

ENDORSEMENTS

Surrendered Hearts is a captivating book that will encourage, inspire, and enlarge your faith and trust in God, no matter what life experience you are facing! Lori Schumaker's authentic and heartfelt sharing, combined with her practical suggestions and biblical truth, is a must-read book for anyone who is adopting or struggling with surrendering their expectations of how life should be. Thank you, Lori, for touching my adoptive-mom heart, my grieving-a-child heart, and my longs-to-live-life-trusting-God heart, surrendered.

—Kathe Wunnenberg
President/Founder of Hopelifters Unlimited
Author of several books, including
Grieving the Child I Never Knew

This book is riveting! I couldn't put it down. Lori skillfully draws the curtain on international adoption and gives us a peek into the joys, sorrows, and unknowns that every adoptive family faces. She captivated me with her family's story while candidly shar-

ing the faith lessons God taught her along the way. A must-read for everyone!

—Stefani Stoltzfus

Creator of the Truthbytes for Moms Bible study app

Author of *Mom on a Mission*

Blogger at *Walls of Home*

Adoptive mother and adoption advocate

Adoption is a surrendering. Giving to God what we cannot control. Trusting that God is working even when we cannot see, weaving together a family—many times against all odds. Lori Schumaker’s new book, *Surrendered Hearts*, is a hope-filled story of adoption, and so much more. Lori’s words remind us of the transformation found when we surrender our hearts to the loving Christ, trusting Him to move within the broken parts of our stories and letting Him make us new.

—Michelle Madrid-Branch, author, speaker

International adoptee

Global advocate for women and children

Host of the *Greater Than Podcast*

Wow! I loved this book! What an amazing journey that brought back many memories. I was inspired by Lori's unwavering faith and commitment to her daughter throughout her journey. With the many ups and downs in international adoption, the Schumaker's story shows how faith can overcome anything!

—SooJin Park

Program director and adoption case manager

As a pastor and a friend, I have had the privilege of walking with the Schumakers through this roller coaster of a journey. Watching their story unfold through the pages of this book gives me an even greater appreciation of this family's faithfulness and God's goodness. I have been challenged not simply to endure the journey but to embrace the joy that comes with learning to trust Jesus. Their story will inspire others to step confidently into a calling, whether it be adopting a child or changing a career path.

—Corey Bullock

Teaching and Next Generation pastor for
Trace Church of Colorado Springs
Former Gilbert and Ahwatukee Campus pastor for
Central Christian Church in Arizona

To my family—Bryan, Zachary, Landon, and Selah. This journey is about all of us. Together, we've faced fears, learned to surrender control, and trusted God. Through it, we've become stronger and our love deeper. To Selah, your story is a miracle, and we love you to the moon and back. To Zachary and Landon, your love for your sister blows me away. You are Selah's knights in shining armor and the protectors of her heart. And Bryan, you are exactly the kind of daddy every little girl needs—especially our Selah.

An Adoption Story
of Love, Loss, and
Learning to Trust

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LORI SCHUMAKER

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If you could look into the past and see who I was twenty-five years ago, you'd have difficulty recognizing me. Back then if you peeked below the surface of my smile, you'd find a broken girl. You'd see a believer, but not someone surrendering her life to Christ. You'd see hope, but not the kind of hope someone has when they trust Jesus with everything.

Today I'm different because I surrendered. Even though it's an ongoing journey, the difference is visible both emotionally and physically. As I've followed Him, God has broken chains and carried our family through things that would be impossible without Him.

Without our surrender—without trust enough to follow Him through the difficult times, we wouldn't be the family we are today. We wouldn't have walked the road of adoption. We'd have missed out on so many good things.

So today, I thank Jesus for everything. I thank Him for loving me when I was blinded, broken, and

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lost. And I thank Him for bringing people alongside me to minister to my heart and encourage me along the way. They make sharing Selah's story through this book possible.

Thank you, Bryan, for choosing me. For being the logic to my emotion and the laughter to my oh-too-serious self. Thank you for supporting my ministry and pushing me out of my comfort zone.

Thank you to my boys, Zachary and Landon. The way you love and encourage is way beyond your years. The perfectly timed hugs, texts, and cups of coffee each morning were just what I needed. Without them, this book would not be complete!

Selah, my sweet girl. My reminder to reflect on the goodness of God all the time. Thank you for being so brave. We are learning about this surrender thing together, aren't we? Thank you for teaching me to love better and trust more. I am so honored to be your mommy.

Thank you to my parents, who have always believed I'd write a book someday. Dad, you taught me about writing long ago and gave me that antique army typewriter. It birthed a dream in my heart.

To the Nolans. Thank you for your witness of faith. Col, you've walked me toward freedom and

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prayed for those chains to break. Thank you for that. And, Kourt, you are a priceless treasure and bring great joy to the world around you. Thank you for melting Uncle Bry's heart and teaching him what adoption is all about.

Thank you, All God's Children and SooJin Park. Our family is complete because of you. Thank you for all you do for children in need.

To my prayer warrior friends. Goodness, I'd never be here without you. You've prayed us up and over every mountain. LeAnne, you were my first real breath of Jesus with skin on when I was just a girl. My mom's group sisters, you did not relent but stormed heaven's gates for us!

Thank you, Central Christian friends, for not only praying us through the difficult times but for encouraging me to follow Jesus as He called. How faithfully you have stood by me!

To my Blessing Counters Sisters! Your prayers, encouragement, and wisdom keep me on track and remind me to trust in the great I Am.

Thank you, Athena and Redemption Press, for making this book possible. Athena, our God moment in the airport inspired me to take out the story I had long put away. You are a gift.

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And finally, thank you, Yvonne and Monica. Your willingness to step beyond yourselves changed our lives. You allowed God to use you as His conduit, and because of that we are a family today. I am forever grateful.

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INTRODUCTION

In a far-off Bulgarian village, a new mom—young, alone, and without means—walked out of the hospital with empty arms. Her body and emotions exhausted, she had done the only thing she knew to do.

Moments after birth, her daughter had felt her biological mother's touch for the last time. Surrendered, she would spend her first three years in the baby orphanage in Plovdiv and the next two years in the small village orphanage in Narechenski Bani.

In the United States, a young couple blissfully enjoyed the blessings of marriage, work, home, and children. Unaware of all that God would place before them, they looked toward the future with confidence.

Thousands of miles apart, no obvious connection, no human ties—how did these lives come together?

Out of all the billions of people in the world, who knew they would meet? Who planned the events in

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each of their lives that would bring them together for a poignant moment in time? Who could connect that one little girl, halfway around the world, to the one family who had prayed for her for years?

Only God.

The Surrendered Heart Manifesto

I love God with my whole heart. I love how He loves me and relentlessly pursues me. I love how He calls me His own and showers me with His grace while longing to see me walk in my holy purpose.

I believe He is my Savior. Jesus alone is my pathway to heaven, and because of Him and His loving sacrifice, I can experience wholeness, freedom, and joy on this side of the cross (this side of heaven). To experience this to the full, however, I must surrender—not part of me, but all of me. In the face of everything *not* of God, I must surrender my fleshly reactions and respond as He calls. And when I mess up, as I surely will, I will run to Him and let His grace pour over me. I will not stay stuck in the shackles of shame or regret.

I will move forward.

I commit to living a surrendered life. A life of trust. When patience eludes me and I don't want to wait anymore, I will choose to trust God's timing. When the world around me screams injustice and I ache to lash out, I will trust God's infinite wisdom. As chaos swirls around me, tempting me to hypercontrol my world, I will choose instead to respond with balance and trust. When the fears of *what if* threaten to envelop me, I commit instead to the bravery we have when we trust Christ. And finally, when doubt and worry seep through my armor, I commit to trust that my God is bigger than anything I am facing, and somehow—somehow—it will all be okay.

Part 1

GOD PREPARES US

FOR WE ARE GOD'S HANDIWORK,
CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS TO DO
GOOD WORKS, WHICH GOD PREPARED
IN ADVANCE FOR US TO DO.

EPHESIANS 2:10 NIV

Chapter 1

WHY ADOPTION?

Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress.

James 1:27 NLT

Adoption isn't just about growing families. It's not about rescuing or picking out a child to call your own. It's about God and His unflinching love for us. It's about the fact that you are His—no matter where you are or what your story looks like. It's about miracles, love, and relentless pursuit. And it's about surrender and trust.

I don't know that there ever existed a time when adoption didn't have a place in my heart. Maybe it was the little girl from Korea who became my best friend in kindergarten. Maybe it was my mom who wasn't from the United States and at times still struggled with culture and language. Or maybe it was

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those haunting images on television of children in need.

I cannot name any specific event that made adoption a part of my life vision. I believe God was at work from the beginning, orchestrating all the events in my life in preparation for what would someday be. He was preparing my heart for the little girl who

Our adoption story is about embracing God's will and the miracles that happen when we least expect them.

would break it into a million pieces and teach me to love in a way I'd never experienced before. Love that is stronger, more resilient. Love that is fierce.

While the adoption process is joyful, it is also painful. Yet there walks God, right into the middle of the grief and brokenness, and He makes a family. Of course, that doesn't erase the grief. Anyone who's experienced it knows it doesn't simply disappear when something good happens. The grief stays—it becomes a part of the new story. It may never fully go away, but somehow, intricately and beautifully, God weaves it into the fabric of a forever family.

For our family, there isn't a story without God. I know that people of all beliefs walk the adoption

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journey, and some might argue the reality of God, or more specifically, the reality of Jesus. But for us, bringing our Selah home had too many coincidences, birthed too much soul-wrenching love, and wowed us with too many miracles to not point to the God of the universe. And with the chains broken, a child once held captive was freed and claimed as chosen, cherished, and beloved. That, my friends, is the work of Jesus.

Our adoption story is a story of love. The kind that forces you to surrender your will and learn to trust. It is a story about brokenness, grief, patience, determination, and faith. And then it's about embracing God's will and the miracles that happen when we least expect them.