

Closer

TALK IT OVER

Surrender

Closer - Week 2

Pastor Stacie Wood

November 22-23, 2025

If you would like to watch the weekend message, visit www.saddleback.com/watch.

Open your group in prayer and remember that this is only a guide. Feel free to discuss each of the provided questions or simply dive deeper into just one. Before you close with prayer, take a few minutes to look over the Three Essential Questions toward the end of the document.

Scriptures

James 4:8 (NIV); Mark 10:17-31 (NIV); Luke 18:18-30 (NIV); Matthew 19:16-30 (NIV); Mark 8:34 (NIV); Psalm 139:23-24 (NIV)

Questions

1. There is always a solution for what stands between you and God! James 4:8 (NIV) says, *"Come near to God and he will come near to you."* How does James simply describe the way to get closer to God? What does James 4:8 promise if you just *"come near to God"*?
2. Jesus calls us to surrender the things of this world in order to enter the kingdom of God. According to Mark 10:17 (NIV), *"As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. 'Good teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'"* The man was a rich, young ruler who had kept the commandments *"since he was a boy."* In verse 21, *"Jesus looked at him and loved him. 'One thing you lack,' he said. 'Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.'"* The rich, young ruler walked away sad. What does the *"one thing you lack"* reveal with regard to the man's heart condition versus his outward obedience to God? In saying *"Come, follow me,"* Jesus gave the young man the same invitation to personal discipleship that he gave his original disciples! What did Jesus call him to surrender? What unparalleled opportunity did the rich, young ruler miss?

3. Jesus makes clear the cost of following him. According to Mark 8:34 (NIV), *"He called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'"* What did Jesus expect of his followers? In Jesus' day, taking up their cross meant being prepared to go to their deaths! In fact, with the exception of the Apostle John, all of the apostles died as martyrs for the faith! Jesus is after our whole hearts—our complete and unconditional surrender! What have you sacrificed to get closer to God? Share with your group one distraction you can set aside this week to help you concentrate more on your walk with Christ. Discuss how surrendering to Jesus may cost you more than you think.
4. Jim Elliot said, "One does not surrender a life in an instant; that which is lifelong can only be surrendered in a lifetime." Just because you laid your whole life on the altar in one season doesn't mean you are living a fully surrendered life now. Your closeness with Jesus may be stalled by something you haven't even felt the need to address! You have to let go of the things of this world to be closer to God, but the promise is great when you do! As Mark 10:29–30 (NIV) says, *"Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age... and in the age to come eternal life."* Discuss how surrendering to Jesus may cost you more than you think, but will pay you more than it costs!
5. In the Western world, A. W. Tozer said, "A whole new generation of Christians has come up believing that it is possible to 'accept' Christ without forsaking the world." That is not true Christianity! Compare that attitude with what the Bible says above with regard to being a whole-hearted follower of Jesus.
6. Three types of surrender include: (1) Surrender to Jesus for the first time (salvation), (2) Surrender of wealth (the accumulation of riches and stuff), and (3) Wholehearted climbing-on-the-altar surrender (saying to God you-can-have-it-all kind of life moment). Discuss how each of these helps us get closer to God. Share with your group some holdings (time, wealth, status, and habits, etc.) that you struggle to give up.
7. Spend some time meditating on Psalm 139:23-24 (NIV): *"Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."* Some questions for reflection include: (1) Have I received any instructions from God that I know I'm not obeying? (2) Is there anything in my life that I would refuse to give up if I genuinely believed Jesus was asking me to? and (3) Does my calendar and my bank statement reflect Jesus as the center of my life? Discuss what you can surrender this week in order to be closer to God.

Are you interested in the Bible and in helping small groups benefit from the weekend message? Well, you are in luck! Saddleback members like you create these discussion guides each week. If you are interested in joining the team, please email Maturity@saddleback.com

Three Essential Questions

The following questions are intended to be open-ended and encourage members to consider how they and what they, or the group, can do as a result of hearing the message.

1. **What did you hear?** *What point in this message was most impactful for you?*
2. **What do you think?** *How did this message challenge, change, or affirm your thinking?*
3. **What will you do?** *How will you or your group put into practice what you've learned today?*

Small Group Action Steps

1. Consider taking the Group Health Assessment in your small group. This assessment will help you see how your small group is balancing the five purposes and will give you suggested next steps for each purpose. Click here to take the Group Health Assessment:
<https://saddleback.com/connect/smallgroups#spiritualCheckup>
2. Did you know that Saddleback produces many new small group studies each year? Visit <https://saddleback.com/studies> to check out Saddleback's ever-growing library of small group curriculums.

Are you interested in the Bible and in helping small groups benefit from the weekend message? Well, you are in luck! Saddleback members like you create these discussion guides each week. If you are interested in joining the team, please email Maturity@saddleback.com