

Inspired by the themes of the feature film THE FORGE

I SURRENDER ALL

PRISCILLA SHIRER

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ALL

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Inspired by the themes of the feature film THE FORGE

**I SURRENDER
ALL**

PRISCILLA SHIRER

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To John and Trina Jenkins

Thank you for being His disciples.
And for discipling us.
We are forever grateful.

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FIRST

All or Nothing

Many years ago, I traveled from my home in central Texas to upstate Connecticut to speak at a conference. I honestly don't remember much about the event itself. It's been more than twenty years. But my memory about the place where I stayed for those three days remains crystal clear.

You'll see why.

There were four of us altogether, all the speakers for the weekend, waiting at the airport baggage claim area when a van arrived to pick us up and take us to our accommodations. Light snow was falling as a member of the conference committee hopped out to greet us and welcome us to town. After we put our bags inside and each of us had taken our seats, she turned to us and told us where we were headed.

She excitedly said that in lieu of a hotel, a local resident who was on the board of the organization had generously agreed to welcome us into her home.

Hmm. This was different. But okay. We all chatted cheerily with one another during the twenty-minute drive from the airport while our host regaled us with descriptions of what this incredible house was like. Still, when we rounded the final bend and saw it for ourselves, we gasped audibly. Blank stares passed between us for a moment, as if perhaps at this last turn in the road, we'd left the real world behind and been escorted into a fairy tale.

Sprawling out before us was a vast estate surrounded by towering trees with meticulously manicured shrubbery lining the entrance, dusted in snow. The house itself was—well, they said we wouldn't be staying at a hotel, but this three-story mansion looked as big and luxurious as any five-star property I'd ever seen.

We were still trying to absorb the spectacle of it all when our van curved to a stop along the circular driveway, underneath a porte cochere supported by large marble pillars, where the lady of the house stood in the doorway waiting to welcome us. The four of us exchanged glances and sideways smiles inside the van before exiting, in disbelief that we'd be staying here, in this gorgeous home that was truly beyond our expectation.

The woman waiting for us could not have been more gracious and inviting. She was as warm, humble, and endearing as her surroundings were grand. She hugged us sincerely one by one as we stepped down out of the van, and then she helped us carry our things inside. *Inside.*

Twenty-thousand square feet opened up before us like the breaking of the sun over the horizon on a crisp summer day. The “Hallelujah Chorus” sung by a host of angels echoed around us. (Or was that just in my head?) Pristine. Polished. Palatial. Perfect. We weren’t sure exactly what to do next, but as we stood together gawking inside the front door, our host gave us our first instructions. She asked if we’d be willing, before walking any further into the house, to kindly remove our shoes.

Sure, of course. I mean, if I lived in a place as impeccable and immaculate as this, I’d probably ask people not to clomp around in their dirty shoes through my house either. But no sooner had she led us a few steps forward than she asked if we’d mind also not walking on the massive, handwoven European rug that lay across the floor of the entryway. She explained to us that this tapestry, a one-of-its-kind design, had been imported from a remote province and that she didn’t allow either her family or her guests to walk on it, ever.

A rug. In the middle of the floor. That no one walked on.

So we compliantly shuffled around the edges, being careful to restrict our movements to the hardwood floor that created a narrow walking margin. Soon we arrived inside another room, the living room, equally expansive, featuring floor-to-ceiling windows that provided a majestic view of the back acreage. Just beyond was a connected

hallway that contained its own elevator for conveying people up and down the three levels of the house.

With the click of a button, the doors slid open, and the woman motioned us to step inside. But carefully, please. As we entered with our bags in tow, she called our attention to the burnished slats of wood, elaborately carved, that ringed the interior of the elevator car. This wood, not unlike the rug, had been shipped from India while the home was being built, and she was glad to say she'd succeeded so far in keeping it from being chipped or damaged. She asked us to be mindful of our baggage so it wouldn't scrape the walls.

Imagine how tightly we then gripped our purses and carry-ons, tucking our belongings underneath our arms as the door opened on the third level. We gingerly exited in a neat single file.

Here is where we would be staying and sleeping for the weekend, each of us in our own separate master bedroom containing a king-size bed, sitting area, and private bath. I gently set my suitcase on the floor as our host was showing the others to their living quarters and was just about to sit down on the bed when she appeared again and said, "Oh, excuse me, before you sit, would you mind allowing me to fold up the comforter that's on the bed? We don't actually sleep with those. They're only for decoration." Even as she spoke the words, she was already gathering up the bedspread, which she then precisely

folded and tucked away neatly inside the closet, repeating the process for all of us.

Whew! We'd made it. From the front door all the way up here to these spacious bedroom suites, without touching anything or upsetting anything, in our sock-clad feet. Relieved by this, I think, our genial hostess turned elegantly to face us, thanked us again so much for coming, and said,

“Make yourself at home!”

What irony! Make ourselves at home? Here? Really? When shoes can't be worn? Rugs can't be walked on? Knickknacks can't be touched? Certain rooms can't be entered? Walls can't be leaned against? And comforters can't be comforting?

She'd been so kind to let us stay here, and all of us were so thankful for her genuine hospitality. More than that, the warmth I'd seen in her eyes and heart made me feel an instant affection for her. We all felt the same way. But her invitation for us to “make ourselves at home,” wasn't an offer we could truly relax into. Because, let's be honest, she clearly didn't mean for us to feel *too much* at home. There were clear boundaries and limitations, certain areas and certain treasures we knew we couldn't touch.

Invite us in? Yes.

Give us unhindered access to everything? Absolutely not.

Many of us as believers in Christ have been known to treat our Savior this same way. We've invited Him in. We're glad He's here. We like having Him close, and we like considering Him a friend. We enjoy His company, even going so far as to give Him a choice room in our heart where He can stay. We've said, in essence, "Savior, make Yourself at home in me," but what we really mean is, "Savior, you are welcome in *some* places." We'll let Him be here within limits and give Him entrée to certain general areas. But there are other spaces of our lives to which we have no intention of giving Him unfettered access, and there are treasures inside we don't really want Him to disturb.

- Ambitions He's not allowed to touch
- Entertainment choices He's not allowed to overrule
- Comforts we hold dear that He's not allowed to influence
- Opinions and perspectives He's not allowed to sway
- Family traditions He's not allowed to upend
- Relationships He's not allowed to undo
- Attitudes He's not allowed to shift
- Subjects He's not allowed to address
- Dreams He's not allowed to challenge

- Expectations He's not allowed to adjust
- Financial priorities He's not allowed to guide
- Career goals He's not allowed to alter

We're afraid that surrendering the whole of ourselves to Him, giving Him full access to our entire lives, will cause disruptions to our preferred way of living our lives. We fear His intrusive touch might disorder the life we've built or are trying to build. We're uncomfortable thinking He might go around looking into places we've intentionally hidden from view. We're avoidant of the work He might require of us if He finds something that needs adjustment or renovation, perhaps even a complete overhaul. We do not want His purifying gaze of conviction roaming freely throughout the home of our hearts, our minds, our emotions, and our actions. So we say to Him, in essence . . .

Come in as *Savior*.

But not as *Lord*.

Here lies the thin line of demarcation that separates the *believer* from the *disciple*. The *saved* life from the *surrendered* life. Believing is where we begin: repenting of our sins, receiving His forgiveness. Welcoming Him in. Salvation happens in that moment. But being His disciple is the road we then start traveling. Every day. For the rest of our lives. And it's the only road—the narrow road—that leads us where we really want to go.

The disciple has chosen to surrender her all. To release control. To give unhindered access to every part of her life—all of it—to the One who paid the exorbitant price to redeem her life in the first place. To the disciple, Christ is not a visitor held at a cautious arm's length who enters on a restricted basis, answerable to her demands. He is instead a Ruler who possesses full authority to reorient the disciple's life so that it aligns with His purposes, both for her and for His glory.

He is the builder of this house and its chief Cornerstone. The disciple recognizes He is the actual Owner, and she is the steward. He is the Maker of this relationship. And He is the Lover of her soul, whose desire it is to turn this life she lives into something He can work through and use to make a deep, transformative impact on her world for His kingdom. At times, she's worried about the high cost of a life like this. In different seasons, she felt like running from it, fighting hard against it. But she's discovered, to her joy, she never wants to go back. Because no other life can match the disciple's life.

The surrendered life.

So she keeps surrendering all. Even the parts she treasures most. She brings her whole self to Him each morning, every area, every element of what the Bible calls her "everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life." She places it before God "as an offering." She's learned, as so many others have, not

to “become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you” (Rom. 12:1–2 MSG).

Her eyes are fixed on Jesus. The culture is not her authority. *He* is.

Because she is His disciple.



The idea of being a disciple was already in existence in the ancient world before Jesus came. All throughout the Old Testament, in ancient Jewish society, the importance and implications of discipleship were conveyed to God’s people, even though the word itself wasn’t used. They were commanded to “walk in his ways” (Deut. 30:16), to “be holy because I am holy” (Lev. 11:44), and were frequently warned against patterning their lives after pagan deities and committing their allegiance to them. The actual term *disciple* was first used to describe students of Greek philosophers like Aristotle and Plato, who sought to revolutionize the culture around them, including Jewish culture, with Greek thought and influence.

These philosophers knew their pupils could never glean the depth of insight required to shift an entire civilization merely by intellectual training. Cultivating *knowledgeable* students was not their ultimate aim. They wanted much more than mental enlightenment. They wanted their learners to absorb this new way of life so deeply into their being that it transformed the way they thought about and lived their whole lives.

- The way they worked.
- The political perspectives they held.
- The financial shrewdness they employed.
- The family structure they built.
- The entertainment choices they enjoyed.
- The words they exchanged.
- The priorities they pursued.
- The education they valued.
- The disciplines they practiced.

So students of Greek philosophy became “disciples”—apprentices who immersed their whole selves not only into listening to what they were being taught but also by observing the one who taught them. So they tethered their lives to their teacher and they left everything to follow him. They followed him into his home. They watched how he interacted with others and how he governed his behavior in public and private spheres. They observed and absorbed his habits and disciplines, with the sole purpose

of replicating the life of their mentor and making the character and cadence of his life their own. Their goal was not merely to learn things, to build up a knowledge base, but to become a fully formed copy of their teacher not just by embracing his ideas but by identifying with him and imitating him in every way, in every aspect of their lives.

This book you're reading is a call—an invitation—to that kind of radical relationship with Jesus. To be His disciple. To be a true follower. To become a fully formed copy of the Teacher.

This pursuit *includes* being a student, of course, learning about Him through His Word so that our minds are renewed and shaped by truth. But it's far more involved than that—more intimate, more all-inclusive, more of an investment, truly a full integration of ourselves with Him. Just as the ancient Greeks understood, this kind of relationship cannot develop in a two-hour meeting, once a week. It can't just be a Sunday morning thing. It's a whole-life, Sunday-to-Saturday, daily surrendering and aligning of all we are to all He is, until we start to look exactly like our Teacher.

- In how we speak
- In how we behave
- In the restraint we exhibit
- In the humility we exude
- In the kindness we share

- In the perspectives we have
- In the choices we make
- In the priorities we maintain

Please know, if you feel a sense of resistance or hesitation to this kind of all-in surrender, to authentic discipleship—feeling it’s too hard, too complicated, too intrusive, or will leave you too out of control of your own life—you are not alone. The whole rhythm and pattern of this world, not to mention the nature of our flesh, resists the submission that a wholehearted following of Jesus requires. But at its essence, this lifestyle is not a more complicated life. It’s an invitation to receive a gift of simplicity and freedom.

No, it isn’t easy. It is indeed costly. But somehow the grace and goodness of God have made this experience of discipleship freeing and simplifying, getting all the parts of our lives headed in one direction. In His direction. Hear Him whisper to your hesitancy, “Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt. 11:28–29 NASB).

Rest. For your soul.

Surrender is how you finally find it.

I believe you probably picked up this book because, like me, you want to experience the fullness and abundance our

faith is designed to offer. You want more. More peace, more balance. More power, more momentum. More of an impact on people around you. More satisfaction, more contentment. More hope, more joy. More love coming out of you, more love coming in to carry you. More courage to keep going.

The surrounding culture will try to convince you that the only way to find these things is by pursuing each one of them outright. But Jesus tells you that “all these things will be added to you” when you do one surrendered thing—“seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Matt. 6:33 esv). As a disciple.

Jesus has it all.

And He has it all to give.

But first, He must have all of you.

If there’s a single idea that I hope becomes hardwired into our heads as we journey along together, it’s “all,” it’s “everything.” *I Surrender All*. The whole house and everything in it. Because *all* is where the life is. *All* is where the meaning is. *All* is what He requires, and *all* is what He deserves.

All the things.

Everything.



This book has eight chapters, and I’ve intentionally titled each of them around the word “Everything.” I’ve

repeated it and echoed it because *everything*, indeed, is the crux of what the invitation to discipleship demands. Expect it to be challenging because Jesus Himself said it would be.

“If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” (Matt. 16:24)

There’s an “all” and an “everything” to what He’s saying.

“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what good will it do a person if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul?” (Matt. 16:25–26 NASB)

So this is serious. To “lose” your life, to “surrender” your life, all of it, is an enormous ask. But not if it’s the only way to “find” your life—fulfillment, contentment, and purpose.

In order to help you digest and internalize what you’re reading and then be able to recall what the Holy Spirit is teaching you, I’ve included a section at the end of each chapter for you and your Savior to talk with each other and savor the new depths of your relationship. It’s designed to help you actively process what surrendering to the Lord means. Because if this experience we’re

embarking on is going to be complete, we can't just read about it. We need to *do something* about it. More accurately, we need to let Him do something in us. We must kneel before Him, surrendering to Him.

And when we reach the end of the book, I'm going to ask the Lord to align your life with someone else—a spiritually mature, Spirit-filled, wise, and compassionate follower of Jesus—who can continue to walk with you, encourage you, correct you, challenge you. *Disciple you.* In fact, I wonder if you looked carefully you might discover there's already someone in your sphere of influence right now who has taken seriously His command to “go, therefore, and make disciples” (Matt. 28:19). We all need people like this in our life, in a personal and intimate way—someone who will take our hand, walk with us in grace, encourage us toward deeper spiritual maturity in the practical areas of living, and then show us how we can become a disciple maker as well.

This is how change and transformation begin to happen, when we walk with others and when they walk with us. All of us, bringing all of ourselves, into all the things He wants to do through us.

So here we go. I could not be more delighted you're here. Take His hand with me—chapter by chapter, page by page, moment by special moment—and let's follow Him together.

All the way.

All-in.

Always.

With everything.

I Surrender All.

ALL TO HIM I FREELY GIVE.

From Priscilla Shirer comes this fervent appeal and invitation to surrender everything to Jesus. To follow Him not just as your Savior but as your priority, your first love, your Lord. To move beyond being a believer to becoming His disciple.

Because there is a difference.

Salvation is a gift of God. It's free. It's grace. It's the cross. Discipleship comes at a high cost. It's surrender. It's effort. It's a daily choice to lay down your life and follow His. Few believers choose this route, but the ones who do will experience the abundance that only the surrendered life can offer. It's the one choice standing between you and the life of freedom and fulfillment, of peace and purpose you've always wanted. *I Surrender All* is all about making that choice.

The choice that changes everything.

This book will be impossible to simply read because it beckons you to make a decision about the kind of Christian you will be. Prepare to engage, to write, to pray, and be called into a surrendered life. An abundant life. A disciple's life.



Whether through her speaking ministry, her bestselling books and Bible studies, or on a movie screen—most recently in *The Forge*—**PRISCILLA SHIRER's** primary ambition is to lift up Jesus and equip His people to live victoriously.

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