

WHEN BALANCE BECOMES BONDAGE

HOW SURRENDER UNLOCKS PEACE AND PURPOSE
An essay by Cathy Colver Garland

We live in a culture obsessed with balance. Work-life balance. Ministry-family balance. Even self-care balance. It sounds noble, but what if the very thing we're chasing is keeping us from the life God is inviting us into? I know because I've been there.

The Struggle: The Invisible Battle

I entered a season where everything looked balanced on paper: family, work, ministry, and even self-care. But inside, I was brittle and anxious. Spiritually, I was performing for God instead of communing with Him. My faith became a checklist. My family got what was left of me. My calendar was full of purpose, but my soul was running on empty. Balance had become my idol. I was tempted to believe that if I controlled enough variables, I might not need to lean on God fully.

What the Bible Really Says

Here's the surprising truth: the Bible never tells us to "find balance." The concept is a Hindu concept, based on balancing yin and yang, good and evil. As Christians, we don't balance good and evil; we are wholly on the side of God's goodness and wholly opposed to evil. This concept has crept in, and I'm convinced it's keeping us in bondage.

Readers might be surprised that the Bible doesn't even tell us to prioritize, numbering things from 1-10. This concept is not practical for mothers, influencers, or anyone attempting to accomplish a lot. Life is meant to be lived. Messy. Measured in intimacy, not checkmarks.

What Scripture gives us instead is rhythm—seasons of sowing and reaping, resting and working, fasting and feasting.

"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens."
(Ecclesiastes 3:1 NIV)

And above all, Jesus doesn't ask us to balance Him into our lives. He commands us: "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."
(Matthew 6:33, ESV)

True peace and fruitfulness doesn't come from juggling everything evenly. It comes from aligning with God's Kingdom in the season He has us in, seeking His presence above everything else.

The Wake-Up Call

This became clear to me when, one morning in prayer, I heard the Lord whisper: “You don’t need balance. You need obedience.” It stopped me cold. In that moment, I realized peace would never come from achieving perfect balance. It would only come from surrender. I had to lay down my plans, my metrics, and my striving, and align instead with His voice.

Four Shifts That Changed Everything

Here’s how God reframed my thinking and how you can step into the same freedom:



3. Trade Metrics for Markers

Social media numbers and revenue goals don’t measure faithfulness. Obedience does.

Practical Step: Define three “faithfulness markers” you’ll measure instead of metrics.

Examples: Did I follow God’s leading today? Did I serve with excellence? Did I rest when He asked me to?

4. Build a Surrender Habit

Surrender isn’t a one-time act—it’s a daily decision.

Practical Step: Set a phone reminder titled Surrender Check-In. When it goes off, pause. Breathe. Pray: “I release this to You, Lord. Make my steps firm.”

The Fruit of Surrender

When I stopped pursuing balance and started practicing obedience, everything shifted. My home grew more peaceful. My connection with God was measured in intimacy, not discipline. I became more fruitful; not because I balanced better, but because I surrendered.

Final Encouragement

If you’re doing all the “right” things and still feel dry, balance might have become bondage. Lay it down. Cast down any lies and replace them with God’s truth. What God works through you will always be better than what you could organize yourself into.

Seek His Kingdom first. Trust His seasons. Walk in obedience. Freedom isn’t the absence of something, but the presence of Someone.



1. Name What You’re Clinging To

Surrender begins with awareness. What are you gripping too tightly—a launch, a revenue goal, a reputation?

Ask: “What am I afraid will fall apart if I let go? What lie am I believing?”

Practical Step: Journal your stress points. Label each: Mine to manage vs. God’s to carry.

2. Replace Balance with Rhythm

Balance implies sameness, trade-off, and compromise. But God calls us into seasons—and His seasons lead us into rest and fruitfulness.

Ask: What’s eternal? What’s urgent? What can wait? What is God saying?

Practical Step: Begin your week with a God-led priorities list.