

## Sweet Surrender – Upside Down Cake

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For the last couple weeks we've been talking about the concept of biblical surrender, and if you're here for the first time, you've come at the perfect time in this series. And I know what you're thinking! You're thinking, "this is like coming into a movie having missed the first 2/3rds of it, but I'm here to assure you that today is actually the best day for you to be here. God has a plan, and you are right in the center of it by being here today.

What is surrender? It's hit home for me recently in giving up on understanding why God does what God does. Has that ever happened to you? Has God just seemed to go off the deep end and not make sense in your life? I hope that it's not just me!

\*\*\*So when we started this I said that If I went through and asked each of you about what surrender was to you, you'd probably give me about a hundred customized versions of surrender that fit your life and where you are.

But what's also true is that original definitions of words have changed over the course of time within our culture. And we stated that everything that the world's system gets a hold of it perverts. So weather it's music, prayer, or surrender, the world's system perverts it.

For music, the world's system has turned it into a sensual experience, mostly glorifying the human body and the senses, whereas God's purpose for music has always been and will always be to bring Glory to Himself.

The world's system turns prayer into a mindless, lifeless ritual to be avoided at all costs that only someone that doesn't have any social life anyway would possibly participate in regularly when God has always intended prayer to be an ongoing conversation between those He loves, His creation and the awesome creator.

In the same way the world has turned surrender into something done, only at the last minute, after all other avenues are exhausted and you have failed. In the world's system surrender is a consequence of failure. You only surrender after failure has occurred.

Well the doctors can't do anything more, I give up!  
Well I've made a mess of our finances doing it my way, I give up!

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Well my marriage is falling apart, I give up!  
Well all my friends hate me, I give up!

Or surrender is an event that happens only when we finally get caught.  
My wife caught me cheating on her again. I guess I'm going to have to straighten up and give my heart to God and start going to church.

My parents caught me smoking pot and now I have to go to church with them.  
My boss caught me looking at porn on the internet at work and now I have to go to counseling to get help.

The whole thing takes on an old west connotation when Bad Bart gets caught by the sheriff and is surrounded.

Come out with your hands in the air and surrender, Bad Bart. We've got the place surrounded.

So as we go through this together, what we're going to find is that Surrender in God's economy, in this thing we call the Kingdom of God, is much more than just a one-time event. It is a consistent, life choice made every day by each of us as we work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

What I have found as I've studied and prayed about this is that true, biblical surrender is sweet. It is something that brings peace and bears fruit in our lives. It is not something only done after failure, but rather, before true success.

\*\*\*In this series we explored 2 key characteristics of sweet surrender together and see how they apply to our walk with Christ, and also, maybe, see that what we've been calling our walk with Christ isn't really what we thought it was.

\*\*\*The first was humble pie or humility

Humility is defined as simply this: you, by an act of your will or a choice you make, decide to make some else's deal the priority and not yours. And we saw that when we do that, God gets behind that and begins to participate in our deal.

\*\*\*The second was the whipped topping or submission.

And last week Laurie talked about Jesus as He came into the city of Jerusalem and she asked the question, "who was driving Jesus' car during the parade?" Even

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Jesus had to decide who was going to be in the driver's seat of His life. And she stated that sometimes when we're submitted to God, it takes us to applause and sometimes it takes us to servitude, like when Jesus chose to be the humble servant at the last supper and wash the feet of his disciples.

But no matter which direction that submission takes us, we will ultimately come out the winner, just as Jesus did.

\*\*\*So that brings us to today as we take a look at the 3<sup>rd</sup> component of Sweet Surrender is the turnover or the upside down cake of repentance. The reason I chose these 2 representations is that for both of these desserts, the bottom becomes the top, and the top becomes the bottom.

Repentance is another one of those terms that's received a bad rep due to its misuse in mostly the media. When I say the word, what immediately comes to mind for most of us, is a guy with long, scraggly hair, standing on a street corner, with the giant placard that says, "Repent, then end is near."

And with the plethora of disaster movies recently he has become a frequent visitor to the movie screen of late.

So when I was first growing up in the church, repentance was always defined as admitting I was sorry. And for me, it was usually in the context of having been caught in something. I would say I was sorry and promise never to do it again, which would last usually as long as it took for me to get out of the supervision of the people or person that caught me.

But repentance in the bible has little to do with getting caught or saying you're sorry.

Repentance in the bible has to do with a change in direction.

I got to go with my daughter Grace to see the TAO martial arts drumming group at the Ferguson Center yesterday, which was fantastic! Well, because I had been there before I knew the quicker way in to the parking lot, but while we were on our way there, we ran into some construction in the parking lot of CNU where the Ferguson Center is located and my planned route of getting where I wanted to go

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was blocked. This was frustrating to me for 2 reasons. Number one, we had left at the last possible moment to get there and didn't have any spare time to go hunting for an alternate route, and second, I had a plan! And somebody else had screwed up that plan and now I'm stuck with being forced to change directions and go a different way.

Has that ever happened to you? Has anything ever happened in your life to upset your plans and forced you to change directions? Well today, I'm here to tell you that you're not the only one. And today we're going to look at the life of someone that had his whole world turned upside down.

In the book of Acts (not Ax), we get introduced to a man that would later be known for all of eternity. All of you in this room knows his name, cities are named after him, and we all know someone named after him.

Let me set the scene for you here.

Jesus has been killed by the religious leaders of the day and they thought be killing him they would stop the corruption of their religion.

Instead, after Jesus' resurrection, He visits hundreds of people, and now thousands and thousands of people throughout the land are doing nothing but talking about Jesus.

One particularly good speaker was Stephen. And, in the course of his talks, the religious leaders of the day decide to frame him. So they pay off some witnesses to testify against him, arrest him, try him and convict him of something that is worthy of death.

Now they take him outside the city and stone him to death. And while this is happening, the people take off their outer robes and put them in a pile where someone watches over the pile.

This someone is Saul, who would later be called by his Roman name Paul.

\*\*\*Acts 7:58 When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

\*\*\*Acts 8:

1 Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death.

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And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

2 Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him.

3 But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.

\*\*\*Acts 9:

1 Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest,

2 and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Pause here and ask, if there is anyone that would be known for what Paul has become known for in all of history, this ain't him!

Also, would you say that this guy has a plan? He has a plan as to where he's going

\*\*\*3 As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him;

4 and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,

This is the question that brought Saul to a complete turn-around in his life. I'm saying the answer this question turned his world upside down and what used to be on top now went to the bottom and what used to be on the bottom was now on top. Because before this, all he knew of Jesus was the over-inflated stories, and the fact that he was a dead heretic.

And notice what questions he didn't ask. What about? Why would you?

Adults don't become Christians because they get all their questions answered because they figured everything out or get over all their obstacles, but generally something comes along that shrinks their questions and obstacles.

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Guys don't get married because all their questions and doubts get answered, they fall in love.

You don't have to have all your questions answered in order to make Jesus your Savior. I have never met anyone that made Jesus their Savior because all their doubts were quelled.

What about and Why would? And what I'm telling you is that even if you read books on all your questions and got them all answered you'd be no closer to God than you were when you started.

I'm not saying the questions aren't valid, but they're the wrong questions.

The 2 questions that you have to answer in order for you to be drawn to Jesus as your Savior are:

1. Who is Jesus?
2. What happened?

We always go with undeniable over unexplainable.

**\*\*\*We have three options:**

live with a rebellious heart toward God;

live with a divided heart;

live with a surrendered and submitted heart.