

## **I Surrender All**

By Maggie Moller

The hymn “I Surrender All” has long been one of my favorites to play and sing. It contains a powerful message for Christians on surrendering our whole being to the work of the Lord. Paul urges believers, in view of God’s mercy, “to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:1-2). We are to surrender every aspect of our lives to the leading of the Lord.

The beautiful words to “I Surrender All” were written by Judson W. Van DeVenter. Mr. Van DeVenter was born on December 5, 1855, near Dundee, Michigan. He attended Hillsdale College in Michigan and then moved to Sharon, Pennsylvania, where he taught art. While developing his art career, Judson was waging war within himself. Desiring to improve his art talents, he struggled with the feeling that God desired him to go into ministry instead of art. He later said of this battle to allow God to direct his path, “At last the pivotal hour of my life came, and I surrendered all. A new day was ushered into my life. I became an evangelist and discovered down deep in my soul a talent hitherto unknown to me. God had hidden a song in my heart, and touching a tender chord, He caused me to sing.” How often we are humbled when we put our will above God’s. Though at the time our way seems better in our human eyes, God’s ways are always better. Judson was struggling to fulfill his own human dreams of pursuing art, yet when he surrendered his life to God’s leading, God showed him a hidden talent he possessed: hymn writing. Mr. Van DeVenter retired to Florida where he taught hymnology at Florida Bible Institute (now Trinity Bible College) for four years. He passed away on July 17, 1939.

Winfield Scott Weeden composed the music for “I Surrender All.” Mr. Weeden was born on March 29, 1847, in Middleport, Ohio. He lived most of his life in New York City where he owned and operated a small hotel, while also teaching in singing schools and working in evangelism. He passed away on July 31, 1908, and he was buried in Woodlawn Cemetery, New York, where his tombstone bears the title of his song, “I Surrender All.”

In Luke 14:33, Jesus says, “Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.” Once we give our lives to Christ, we are no longer to live our lives the way we desire; rather, we are to completely surrender ourselves to God’s direction.