

WHEN A *life* IS  
**Surrendered**  
TO GOD



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*Have you ever been in that place where you have needed to let go and trust God? It could be with a decision, a desire of your heart, a situation that is out of your control or even that way you see and understand yourself. Well today we learn from the life of Hannah, whose trusting faith in the midst of a heart-wrenching situation is a beautiful picture of a life surrendered to God. Her actions, and her prayer of praise after God answered her cry, truly reveal the trusting nature of her faith and invites us to examine ourselves.*

*As those whose lives are surrendered to God, are we a people who live out of this place of trusting faith in our Great God?*

### Hannah's Story

Read 1 Samuel 1:1-10.

In many ways Hannah's is a simple story to understand. The real power of Hannah's faith and example comes when truly enter her story and imagine ourselves in her position.

- Can you empathise with Hannah? What tumult of emotions would she have experienced?

Sometimes we can think of trusting faith being the response of a person in a place of strength to the call of God to go do something amazing for him. Yet equally powerful is the trusting faith that calls us to simply reach out to God in the darkest places of our lives.

- Do you find it natural or more difficult to trust God in the harder places of your life? What are some of the things that make it hard for you to surrender yourself to trusting God's leading, provision, conviction or care?

Read 1 Samuel 1:11-19. Childless, Hannah was not prayerless and her prayer reveals that in her barrenness she still believed. Her prayer is full of faith, sincerity, humility and respect for God.

- What is it about the character of God and our relationship with Him that invited Hannah (and us) to pray such prayers of trusting faith? (nb: see also Hannah's prayer in 1 Sam 2)

Consider verse 18-19. Although her circumstances had not changed, the prayerful encounter with God and Eli (after the initial misinterpretation was cleared up!) left Hannah's attitude seemingly changed.

- In your own experience, what effect does surrendering control of our decisions, circumstances or desires to God have on our experience of those things?

- Knowing that it is not always easy, what practical things have you or might you find helpful in surrendering your difficulties to God?

Read 1 Samuel 1:21-28. It is amazing that Hannah would completely hand over Samuel, the very answer to her prayer into God's service and care.

- What does this action reveal about Hannah?
- When we entrust to God what is the most precious to us, what does it show to others?

### The role and importance of trusting faith

Read Genesis 15:1-6; Proverbs 3:5-6; Psalm 13:5-6, 18:1-2, 56:3-4; Romans 15:13.

The Bible writers make much of trusting faith. It is essential for our salvation, is credited to Abram as righteousness and sung about in the psalms.

- Share some of your own journey in seeking to increasingly trust God. What have been some of the highs and lows as you've journeyed deeper into trusting faith in God?

Many preachers and commentators have observed that the modern day Western Christian goes to great lengths to structure their lives in such a way that faith is no longer required. Cultural values like independence, financial security, comfort, risk minimisation can easily sneak into the Christian walk.

- How do you understand the biblical interplay between trusting faith and personal responsibility?
- What role does your trusting faith in God play in your day to day life?

### Personal Reflection

What have you felt God speaking to you through Hannah's life and example?

What are you doing right now in your life that is requiring you to have faith?

Where are you holding back from allowing yourself to fully trust God?

*Have you ever surveyed your skills, training, abilities and experiences and wondered how they might be used to serve God and others? Have you ever dreamed about what the church community might look like if every single person's gifting found its expression to the glory of God? Well today we learn from the life of Bezalel and Oholiab, two names you might be initially unfamiliar with. Empowered by God, these two men were pivotal figures in the creation of the sacred place where generation of Israelites would come to enjoy glorifying and worshipping God. They cause us to ask ourselves:*

*As those whose lives are surrendered to God, are we a people who faithfully use our God-given skills in His service for His glory?*

### Bezalel and Oholiab's Story

Read Exodus 31:1-11.

It is hard to overstate the importance of the task that these men undertook: we are talking about the creation of Israel's central religious space where God would dwell and His people would worship him for generations (not to mention the creation of the Ark of the Covenant itself)!

- Put yourself in their shoes...no pressure right?! How would you feel to be called to this extraordinary project – proud, intimidated, excited, fearful, inadequate or up for the challenge?
- As you think about the task that lay before them, have you ever experienced something similar (an opportunity or responsibility that came your way which you felt God was calling you into)? If comfortable share what it was and how you felt about it.

A key emphasis in the Exodus account of the work of these two men is that their abilities were given by God for the accomplishment of God's plans. Bezalel is also specifically singled out as being '*filled with the Spirit of God*'.

- Why do you think such a supernatural enabling was required for this task?
- Do you think that the emphasis on their supernatural enabling diminishes in any way their own personal effort to refine those skills over the years?
- When you think of your own natural talents, interests and skills that you have cultivated through training and experience, how much do give God credit for those?

I wonder whether Bezalel & Oholiab thought that religious 'spiritual' things were more for the priests and prophets and those in the tribe of Levi rather than for blokes who worked with their hands.

- Do you think there is an unspoken assumption of a hierarchy of service, as if somehow certain skills or service are more important in the Kingdom of God? If so, where do you think this has come from?

Other than their names, lineage and skills we know very little about these two men. They rise from anonymity and return to anonymity. They no doubt took pride in their work, yet their position did not lead to self-aggrandisement. In fact they were happy to teach and work alongside others (Exodus 35:34-36:1), allowing all the glory to go to God.

- How do you balance being rightly proud of your opportunities to serve and the fruit of your ministry, whilst maintaining a humble servant heart?
- How can you safeguard against sinful pride, arrogance or abuse of power or position?

### The role and importance of skilled service

Read Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Ephesians 6:7-8; Colossians 3:17 and 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2 & 4:11-12.

The Scriptures call us to do things well to the glory of God; stewarding the natural talents, spiritual gifts and experiences we have by finding our unique place to serve.

- What do these passages say about the attitude that we are to have as we serve God?
- How might it look practically in your life to do things for the glory of God?
- Are there any ways that this challenges the way in which you are serving God at the moment?

### Personal Reflection

What have you felt God speaking to you through Bezalel & Oholiab's life and example?

Where do you feel that you are stewarding your God-given gifts and talents well at the moment? How have you been encouraged by the ways God has used your skilled service to bless others?

What skill and gifts do you feel you have that go ignored or underutilised? How might you begin to pursue opportunities to increasingly use them for God's glory?

*Have you ever found yourself serving to meet a need someone has and thought “this feels exactly how servants of Jesus should be living all the time”? Well today we learn from the life of Elisha, one of Israel’s most powerful prophets. Despite some of the incredible miracles and prophetic words God brought through Elisha, we read of a simple humble servant who does not find it beneath him to deeply care for individuals (well, maybe apart from those disrespectful youths in 2 Kings 2:23-25!). His life often speaks to us of power expressed through willing and caring servanthood, and calls us to examine ourselves.*

*As those whose lives are surrendered to God, are we willing servants of all?*

### Elisha’s Story

Having been called into service by Elijah (1 Kings 19:19-21) and then inheriting the spirit/power of Elijah after his departure (2 Kings 2:9-15), Elisha’s ministry is one of amazing miracles and surprisingly intimate interactions.

Read 2 Kings 4:1-37. Here Elisha helped a widow in her debt and a sonless wealthy Shunammite woman. In both cases, Elisha took a personal interest in providing for the needs of these women.

- As you read the account, what strikes you about the care that Elisha showed?
- Have you ever had the opportunity to walk closely with someone through their time of need (or have someone walk with you through your time of need)? Share, if comfortable, the impact that had on you and the others involved.
- We are unlikely to help someone sell oil or get miraculously pregnant (although we can certainly pray for that!), so what are the needs we likely to come across today that we can be proactive in being involved in?

In 2 Kings 5 Elisha willingly heals a powerful foreigner with the dreaded and incurable condition of leprosy. Elisha doesn’t discriminate against him despite his foreign military background, nor does he make a big fanfare (simply sends a message), and is resolute about not receiving any payment (including punishing a servant who tried to take advantage of Naaman’s offer).

- There is a difference between being discerning and being discriminating in working out who to help and how to help. How do you find the balance when presented with a need?
- Where do you notice yourself resisting helping someone in need? What might you need to surrender in order to be responsive to their need?

- The humility of Elisha in being involved in a miraculous healing is beautiful. How is the manner in which we help sometimes as important as the help that is given?
- Like Elisha, when Christians help without reward what does that communicate?

Elisha, the man who prophesied to Kings and performed miracles like routing an entire army of Arameans is also the man who helped recover lost borrowed axe-heads (2 Kings 6:1-7).

- In many ways, this seems a strange incident to warrant mention in the Scriptures. Why do you think it is included in God's Word?
- How have you experienced God at work through normal, everyday opportunities?
- It seems that no need was beneath Elisha's help. What are some ways that seemingly insignificant things we do for others can also be powerful demonstrations of our loving care for them? What specific examples have you been a part of?

### The role and importance of willing servanthood

Read Proverbs 31:8-9; Mark 10:42-45; Matthew 25:34-40; Acts 20:35; Philippians 2:1-11; Hebrews 13:16.

We have the greatest example to follow, and the command to follow in his footsteps.

- In the past Christians have been known as those who start hospitals, schools, charities and the place to turn to when times are tough. How can we share these stories (without boasting) to realign the views that not-yet Christians have of the Church or Jesus?
- Consider the radical generosity of God towards us through Jesus' servanthood. What are some practical ways that we can express that same generosity of servanthood to others?

### Personal Reflection

What have you felt God speaking to you through Elisha's life and example?

In our season of gratitude as a church, who do you need to be grateful for because of the ways they have been a willing servant to you?

What need in our community or with someone you know do you feel God calling you to be a servant of this coming month?

*Have you ever marvelled at the way someone is able to influence and help shape culture? Or have you ever found yourself feeling a holy discontent about where a group of people are at spiritually and dreamt they were so much more than they currently are? Well today we learn from the life of Josiah. His life is a stunning example of godly influence, and the importance of that influence being grounded in his own deeply personal faith journey.*

*As those whose lives are surrendered to God, are we a people who are Godly influencers in our families, friendship circles, schools, workplaces and our broader society?*

### Josiah's Story

Read 2 Kings 22:1-2.

At 8 years old, Josiah inherited one of the most influential positions in Judah. As the record of Scripture shows, Josiah (unlike many kings) used his position to be a Godly influence.

- Whether intentionally or unintentionally, all of us have a degree of positional or personal influence on others. Think of your own current situation: where/who/how are you an influencer?
- With so many examples of power corrupting individuals, how important is it for us to be thoughtful and intentional in stewarding the influence we do have?

Read 2 Kings 22:3-20 & 23:25. There will always be those whose life speaks "do as I say, not as I do". This cannot be said of Josiah. His religious reforms were clearly grounded in genuine repentance and a deeply personal devotion to God and His ways.

- What do verses 11-13 and 19-20 reveal about the character of Josiah?
- When it comes to being a person of Godly influence, why is the most important thing our own character and personal relationship with God?
- Think back on some of the people who have been a godly influence on you. How important has their integrity as a person of God been on the impact and influence they had on you?

It could have been easy for Josiah to bemoan the current state of Judah's spirituality, apportion blame or minimise the sinfulness of what was happening. Instead, Josiah chose to take seriously the words in the Book of the Law and then work with all his might to bring Judah back into a place of obedience.

- In those spheres where you have influence, do you often get discouraged or feel defeated by the spiritual state of the people there?

- To quote the Apostle Paul, how do you 'keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord' (Romans 12:11) in those times?
- In your places of influence (family, work, friends, church, sporting team etc), instead of accepting things the way they are do you have a vision for what could be? What are some practical things you could do to be more intentional in your Godly influence to this end?

2 Kings 23:4-24 catalogues Josiah's relentless opposition to idolatry within Judah. There were some drastic measures taken, many of which were likely to have been incredibly unpopular. Josiah began first though by publically recommitting himself and all of Judah to God's ways (23:1-3).

- What is the role of courage in seeking to be a godly influence?
- Josiah had a uniquely public platform and positional authority to influence from. What are some other forms of influence that we might consider?

### The role and importance of Godly influence

Read Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Matthew 5:13-16; 1 Peter 2:9-12; 1 Timothy 4:11-12; Titus 2:7-8; Colossians 4:5-6.

- In our individualistic society we have a tendency to privatise faith, focusing on "my personal relationship with God". How is using our influence just as much an act of worship as daily bible reading?
- How does seeking to be a person of Godly influence impact our own journey of discipleship and sanctification?

### Personal Reflection

What have you felt God speaking to you through Josiah's life and example?

What practical ways can you, this week, be at work to influence people towards God (be specific!)?

*Have you ever had the chance to get to know someone behind the scenes and been inspired by their integrity? Or have you ever felt disgust as someone's character is exposed as someone whose public image did not match their private life? Well today we learn from the life of Samuel, Hannah's answer to prayer and a righteous prophet to Israel. His life shows him to be the last in the great line of Israel's judges, one of Israel's greatest intercessors and the prophet who anointed the first two kings of Israel. In all of it though, he remained a man who is known for his integrity and the way his allegiance was always to God first.*

*As those whose lives are surrendered to God, are we a people of personal integrity?*

### Samuel's Story

Read 1 Samuel 1:24-28; 2:11-12, 17-26; 3:1-21.

To say Samuel had an unusual childhood is an understatement! Given fully into the Lord's service before we would send our children to pre-school, Samuel grew up in the Temple when the word of the Lord was rare (3:1) and with older brother figures who were unashamedly wicked.

- How was Samuel's integrity, relationship with God and reputation among the Israelites contrasted with Eli's sons?
- In an environment where the example set was one of using position for selfish gain, what does Samuel's right living reveal about his inner convictions and moral compass? As a young man he had already decided what was to be most important to him – what was it?
- What emotions might Samuel have felt when called to give an honest account of his first vision to Eli (who would have been like a surrogate father figure to him)?

Samuel's actions even at a young age reveal that his allegiance was to God first. God was going to be his priority, even in the intimidating face of human authority. This steadfast integrity to put God first continued throughout his life. In 1 Samuel 15, Samuel is faithful to deliver a very unwelcome prophecy to the first king of Israel, Saul who had just fought a victorious military campaign with 210,000 under his command.

- Although Saul didn't obey God's instructions completely, he did still sacrifice some of the spoils to God. In light of who Saul is (the king with an army who would have felt that God gave them the victory), would you have been tempted to let the partial obedience slide? Why do you think Samuel did not let it slide?
- What are some of the potential unfavourable responses that we might get today, which cause us to think twice about saying or doing what we believe God is calling us to?

Samuel is shown to be a man of prayerful intercession, one of Israel's greatest intercessors (see Psalm 99:6 and Jeremiah 15:1). He intercedes in battle (1 Samuel 7) and for the people (12:23); seeks God's guidance (8:6, 15:11), is sensitive to the leading of God (1 Samuel 9:15-17) and submits his own opinions to God's voice (1 Samuel 16:6-13).

- As a people whose lives are surrendered to God, what does prayer have to do with our integrity?
- Are you someone whose private prayer life matches the public image you project?
- How might you increasingly be a person of integrity in your private prayer life? (What sort of prayers would you pray? How would you respond to God's voice in prayer? etc)

Read 1 Samuel 12:1-5, the speech Samuel gave as the kingly line was introduced into Israel.

- After so many years of being a public persona, all of the people completely affirmed the integrity of Samuel! What is the power of such an example?
- In the way that you work, parent, lead, serve and live, are you conscious of not only what you achieve but the kind of person you are as you do those things? How can you be more intentional about the kind of example you are?

### The role and importance of Personal Integrity

Read Psalm 15; Proverbs 28:6; 2 Corinthians 8:21; Hebrews 13:18; 1 Peter 3:8-17

- As you consider the Scriptures, how would you define 'integrity'?

### Personal Reflection

What have you felt God speaking to you through Samuel's life and example?

Samuel, is ultimately shown to be a man who lived by his rebuke to King Saul that '*to obey is better than sacrifice*'. Where are you feeling God calling you to greater obedience as you seek to be a person of integrity?

*Have you ever had an inner-conviction you felt so strongly that you couldn't shake it, even when felt as if forces, people or circumstances were against you? What did you do with that? Well today we learn from the life of Daniel, a young man in a foreign culture who was unwilling to compromise on his conviction when there was plenty pressure to do so. His example speaks to us, and causes us to ask ourselves:*

*As those whose lives are surrendered to God, are we a people of uncompromising conviction?*

## Daniel's Story

Read Daniel 1.

Daniel was a naturally gifted, well-educated, member of the elite (and apparently handsome as well!) when he was taken from his people to enter King Nebuchadnezzar's service. With his upbringing and this opportunity, he had every chance of flourishing within Babylon and integrating himself into Babylonian culture. Yet straight away, Daniel 'resolved' to be true to his personal convictions in the areas of diet and obedience to the God of Israel's claim over all areas of his life.

- How quickly do you think Daniel would have taken on Babylonian culture without his inner conviction and the decision to not to defile himself at this first test?
- Convictions are often understood as a matter of personal conscience, yet often they have to be lived out publically. What are some personal convictions you have that naturally find an outward expression?
- Share an example of a time when one of your convictions helped you navigate a situation, decision or relationship that you suddenly found yourself faced with.

When we have personal convictions, we usually feel those very strongly. Some of those deeply held convictions are straight out of Scripture, some are personal convictions arrived at through prayerful reflection, and some can be deeply held convictions that have come out of our family of origin or been formed out of experience.

- How do you discern the difference between a God-given conviction and a passionately held personal opinion?

This would not be the last time Daniel's convictions were challenged (see Daniel ch 6) and each time he interacted with those who didn't share his convictions with humility, respect and grace. He neither condemned Babylonian culture wholesale, nor did he try to force his ways onto those he encountered.

- Christians haven't always been good at living out our convictions in this way. Why do you think that is?
- Have you seen someone live out their convictions in such a way that even those who disagree with them still end up still respecting them? Share if appropriate.

There are many who have drawn parallels between Daniel's situation in Babylon and our situation in the broader society and culture of our time. That is, the modern believer lives among a culture and society that is animated by different truths, values and ultimately "gods" than the Biblical Worldview, Kingdom Values and Lordship of Jesus.

- How can we examine ourselves to discern whether we are living out of our God-shaped convictions instead of taking on the norms of our surrounding culture?
- What are ways in which our Christian convictions are at odds with our surrounding culture? Where do you find that our different convictions really clash and call us to choose where our allegiance lies?

### The role and importance of Uncompromising Conviction

Read 1 Kings 18:21; Philippians 1:9-11, 27-30; 1 Corinthians 15:58; 16:13; Ephesians 4:13-15; Hebrews 10:32-39; James 4:17.

- The Scriptures are full of verses calling us to decide, to stand firm, and to live out our convictions. What is the witness and impact of our example when we do live this way?
- We've looked at some of the cultural circumstances that assail our convictions, but what about our own internal struggle to act on those convictions? How have you found that the battle to live with uncompromising conviction is often a battle with your 'old self'?

### Personal Reflection

The often quoted "if you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything" is a pithy yet astute phrase reminding us of the power of deeply held convictions.

- What are some of your own God-given, deeply held guiding convictions? Share some of them with each other and explain why you hold so tightly to them.
- As you think of Daniel's example, is there anywhere in your life that God is revealing to you where have allowed circumstances or culture to unduly influence your thinking or behaviour?

*Have you ever had God break your heart for a particular need in our world? Or felt God place a specific calling on your life? Well today we learn from the life of Nehemiah, a servant of God during the time of exile whose heart broke for the plight of his fellow Israelites and the vulnerable state of their capital city. His life is the text book example of the power of a passionate focus. He worked with all wisdom, strength and prayerful dependence to achieve the almost impossible: the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem in 52 days!*

*As those whose lives are surrendered to God, are we too a people of passionate focus?*

### Nehemiah's Story

Read Nehemiah chapter 1.

Nehemiah chapter 1 records the moment that Nehemiah's heart broke for what would become his passionate focus and calling: the plight of the Jewish remnant in Jerusalem.

- Have you ever had a similar experience (when you saw something that was not right in the world and felt your heart break for it)?
- If you are able, share with the group what you feel God's specific calling on your life is (or is in this current season of life). If you know what that calling is – why and how did you come to feel that God is calling you to that specific thing?
- This need before him drove Nehemiah to prayer. His prayer reveals that he knew he would need God's help (see also Nehemiah 2:5). What does your prayer life reveal about the things you are passionate about?

Read Nehemiah 2:19-20 and chapter 4.

- Biblically and spiritually, we know there are forces that actively oppose the work of God in our world. How is Nehemiah's rebuilding of the walls shown to be more than just a human Vs human struggle?
- As you passionately devote yourself to whatever God has called you to, how seriously do you take spiritual opposition to that work?
- Australians are known for having a "tall poppy syndrome". It is the recognition that whenever someone rises from the mediocrity of the comfortable status-quo, there are always those who criticise, mock or oppose. Have you ever experienced this? Has or does the fear of this response sometimes keep you from fully pursuing a God-given passion?

Read Nehemiah chapter 5. People who have passionate focus can often be very driven and success oriented. The temptation is for achieving the desired result whatever the human

cost, but not for Nehemiah who exhibited a deep concern for the welfare of the people of God.

- People matter to God more than projects. How can we make sure we avoid a “the end justifies the means” mindset in our own area of passionate focus?

One of the most famous verses in Nehemiah comes in chapter 6 verse 3-4. Despite repeated attempts to get Nehemiah to leave his project, Nehemiah had so much personal clarity and passionate focus that he refused to be distracted from his task.

- We all have competing demands on our time and things (some good, some not) that would distract us or delay us from the task. How do you keep focused on what you believe God has called you to in the midst of these demands?
- What is the danger in allowing ourselves to not make the distinction between our priority tasks and the various other things that clamour for our attention?

The testimony and witness of the completion of the wall is that it was God’s work (6:15-16). Much is made about having a “God-sized vision”, that is: that we should have a bigger vision for our life, family, church and community than we could reasonably achieve in our own strength (forcing us to then rely on God’s empowering presence).

- How was Nehemiah’s passion for the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem beyond his own personal ability to make happen without God’s power and influence?
- If you survey your current dream for the impact and influence of your life, does it desperately need God to come through for you? If not, do you think your vision is too small?
- How do you feel that we as a church community at PBC go with this?

### Personal Reflection

There is more to learn from the life of Nehemiah than what we have looked at today, but thinking of Nehemiah’s passionate focus, what have you felt God speak to you?

Read Nehemiah 2:11-20. Unlike many people who loudly proclaim what they are passionate about but then do very little about it, Nehemiah allowed his passion to guide his prayer, thoughts, plans and actions. The following chapters reveal his continued devotion to action and the recruitment of others in the same endeavour.

- The saying “talk is cheap” comes to mind here. How might you be more active in pursuing what you feel God has called you to in the coming weeks and months?

## When a life is surrendered to God... Jeremiah: *Steadfast Faithfulness*

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*Have you ever felt like you were the only one left who wants to follow God completely? Or have you ever experienced discouragement take over after facing personal opposition and disappointments as you sought to live God's way? Well today we learn from the life of Jeremiah, the so called "weeping prophet". Jeremiah faithfully proclaimed messages from God only to have his listeners reject him and his message, refuse to repent of their ways and choose instead to trust in false prophets and the false security of the temple. Jeremiah is a terrifyingly challenging example of the steadfast faithfulness that God sometimes calls his people to. Despite the threats, plots against him, discouragements, the enormous personal cost and the lack of any fruit or "success", Jeremiah remained steadfastly faithful.*

*As those whose lives are surrendered to God, would we be prepared to be as steadfast in our faithfulness?*

### Jeremiah's Story

Read Jeremiah 1-2. Here Jeremiah's call to ministry and first prophecies are recorded.

- Jeremiah 1:5 reminds us of the intimate knowledge that God has of those He calls into His service. How does your belief in God's deep love for you and the knowledge of His presence with you, shape the way you are faithful to God?
- Jeremiah's call is made clear in 1:7. Christians are often good at partial obedience, yet that is not what God called Jeremiah to. What did Jeremiah, and what do we have to surrender in order to be fully faithful to God and His ways?
- As you read these first prophecies of Jeremiah, what seems to be the core of God's message to the people of Judah through His chosen prophet?

Jeremiah's message is a vivid denouncement of sin and announcement of God's coming judgment. Read some examples: Jeremiah 5:7-31, Jeremiah 19.

- Put yourself in Jeremiah's shoes for a minute. Imagine having to bring that Word publically in its fullness to a people you know, some of whom you would have grown up with! What would you be feeling? What would you be thinking?
- Ultimately, what would you do if you were in his shoes?

Jeremiah's message may be harsh, yet was spoken with deep empathy and love for his listeners (9:1; 13:15-17) and accompanied by the constant call to turn back to God so that judgment might be avoided (4:1-4; 7:1-7). His listeners however, continued to avoid repenting and did not even feel any shame over their sinfulness (6:13-15; 8:12).

- Have you experienced putting your whole heart into something for God which did not seem to go the way you planned? Share if appropriate.

- What did you feel in those times? What did you pray? What was the impact on your own relationship with God? How did you to navigate that disappointment?

Read together Jeremiah 16:1-9. On top of the opposition to his message, Jeremiah was called to a life of singleness and childlessness. Furthermore, he was called to intentionally remove himself from those social occasions where we feel the deepest relational connection with each other (mourning and celebrating).

- Can you imagine how lonely and isolating his faithfulness to God would be?
- Why would God ask this of Jeremiah?

Understandably, Jeremiah ended up experiencing deep discouragement and doubts. We have a unique insight into Jeremiah's inner emotional life through some of his personal prayers; perhaps the most bitter being Jeremiah 20:7-18.

- As you read his prayer, what do you feel for Jeremiah?
- As Christians we believe that Jesus came to bring us life to the full (John 10:10), that we have been filled with an inexpressible joy (1 Peter 1:8), and that we have the same Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead living in and empowering us (Romans 8:11)! So how do you reconcile that with the hardships and discouragements we face along the way just by being faithful?

### Personal Reflection

Read Lockyer's summary of Jeremiah the man below:

*Jeremiah's harsh message of judgment delivered with tears never won a convert. Such a message was not only unwelcome to the nation whose 70 years' captivity Jeremiah predicted, but totally rejected by a backsliding people. Yet 'the grandeur of his character appears in his fearlessness and faithfulness and passion for souls. He faced misrepresentation, persecution, the dungeon and death, rather than keep back one word of truth' (All the Books and Chapters of the Bible, p177)*

Throughout this series we have been looking at examples of what it means to have a life surrendered to God. Jeremiah's was a life totally surrendered to God.

- As you look back, what seasons or circumstances can you praise God for where His strength empowered you to steadfastly persevere in faithfulness?
- As you think of where you are at today, how can this group be praying for you in areas where you feel your faithfulness is being tested?
- As you look forward, where do you feel God calling into greater faithfulness?

*Have you ever skydived, shared a deep hurt with someone for the first time, scuba dived, or handed your car keys to your freshly licenced child for the first time? Then you know that there is an instant where you have to fully commit yourself to taking that step of faith! Well today we are not learning from another bible character but drawing the mirror close to consider our own lives.*

*Daily we are assaulted with a myriad of choices. Choices about how to use our time or what we will speak. Choices about who we will become, or how we will manage our relationships and finances. Choices about how follow Christ in this world and what we feel him calling us to let go of, step into or step up to. Through it all we have this solid foundational posture before God, which guides us and calls us into ever deepening trust in Him. The solid foundation of: "not my will Lord, but yours be done".*

### Your Story

Every one of us continues and contributes to the great cloud of witnesses; that is, those who place their trust in God and live from this place of surrender to His will.

- Share a story of a time where you surrendered to God's leading and took what felt like a step of faith into that? What did it feel like? How did you go?
- As you think back on your walk of faith so far, what have been some of your internal "push backs" to surrendering fully to God? What makes it hard for you to surrender completely?
- As you think back on your walk of faith so far, what have been some of your internal "motivators" to surrendering fully to God? What has made it easier for you to surrender to God in both the little and big moments?

This series we have looked at some real life examples of what surrender to God can look like, and examined the following traits as we learned from their lives: *trusting faith, skilled service, willing servanthood, Godly influence, personal integrity, uncompromising conviction, passionate focus, and steadfast faithfulness.*

- Which of those did you feel God speak particularly clearly to you through? How so?
- What have you already applied to your own life that you felt God speak to you through the different weeks and messages? How has applying that to your life gone so far?

Read together: Acts 20:24; Galatians 2:20 and Philippians 1:19-20. In these verses we see Paul's clear self-understanding as a man whose life fully belonged to God.

- How would you explain this Christian self-understanding to a not-yet-believer?

- Theologically, how should coming to faith in Christ shift our self-understanding?
- From your own personal experience, how has coming to faith in Christ shifted the way you see and understand yourself in relation to God?
- How should all this affect the way we are to live?

### Personal Reflection

Through the various traits the biblical characters have highlighted, we have done a lot of guided thinking and discussing around what surrender to God can look like. Yet surrender to God is obviously not limited to those, nor is it just about our behaviour. Surrender is about a posture and attitude, expressed perfectly through Jesus (see John 5:30, 6:38, Luke 22:39-44).

Spend some time in personal reflection during your small group time – maybe grab a piece of paper, a bible and pen and then each find a quiet spot by yourself for a few minutes. Come to God in prayerful submission with the question:

*“God reveal to me what, where or how you are calling me into deeper surrender?”*

For those who need a bit more of a guided reflection, pray through the following exercise:

What, where or how are you calling me God, into deeper surrender in:

- *The way I see myself? In the way I see others?*
- *The way I understand, worship and serve you God?*
- *My goals, desires and private ambitions?*
- *Where my thoughts, emotions and energy are directed and invested?*
- *My private behaviour? In my public behaviour?*
- *My lifestyle choices?*

After a time, come back and share with each other what you felt God speak into that space.

What practical steps do you need to take to be faithful to see that through?

Encourage each other and then pray for one another to finish our series.

*Thanks for being a part of our series examining the ways faithful men and women throughout the Scriptures have surrendered themselves to God's leading and into His service. We pray you have been encouraged and built up in your faith and challenged to consider the ways you too can find joy and purpose in surrendering to God in your life.*

