

Tender Surrender Brings Freedom

As a child, I don't know how many times during church services I sang the old song, "I Surrender All." I'm not sure what I thought the words meant back then. I probably thought they were defining what I did when I accepted Jesus at age seven and gave up my life of crime as a candy thief.

I stole some penny candy from the grocery store and Dad marched me back there to confess to the store manager. That's when I realized I was a sinner. I was like all the bad people the preacher yelled about every Sunday night. I needed salvation because I didn't want to go to hell.

I accepted Jesus and gave up my life of crime but I didn't give up candy or desserts. As I got older, I thought anything made with sugar helped me get through my day, kept my negative emotions at bay, gave me energy, comforted me and became a friend who was always there when I needed them.

The Sugar Conundrum

Actually the only thing sugar did was cause me to gain up to 430 pounds, which led to a cardiac surgeon telling me I had five years to live if I didn't lose weight and keep it off.

My battle with sugar has been long and involved. I will always be a sugar addict but after losing 250 pounds, today I am a recovering sugar addict, rescued by the grace strength of God.

It wasn't any kind of magical fix though. I didn't walk through a prayer line and have all those pounds fall off of me. I put them on one pound at a time and I had to take them off the same way.

I Am a Sugar Addict

Admitting my problem was the first step on my recovery. I had to accept I had a problem and that it was my problem, not God's. For years I wanted God to fix me so I could eat sugar and not gain weight. Others could, why couldn't I?

Then God brought to mind 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NLT): "Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body."

As those words spilled across my mind, I saw I had not been honoring God with my body. I had been living for myself. I had not been listening to the Holy Spirit who lives within me. I was eating whatever I wanted, whenever I wanted and however much I wanted, and I was damaging the body God gave me.

Life or Death?

In that moment, it felt as if God moved heaven and earth to help me understand that He wanted me to live and not die.

It was like He repeated Deuteronomy 30:19-20 to me: "Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live! You can make this choice by loving the Lord your God, obeying Him, and committing yourself firmly to Him. This is the key to your life."

For some time, I had felt lost and like I didn't have a purpose in God's kingdom. That day He assured me He did have a purpose for me but it came with a price. That price was for me to live and surrender my most selfish desire to Him: the thing that had become a habit, then a stronghold and finally an addiction.

Come-to-Jesus Moment

I had made sugar like a god in my life; that had to change. This was my Come-to-Jesus moment. It was when I got real with Him and surrendered the thing I loved the most to Him—sugar.

I knew I couldn't stop eating it all at once; that had never worked before. I knew I had to have help to learn how to change my habits. I knew it would take time but this was the time I drove a stake in the ground and said from here on I will listen to what the Holy Spirit tells me to do.

Surrender can be a gut-wrenching process filled with anguish and fear of giving up what we think we need. We may surrender 1,000 times until the truth hits us. Then when we understand the truth, we can't help but lay ourselves on God's altar. And that's when the beauty of surrender begins to be revealed in our lives.

Where Do I Go From Here?

Just as Father God gave Jesus free will while He was on earth in human form, He does the same for us. We are in charge of our own lives. He won't make us surrender to Him but He wants us to.

"What should be our proper response to God's marvelous mercies? To surrender yourselves to God to be His sacred, living sacrifices. And live in holiness, experiencing all that delights His heart," (Rom. 12:1, TPT).

God wants us to surrender to Him so He can guide our lives. He knows our destinies and our purposes. He knows how much more fulfilling our lives will be when we just surrender to Him.

Tender Surrender

It will bring more than we can ever hope, dream, imagine or ask for when we go all-in with Jesus. I love Proverbs 22:4 (TPT), which says, "Laying your life down in tender surrender before the Lord will bring life, prosperity, and honor as your

reward.”

Tender surrender is different from forced surrender. God never forced me to surrender. He just kept calling me back to Him again and again and again. He never gave up on me, even though it took me thirty years to finally surrender.

Tender surrender is what we experience when we finally realize the depth of the love God has for us. Then we can't help but lay ourselves on His altar. That's what brings true freedom.

We've Got Help for You

If God is calling you to surrender, you will have to learn how to change your habits. That's why I developed the Sugar Addiction quiz to help you see where you stand on this issue. After you take the quiz, I'll send you some information that is like a mini course in habit change.

It's all free. Go here to start:

And don't forget to check out episode 110 of Sweet Grace for Your Journey podcast, The Beauty of Surrender. {eoa}

Teresa Shields Parker is the author of six books and two study guides, including her No. 1 bestseller, *Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds*. Her sixth book, *Sweet Surrender: Breaking Strongholds*, is live on Amazon. She blogs at . She is also a Christian weight-loss coach (check out her coaching group at *Overcomers Academy*) and speaker. Don't miss her podcast, *Sweet Grace for Your Journey*, available on CPN.

Read articles like this one and other Spirit-led content in our new platform, CHARISMA PLUS.