

## News Story Summary

Kayla Mueller was kidnapped by ISIS in August of 2013 after leaving a hospital staffed by Doctors without Borders. Her parents confirmed her death on Tuesday, February 10, 2015. The exact circumstances around her death have not been released at this time.

A hand-written letter was made public by her family as they announced her death. The letter in part talked about missing her family and the things she looked forward to doing once freed. She also pointed to her mom teaching her that once everything is considered, all one really has is God. Dated November 2014, Ms. Mueller stated: I have surrendered myself to our creator b/c literally there was no one else... (I) have learned that even in prison, one can be free.

(For more on this story, search the Internet using the words “Kayla Mueller letter.”)

## Focus Attention

Prior to the group arriving, write the words *commit* and *surrender* on a sheet of paper. As the group arrives, draw attention to the words on the sheet of paper. Inviting volunteers to share their first thoughts when they see these two words together.

After most have arrived, share briefly the story about Kayla Mueller and the hand-written letter her parents received after her death. Emphasize her use of the word “surrender” in her letter to her parents. Lead the group to discuss the connections between commitment and surrender. Ask: *Can you have one without the other? Explain.*

Say: *Nehemiah’s work as leader in the rebuilding of the walls around the city of Jerusalem was complete. The Israelites celebrated and renewed their relationship with God. The people then made a commitment to live in a way that distinguished them as God’s people.*

Challenge the group to look for the commitment made by the people in Nehemiah’s day and what role surrender played in their commitment.

## Challenge

Remind the group members of the story about Kayla Mueller and the hand-written letter her parents received after her death. Call attention to her statement “that even in prison, one can be free.” Ask: *What does this phrase tell us about Kayla’s understanding of life? What does this statement reveal about Kayla’s commitment to God and her willingness to trust Him?*

Challenge the group to consider their level of willingness to follow Christ regardless of where that commitment may take them. Call attention to the second questions set under “In My Context” on page 130 of the Personal Study Guide (What could you point to in your life as evidence that you are seeking to live a God-honoring life?). Encourage the group to spend time this week reflecting on that question and asking God to give them the courage to act upon what He reveals to them.

Lead in prayer, thanking God for His continued workmanship in the lives of the group and asking Him to strengthen them as they journey toward becoming more like Christ.