is the difference between asking God to bless and affirm what *we want* and humbly surrendering to *his will* for our life? Give an example of what this can look like in our lives.

We like things our way. We
like to be in control.



PHILIPPIANS 3:7-8 NIV

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ.

7. Laura shared her story of uninvited, unexpected, and unavoidable surrender. Tell about a time when your plans were wrecked or your blueprints were tossed in the paper shredder. How was God present with you through this season of your life?

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8. What is one area of your life where you need to surrender and let go of your will and your ways? What is the circumstance to which you are holding so tightly? What is in the center of that clenched fist? What do you struggle most to let go of?

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The first step toward the Savior
is always surrender.



— CLOSING PRAYER —

Spend time in your group praying in any of the following directions:

- Pray for your group members as they seek to surrender in a specific area of life that they had the courage to share with you.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to show you areas in your life where you need to surrender, give up, and bow down to God's will and ways.
- Thank God for how he has been near you (and your group members) in times of uninvited and unavoidable surrender.
- Celebrate the beautiful reality that God is on the throne. Rejoice that even when we feel desperate, fearful, or uncertain, he is in charge of the universe and all the details of our life.

When we let go we actually gain
something we could never find if
we hold on to what we have.



SESSION 1

Between-Sessions Personal Study

— 1. WHAT TO SURRENDER? —

As we begin this journey of surrender, take some time to identify at least one area you feel you need to surrender to God. Block out ten to fifteen minutes and find a quiet place where you can pray, wait on God, and listen. Bring this study guide with you and also a pen or pencil for writing.

- Ask the Holy Spirit to prepare your heart to humbly receive whatever word, conviction, or challenge you might receive.
- Ask the Lord to give you a clear sense of one area you need to give up or surrender fully to his will.
- Write down, in just a few words, what you feel prompted to surrender.

Perhaps also write it on a separate piece of paper and post it on your mirror at home, the dashboard in your car, or your computer at work—wherever you'll see it on a regular basis. This will reinforce the day-to-day practice of surrender.

- Pray for courage and discipline to lay this down and surrender this area to God over the coming weeks as you walk through this learning experience.

Share this conviction with a mature Christian who knows and loves you. Ask them if they will serve you and help in your spiritual journey by doing three things:

1. Pray for you in the coming weeks, asking God to help you fully surrender in this area of your life.
2. Give you input, right now, on how they feel you could grow in surrender in this specific aspect of your life.
3. Check in with you over the coming weeks and ask how you are doing, what you are learning, and how your life is changing as you surrender this area of life to Jesus.

— 2. LIFE INSPECTION —

Surrender begins with an honest survey of our heart, attitudes, and relationships. Find a quiet place and set aside ten to fifteen minutes. Bring a note pad and something to write with, or make a list on your phone, tablet, or computer. If you like to keep notes on a device rather than on paper, take a moment to put your device on airplane mode or disconnect your internet so you don't get beeps and vibrations that could distract you in this sacred time with God.

Begin with prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit of God to search your heart, mind, and life. Tell the Father that you desire to yield your will to his ways and surrender to all that he has for you, even if it is hard. If you like writing out your prayers, use the space provided below:

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I GIVE UP

Reflect on God's Word. Read the following verses a couple of times, slowly, and make them your prayer.

*Search me, God, and know my heart;
Test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting.*

PSALM 139:23-24 NIV

Write down two or three specific areas you believe you have not yet surrendered or need to surrender more completely to God's will for your life. Think about attitudes you need to surrender. Ponder actions or life patterns God might want you to yield to him. Let your mind run through your relational world and identify specific places you might need to surrender to another person in a way that would honor God and mature you.

Area One: I need to surrender . . .

Area Two: I need to surrender . . .

Area Three: I need to surrender . . .

Identify one action step of surrender for one of the areas above. What can you do, say, stop doing, or stop thinking and what will move you toward a more surrendered life?

My Action Goal:

3. CONFESSION IS A BIG PART OF SURRENDER

The Bible invites us to be people of confession. We are to confess our sins to God as well as to others. Read the two passages below and then take time to confess to God whatever the Spirit puts on your heart. Also, if you have wronged someone and need to confess your wrong, be sure to contact this person as soon as you can and admit where you were wrong as well as ask for their forgiveness. This is a radical and powerful act of surrender.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 JOHN 1:9 NIV

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

JAMES 5:16 NIV

4. KEEP A SIMPLE JOURNAL OF LESSONS

Use the journaling space below to note what the Holy Spirit is stirring within you that you may not have been aware of before or an area you hadn't quite considered needing to surrender.

5. REFLECT

Use the space provided below to write some reflections on the following topics:

- How can reading the Bible regularly, and seeking to follow what God teaches you through his Word, help you grow in surrendering to his will and move you away from seeking (or demanding) your way so often?

The more we are exposed to
God's Word and submit our lives
to his teaching, the more we
are changed into his likeness.



WHAT IS SURRENDER ANYWAY?

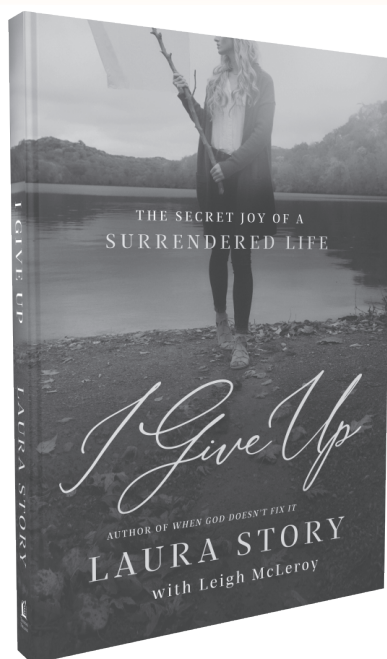
- What makes you afraid to surrender all of your life, the big stuff: your future, your dreams, and especially your plans to God?
- Do you find it more difficult to surrender the “big stuff” or the “little stuff,” such as how you approach daily tasks, respond to bumps in the road, deal with setbacks or schedule changes, family, work etc.? Why?

— RECOMMENDED READING —

As you reflect on what God is teaching you through this session, you may want to read chapters 1 and 2 of *I Give Up* by Laura Story. You also might want to read chapters 3–6 as you get ready for the next session.



New from Laura Story



Softcover
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If you've enjoyed this Bible study, read more of Laura's journey of surrender in the companion book!

Newlywed Laura Story thought she had control over the great life ahead of her. After all, she followed Jesus and had a promising new job as a worship leader. Why would God not want to fulfill her dreams?

But when Laura and her husband, Martin, faced a brain tumor, infertility, and a son's birth defect, she realized she'd been looking for a happiness that comes from circumstances, rather than a deeper joy that comes from God. Again and again, Laura had to surrender her vision for her life so she could embrace God's vision. And again and again she learned that even in the midst of shattered dreams, God's plan brought greater joy than she could have imagined.

Available now at your favorite bookstore.



Also available: Laura's new album, *I Give Up*
inspired by the secret of surrender.
Find it everywhere music is sold.

Also from Laura Story

In this five-session video Bible study, Laura examines the twists and turns that took place not only in her own life but also in the lives of many of the heroes of the faith. She reveals how God used crises in the lives of people such as Abraham, Sarah, David, and Paul to bring them closer to him and set them on the path he wanted them to take. She also shows how God used each of these individuals in spite of their flaws and brokenness.

God may not fix everything in our lives. In fact, our situation might not ever change or get better. But we can know that God will lead us to a place where we are better because of it.



Study Guide
9780310089162

DVD
9780310089186

Available now at your favorite bookstore,
or streaming video on StudyGateway.com.



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