

# The Gift of Letting Go\*

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## Philippians 2:3-11

<sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:3-11 ESV)

I participated in a Advent retreat by SoulCare. I mediated on those verses. I believe this is a good way to end the year.

Thanks for the testimonies we heard this morning. Each person has their own spiritual journey. All of them learning from God how to walk in this life, where many obstacles came to knock our door.

Let me start my sermon with illustration **about the hand**.

Our hands are full of muscles.

**-How do we hold something?**

With strengthening our grip that usually involves using the **flexor muscles**; it is amazing how we can hold something.

-But it is also amazing how we can **open our hands**.

Those muscles called **extensor muscles**, and we neglect those muscles, until one day you realize that opening and closing fingers of your hands are important. We start learning to exercise those muscles to open and close your hand.

Thus, both the **flexor and the extensor** muscles are both necessary and needed; they work hand in hand.

**-Illustration:**

Holding something is important; but also to release something is as important.

If I throw you a ball, instinctively you will grip and hold the ball.

-Have you watched a grip of child. My kids used to hold my hand with their little fingers. But also we need to teach them, to open their hands, to let go.

What things do we hold on to?

-We hold on to friendship; friendship is a good thing. It is very good to have friends. **But** those relationships can be dangerous when **we hold so tight** that we don't include others in the group.

We kind of grip a little bit too tightly, right?

-We hold on to our image, too much concern about our image.

We all like to have a good image. New year resolutions are about losing weight. Those are good stuff.

Having a good reputation is a positive thing. Having a positive image is good.

**Yet** sometimes we **HOLD too** tightly to that image. It almost becomes **an idol**.

What others think about my image becomes a goal.

-We can hold on tightly to our children, our spouse. Of course, we should hold them, and love them, and care for them. We should protect them: God entrusted them to us.

**Yet** sometimes there are people who hold on a **little too tight to their own dreams for their kids**; you think you can decide their future, because you know what they should do, or become... what career they should pick; the person they should end up with... Let me tell you it does not work that way.

-We hold tight **to our beliefs**, or **convictions**. This is so good and important. Please hold on to the truth. We should have a bold faith, and a strong faith.

We should have biblical convictions. that's a good thing.

**But** sometimes we hold on so tight to our convictions, that our convictions become almost like little clubs that we hit other people with;

people that might disagree,

we need to see that people are made also in the image of God and they might see things differently; we **don't like this**.

We get threatened, frustrated, or angry and so we're holding on so tight that we actually harm people sometimes with what we're holding so tight.

Some negative elements:

**-We hold on those grudges and grievances, anger;** we hold on those stuff soooo many years. We don't want spirit of forgiveness. We are afraid to let it go... there is fear of being exposed ourselves.

**-We hold on our material stuff:** such as the love of money; they control you.

**-We hold on addictions:** pornography, gambling, alcohol, computer, phone, social media.

**-How about worrying about 2024.**

We hold on to our fears of uncertainties.

We hold on to our biases. (I know this person, he/she will do the same mistake...)

We hold on to maybe this, maybe that....We are not content until we find what is the next thing.

**What is the next thing?**

Because we don't know the next thing, we hold on to whatever we have, thinking that is our security.

Holding on to what we have...

Holding on to my stocks...

Let us go to our passage:

What if Jesus held on to his image and stayed in the heavenly glory?

He was doing fine there. Why in the world He needed to empty himself?

**Who (Jesus) , though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**

We just celebrated Christmas, and we Armenians will celebrate this coming week January 6, 2024

**Incarnation of Jesus: what was like for him to enter into our humanity?**

Though he was God, he **did not count equality with God...**

**He emptied himself...**

**He gave up his divine privileges...** (fully divine and fully human)

**He did not hold on to his rights...**

**He left his glory**

We read in Jesus' priestly prayer in John 17:5

**And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.**

Christmas, we think of him as a baby in a manger....

then we go fast forward to Jesus as a man that walked around teaching, healing, speaking, loving, doing miracles, and all those beautiful things he did.

but I want us to invite you to consider this: **Jesus willingly release from divine glory in order to enter into what he did as a human being.**

He left behind his glory.

Jesus who was and is God, who existed in limitless time in eternity, present everywhere all at once, and **willingly takes on a human body**, that could only be in one place at one time... to be finite...

-Imagine: Jesus got tired, hungry, thirsty, and felt the range of human emotions. was vulnerable, dependent...

Jesus **gave up all he was entitled to...** **he gave up the glory of heaven.**

I think there is one thing left for us to do.

**We should be falling down on our knees and worshiping Him.**

Here is the beauty: Jesus **does not insist** that we worship HIM. **Rather he allows us to choose to worship or reject him.**

Jesus had every right to command obedience, but he didn't;

He had every right to demand and command obedience to every word he ever said,

yet he willingly opened **his arms and heart and let people choose to follow him or not....**

**In fact, he opened his hands so he can be crucified.**

**The gift of letting go.**

**Application end of the year.**

-Please look back and see what you are holding on to that is not helping you to hold on to Jesus.

My sermon title is **“the gift of letting go”....**

-Can you open your hands.... And pray, God what is it that I am holding on to and I am not allowing to let go...help me, God...I believe that there is a **genuine freedom** to be found when we let **go of our idols....**

Have confidence that God is in control, and He will lead you to His ways.

**Here my prayer to all of you**

**May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Rom 15:13 NIV)**

**Welcome 2024**

**Towards the unknown future**

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**in the hands of an all-knowing God**

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\*The title and ideas are taken from WellSpring-SoulCare Advent retreat 2023. By RICHARD GOTTHARDT and PATTI PIERCE