

Not My Will, But Yours: Surrendering to God's Better Way

What does it truly mean to surrender? Not the kind of surrender that feels like defeat, but the kind that leads to the greatest victory imaginable. At the heart of this conversation is the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus knelt under the weight of all human sin and prayed the most powerful words ever spoken: not my will, but yours be done. That moment was not weakness. It was the ultimate act of trust. And it speaks directly to the tension we all feel between what we want and what God is calling us toward. We live in a culture that tells us to have it our way, to put ourselves first, to choose comfort over sacrifice. But the narrow road, the one Jesus walked, leads somewhere the wide road never can. Whether we are navigating a struggling marriage, a fractured relationship, a career crossroads, or a moment of deep personal uncertainty, the invitation is the same. Stop asking God to bless our plans and start asking to be part of what he is already blessing. The Garden of Gethsemane is not just a historical moment. It is a mirror held up to every decision we face. And the message it reflects back is this: God's way is not always the easy way, but it is always the better way.

Pastor Cole examines Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane as the ultimate model of surrender and obedience to God. Drawing from the scene where Jesus prays that the cup would pass from him, yet submits fully to the Father's will, the sermon challenges believers to lay down personal comfort, cultural conformity, and self-driven agendas in favor of God's higher purposes. The message affirms that while God's way is rarely the easiest path, it is always the right one, and that true surrender — in marriage, in faith, in cultural engagement, and in handling Scripture — leads to the greatest outcomes. The sermon also applies this principle of surrender to current cultural headlines, calling the church to remain awake, discerning, and rooted in biblical truth.

Key Points:

- The most powerful prayer ever prayed is "not my will, but yours be done," spoken by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane
- God's way is consistently the harder road, but it is always the better road, producing holiness through friction and growth through obedience
- Marriage requires daily renewal of commitment — continuing to say "I still do" — with Jesus at the center as the foundation, not the spouse
- Jesus bringing Peter, James, and John into the garden models the importance of surrounding yourself with godly community during the hardest moments of life
- Satan's strategy is to lull believers to sleep spiritually so they fail to recognize what is truly happening in the culture around them
- The name Gethsemane means "oil press," and just as olives are crushed to release oil, Jesus was crushed under the weight of all human sin so that redemption could flow
- The doctrine of kenosis, drawn from Philippians 2:7, describes how Christ emptied himself of the privileges of heaven and took on full humanity, including its suffering and limitations
- Because Jesus experienced suffering fully, he is a high priest who can sympathize with human weakness and truly understands what people go through
- Abortion legislation expanding access up to nine months of pregnancy, as recently signed in Massachusetts, represents a direct assault on the sanctity of life, which begins at conception
- Politicians who selectively invoke Christianity to advance progressive policy while labeling traditional biblical Christianity as extremism reveal a fundamental contradiction and a distorted view of faith
- The erosion of biological categories in women's sports undermines the original purpose of those spaces and harms women, even as the church is called to walk alongside those struggling with gender confusion in truth and love
- The Passion Translation of the Bible lacks credible scholarship, relies on a single non-peer-reviewed translator, and has been removed from major

platforms; believers should use trustworthy translations such as the ESV, NIV, NASB, CSB, or NLT

- Every cultural issue discussed — abortion, political compromise, gender confusion, and biblical fidelity — circles back to the same question Jesus faced in the garden: will I do it my way or God's way

Scripture Reference:

- The account of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, where he asks the Father to let the cup pass but submits to the Father's will (Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22)
- Philippians 2:7, which describes Christ emptying himself by taking on the form of a servant and being born in human likeness, the basis for the doctrine of kenosis
- Zechariah 14:4, which prophesies that the Lord's feet will stand on the Mount of Olives at his return, splitting the mountain from east to west
- Galatians 1:8, which warns that even if an angel from heaven preaches a gospel contrary to the one delivered by the apostles, that messenger is to be condemned

Stories:

- Pastor Cole reflected on 35 years of marriage to his wife Pam, describing how they started young with no money and no clear direction, and how Jesus at the center of their marriage has been the reason they are still together; he described marriage as requiring thousands of "I still do" moments beyond the wedding day
- The triangle illustration was used to explain marriage dynamics: when both spouses pursue Jesus at the top of the triangle, they naturally grow closer together, but when a spouse is placed at the top, the relationship collapses because people make poor substitutes for God
- Pastor Cole described watching the reality show "Married at First Sight" with his wife and observing how the participants' self-centered thinking mirrored patterns he recognized in himself and in marriages generally
- The story of Peter walking on water was referenced as an example of choosing the hard, faith-requiring path over the comfortable, safe one

- Pastor Cole recounted applying for his first job as a young man, walking into a Brahms restaurant he least wanted to work at, and getting that job — using it as an illustration that the harder, less desirable path is often the one God has prepared
- The contrast between Jesus sleeping in the boat during the disciples' storm and the disciples sleeping in the garden during Jesus' moment of greatest anguish was highlighted as a rich study in which storms to rest through and which demand watchfulness and prayer
- A couple's 3D ultrasound video was described, in which a father spoke to his unborn child and the baby visibly smiled, offered as a vivid illustration of the undeniable humanity of the unborn
- The origin of the Living Bible was recounted: a father paraphrasing Scripture in plain language for his children who could not understand the King James Version, writing on his commute and in the evenings, with Billy Graham later championing it and Tyndale eventually publishing it before commissioning scholars to refine it into the New Living Translation

Scripture References from the Sermon

Directly Cited or Clearly Referenced

Matthew 26:39 — Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, praying that the cup would pass from him, yet surrendering to the Father's will

Luke 22:44 — Jesus sweating drops of blood during his agony in the garden

Matthew 26:36-46 — Jesus taking Peter, James, and John to Gethsemane and finding them asleep

Matthew 8:23-27 — Jesus asleep in the boat during the storm while the disciples panicked

Matthew 14:28-29 — Peter asking Jesus if he could step out of the boat and walk on water

Matthew 7:13-14 — Jesus describing the wide road and the narrow road

Philippians 2:7 — Christ emptying himself, taking on the form of a servant, born in the likeness of mankind (kenosis)

Hebrews 4:15 — Jesus as a high priest who sympathizes with human weakness

2 Corinthians 5:21 — Christ becoming sin so we might become the righteousness of God

Genesis 1:27 — God creating mankind male and female

Zechariah 14:4 — The Lord's feet standing on the Mount of Olives at his return

Galatians 1:8 — A warning against any angel preaching a contrary gospel

Isaiah 55:9 — God's ways and thoughts being higher than ours

Proverbs 27:17 — Iron sharpening iron

Thematically Alluded To

Genesis 2:24 — The two becoming one in covenant marriage

Ephesians 5:22-33 — Marriage as covenant, mutual sacrifice, and submission

Proverbs 11:14 — The value of seeking wise counsel

Psalms 139:13-16 — God knitting life together in the womb, affirming the sanctity of unborn life

Isaiah 5:20 — Calling evil good and good evil

2 Timothy 3:16-17 — Scripture being God-breathed and trustworthy

Revelation 22:18-19 — Warning against adding to or distorting God's Word

QUOTES

Without Jesus in the center of our marriage, we would not still be here today.

I still do. I still choose you. I still forgive. I still show up. I still am going to serve. I'm still going to lay down my own selfish desires for the sake of you.

If you put Jesus at the top, as you both pursue him, you grow closer together.

If you put your spouse at the top, everything falls apart. Because they may be a great person, but they're a horrible God.

Most powerful words that have ever been prayed are, not my will, but yours be done.

God doesn't just want you to be happy. Happiness is great. He wants you to be holy and the way we become holy is through the friction of iron sharpening iron.

Gethsemane means oil press. And it crushed the olives. The olives were crushed under tremendous pressure so that what was inside came out. The oil began flowing. Same thing happened to Jesus in that moment.

The strategy of Satan is to lull you asleep, that you fight with your eyes closed so that you, you know, you don't start to notice the things that he's doing.

God's way is not always the easy way. Many times it's the hard way. It's always the right way. It's always the best way when we say yes. And when it's God's way, it ends in victory.

You don't help somebody by lying to them. You help them by speaking the truth in love, by speaking, by walking alongside with them.

Jesus shows us this better way, and that is to trust him and to do what he says and that we would also say, not my will, but yours be done.

Discussion Questions

Pastor Cole described marriage as a series of ongoing 'I do' moments rather than a single vow -- in what areas of your most important relationships do you find it hardest to keep saying 'I still choose you,' and what does surrender look like in those moments?

Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane that God's will would take priority over his own desires -- where in your life are you currently resisting that kind of surrender, and what would it cost you to finally let go?

The sermon drew a connection between the crushing of olives at Gethsemane and the pressure Jesus endured before the cross -- can you identify a season of crushing in your own life that ultimately produced something fruitful, and what did that process teach you about trusting God?

Pastor Cole noted that Jesus brought his three closest disciples with him during his most vulnerable moment rather than facing it alone -- who are the people in your life who carry water rather than gasoline, and are you actually turning to them when you face your hardest moments?

The wide road and the narrow road were referenced as a contrast between comfort and obedience -- in what specific area of your life does following God's way feel like the narrow, lonelier road right now, and what is holding you back from walking it?

Hebrews teaches that Jesus is a high priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses because he experienced human suffering firsthand -- how does knowing that Jesus genuinely understands your pain and temptation change the way you approach him in prayer?

The sermon described a cultural pattern where something previously denied eventually becomes openly celebrated -- as a follower of Christ, how do you stay spiritually awake and discerning rather than being gradually lulled into accepting what God calls wrong?

Pastor Cole argued that no belief system can truly be separated from public life and policy, and that some moral framework will always shape legislation -- how should Christians engage the public square in a way that is both faithful to Scripture and genuinely loving toward those who disagree?

The kenosis passage in Philippians 2 describes Christ emptying himself and taking on the form of a servant -- in what practical ways does the example of Christ's self-emptying challenge the self-focused thinking that shows up in your daily decisions?

The sermon closed by connecting the Garden of Gethsemane to every headline discussed, suggesting that 'not my will but yours be done' is the answer to cultural confusion -- what is one specific area of your life or one cultural issue where you need to stop asking God to bless your plans and start asking how you can join what he is already doing?