

Hepner, Kristen. *Surrendering: My Story of Embracing the Will of God*. Magnolia, Texas: Lucid Books, 2020.

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A heart of surrender is obedient to the only Savior who is worthy of our everything. This book is about Kristen Hepner's life as she surrenders herself day after day. She shares the intimacy of these moments to point us to her faithful and true Savior.

Kristen and her husband Josh have served on the front lines of missionary work in Eastern Europe for more than 15 years. They have endured many struggles and hardships, living in hard places amongst obstinate people. They have raised seven beautiful children in a foreign country. They have been models of leadership as they have led their family and many people to the Lord through their faithfulness, love, perseverance, and surrender. You will love reading her story of surrendering every moment to the Lord and finding God always faithful. You will feel understood, encouraged, and strengthened to continue the race the Lord has given to you.

In this world and even in ministry, authenticity can be hard to find; but, it is through authenticity where we truly connect and grow. I appreciate Kristen's willingness to be vulnerable and honest with her walk with the Lord in victories, struggles, obedience, disobedience, strengths, and weaknesses. She encourages her readers to "live in a place of authenticity, to be your genuine self. He wants you to be the way He made you, not the way you



perceive you should be or the way anyone else would like you to be” (65). She gives us an excellent example of a life truly surrendered. *Surrendering* reminds us that “[we] will have to pick up [our] cross daily for the rest of [our] lives and follow Him, but He will give [us] the strength” and “once we taste and see that the Lord is good, that cross becomes lighter and even a joy to bear” (34).

Kristen calls her readers to experience the Lord in His fullness. She reminds us God desires to give us an abundant and full life. However, God often defines abundant and full very differently than we may. Kristen shares what it looks like to give up personal idols, battle the lies of the enemy, and delight ourselves in the Lord. She also gives practical advice on how to discern whether one is seeking personal desires or His desires.

Christianity really is not as complicated as we often make it. It comes down to obedience. This book is a call to obedience over and over again, letting it infuse every area of our lives. Paul tells us in Romans 12:1 to “offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God- this is your true and proper worship.” Kristen’s stories of how she has had to wrestle and choose obedience with her family, her career, her home, her body, and health embody what it means to be a “living sacrifice.” But, as she shares her stories, she also reminds us that “whatever God calls you to do, He makes it okay with your heart” (58-59). He equips the called with all they need to do His will.

Surrender and obedience do not equal an easy, carefree life. At times, we will suffer with doubts, anxiety, depression, loneliness, and hardships. Kristen opens up about hard times in her life when she was discontent, when she was weary, when she was far from perfect, and even when she was blatantly disobedient. There were times when life was not fair or when storms surrounded her. She says, “Peace is possible even in the storms of life. We do have the choice to find joy and even laughter in times of trouble” (84). We must stop viewing suffering as something that is opposed to God’s goodness. It is often through these times of suffering that we experience

God most intimately. He transforms us through these experiences more into His likeness. God can also “use [our] hurt and even disobedience however He sees fit” (98).

One of the best lessons to learn in this life is our call to surrender to grace. We have been given what we do not deserve: forgiveness, mercy, and grace; therefore, why is it so difficult for us to forgive those who sin against us? Kristen walks us through forgiving one of the most heinous sins that can be committed against someone. Kristen explains that there are different levels of forgiveness and how we can dig into the deepest level of true forgiveness. She reminds us of an old saying, “unforgiveness is the poison we drink, hoping the other person dies” (76). In this life, we are faced with many opportunities to forgive. We live in an imperfect world with imperfect people who will disappoint us. That is a guarantee. Sometimes the hardest person to forgive is ourselves. Forgiveness is a gift to us and for us. It sets us free from bitterness, bondage, and insecurity.

One of my biggest takeaways from *Surrendering* is that we each have a story to tell. God is at work in each one of us, transforming us into His image throughout our lives. This daily surrender is, as we have previously noted, “presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is [our] spiritual act of worship” (Romans 12:1). Kristen encourages us that “if you have breath left in you, He is not done using you for His glory” (p 100).

Second Chronicles 16:9 says, “He searches the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.” Psalm 52:8 says we “are like a green olive tree in the house of God. [Trusting] in the steadfast love of God forever and ever. I will thank you forever, because You have done it.” Keep surrendering, friend, to God; He is worth it.