**THE POWER OF LETTING GO**

When we let go of plans and our purposes and our agenda, God begins to bring about His plans His purposes and He establishes His agenda! This is what I believe every true child of God really wants! Letting go, however, maybe a little easier said than done at times, but when God is in it it’s always visited with **POWER!**

**Let’s consider just three Biblical instances for example:**

***#1) JESUS ON THE CROSS -letting go of life***

**Luke 23:46** And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. Mark’s account of His death brings out that the veil of the temple torn from top to bottom. Not bottom to top. God tore apart the petition of separation between Himself and fallen man when Jesus let go of His life! In Matthew’s account of His death, he brings out that there was an earthquake!

Had Jesus held back His life and refused to die that day, Salvation would have never reached you and I. Jesus said in **John 12:24** **Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die; it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.** The act of letting go on Christ part, was accompanied by a powerful earthquake! When we let go of our lives and abandon our wills to God, we will also experience the mighty power of God at work and the lost will come to Jesus!

***#2) PAUL AND SILAS IN JAIL - letting go of praise***

Do you remember this incredible story? This truly dynamic duo (Acts 16), were going about the Father’s business, lifting up the name of Jesus. They met up with a lady that was under the control of a nasty old demon. They, being full of the Holy Ghost, naturally told the demon that his game was over and cast him out. What a hornet’s nest they stirred up when they did that. She could no longer prophe-lie about the future. Her masters became really hot and bothered about this, and they made a stink.

Well, to make a long story short, they were thrown into the slammer! Instead of saying things like: "How could this have happened to us?" or "is this the thanks we get for working for God?" or "the devil is on my back and I can’t get him off’ or "I hate the food, smell, furniture, company, lighting, guards, decor, sound-system, Chaplain." NO, they let go of their praises to God! They did not forget that God was worthy no matter what their circumstances. They did not hold back the praises that God deserved! Guess what happened... Yes, another earthquake! It set them free without harming a soul and the jailer and his family came to Christ! **The psalmist said, "LET, THERE BE PRAISE! (Ps. 150:6) In other words, don’t hold it back!**

***#3) THE EARLY CHURCH - letting go of fear***

The leaders of the newborn church had also stirred up a huge stink with the Sadducees. Their contagious faith in Christ, brought strength to a lame man’s feet! **(Acts 3)** You know the rest. He went walking and leaping and praising God! The Sadducees told them that they could not preach any more in this name of Jesus or else! **(Acts 4:17-18)** Remember, it was the religious bunch that were crying crucify Jesus not many days before this! Well, they gathered back to their prayer closet and told the Heavenly Father about the threats from the "Jesus’s haters united" group, and asked Him for the guts to keep on preaching; and can you believe what happened?

That’s right, another earthquake **(Acts 4:31)** God granted them a fearlessness to preach Christ and they went out and kept right on telling the wonderous story of Jesus and His love; and because they let go of their fear, they proceeded to turn the world upside down! God is looking for a few in this world that will let go and let God be God! Let’s be people that cause God to shake this dying world again!

 A few years ago, when I was teaching my son to ride his bike, I would run alongside him and hold onto the bike so he wouldn’t fall.

He would tell me over and over, “Don’t let go!”  And I didn’t want to let go!  I didn’t want him to fall.  As long as I held on to him I felt like I had some measure of control, that I could control the outcome of that bike ride, and that he needed me to hold on.

**Here I Am + Letting Go**

So often what happens for so many of us is that we want to hold on, we don’t want to let go, because we don’t want to lose control, because we want to control the outcome, and because we don’t really trust anyone else besides ourselves.

In Isaiah 6, Isaiah has this incredible vision of Heaven.  He sees the Lord high and lifted up.  He hears the worship of angels crying out,

***“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Heaven’s Armies!***

And after being purified by fire in the presence of God, he hears God ask this question, ***“Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?”***

Isaiah responded, ***“Here I am, send me!”***

It’s an amazing story, a truly incredible moment in Isaiah’s life.  And more often than not, when we read Isaiah’s response, we focus on those last two words… ***“send me.”***  And it’s good to lean into that part of Isaiah’s response to God.

But before Isaiah said, ***“send me,”*** he said these three words that are just as powerful and full of meaning.  Isaiah said, ***“Here I am.”***

In his own way in this moment, Isaiah was letting go.  And I wonder if some of us need to let go as well and let God have his way in our lives.

**3 Ways to Let Go and Let God**

**1. Letting go of Control.**

When we say things like, “Let go and let God,” a lot of times what we mean is that we’ve got to find a way to let go of the hurt, the pain, the problem, or the fear and let God do what God does.  Let God heal the hurt and the pain.  Let God handle the problem.  Let God take our fear, our worry and anxiety away.

Those are all good things.  For many of us, we’re trying to do just that!  To let go of all those things and let God have his way in our hearts and lives.

But what happens when we not only surrender our hurts, our problems, and our fears to God… but we also surrender **CONTROL?**

Whether we want to admit it or not, a lot of us are addicted to control.  We like being able to control things.  But when you let go of trying to control everything, that’s when you let God be God.  That’s when you realize who you are and who He is.

But letting go of control means letting go of outcomes.

**2. Letting go of Outcomes.**

In her book, Invitation to Silence and Solitude, Ruth Haley Barton offers this incredible insight, that when we come “face to face with our addiction to control, there is also an invitation: the invitation to let go and allow God to be in control.”

Of course, the hardest part about that for so many of us is the reality that when we let go of control, then we can’t control the outcome.  And if we’re honest, we always want to have our hand in controlling outcomes.

But there is also incredible freedom to be found here.

If we are brave enough to truly let go of control, to trust God with the outcome, then we can actually live in faith.  So often what we fail to realize is that whenever we try to control outcomes, we forfeit our faith and declare our independence from God.  Of course, the irony is that no matter how hard we try we can’t control outcomes.

**Whenever we try to control outcomes we forfeit our faith and declare our independence from God.**

When we lay down our desire for control at the feet of Jesus and decide instead to live and walk in faith, believing that God is working all things together for our good and for His ultimate glory, something happens.

**3. Letting go of Self-Reliance**

What happens is that we let go of self-reliance, and we learn to rely on God. PSALM 45:10 says, ***“Be still and know that I am God.”***

Another way to read those words, ***“Be still”*** is ***“Let go of your grip.”***

When we let go of whatever is in our grip and approach God with open hands, much like when Isaiah said, ***“Here I am,”*** we come before God with open hands, open hearts, and we trust Him no matter the outcome.

**Saying Yes Lord to God’s Story**

What happens next for Isaiah is almost impossible to imagine.  You might think Isaiah would go from this point and have an incredibly successful ministry.

But that’s not what happened.  Isaiah learned that he would spend all his days declaring a message from God that the people of God would not hear and to which they would never respond.

Letting go and letting God does not mean God is going to give you what you want or give you success.  What it means is that you’re coming before God with open hands and like Isaiah, you want to say, YES, LORD to being a part of God’s story.

Isaiah didn’t have success by the world’s standards, but he did point to a “holy seed” that would one day be the salvation of the world.  Isaiah got to be a part of the greatest story ever told because he was willing to say Yes Lord.  Because he was willing to let go of control, let go of outcomes, let go of self-reliance and serve God with open hands.

**Open Hands**

So, let me just ask you, What are you holding onto right now?  What are you trying to control?  What’s bothering you?  What’s keeping you awake at night?  What are you afraid to let go of?  And what would happen if you held that, whatever it is, with open hands?

If you’re in a place where you can do this I would invite you to just hold your hands out in front of you, with your palms up, hands open.  Imagine that whatever it is you’ve been holding onto right now, and it can be anything, imagine holding it right now with open hands before God.  And then tell God what it is.

Tell him why you’re afraid to let go of it, to let go of control of it.  Then, if you’re brave enough, let go of it and lay it down at his feet.  Whatever it is, no matter how big it is, no matter how important to you it is, God is big enough to handle it.

And I want to encourage you after you lay it down in His presence, don’t pick up it up again.  Now that you’ve laid it down, now that you’ve “Let go of your grip,” trust God.  Let God be God.

Your only job now is to be faithful, to be humble and kind, to be obedient, and to live a life of love.  Whatever it is that you just let go of in the presence of God, trust that God will handle the outcome of that situation.

**Let Go and Let God Leads to Freedom**

As I chased my son around the neighborhood on his bike, I eventually had to let go.  And when I let go, he was free… and I was, too.

When you let go, you too will find freedom.  And you’ll give God freedom in your life to be God over your life.  So go ahead, try it.  Let go and let God.

**Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Phil 3:13-14**

Paul gives us a great formula here to make this year even greater. To me on my first reading it seems like Paul made a contradiction. He said, “this one thing I do”. Yet we go on to read three things, three pieces of advice. So, my answer is, it is a process. There is a flow here. First you have to forget those things that are behind, then you can move on to reaching forward to those things before, and finally pressing toward the mark.

**Yet if you don’t start with one you can’t go to the next step.**

**If you stay, there, you live there.**

**I. Realize the need for Change**

**A. You have not apprehended**

Philippians 3:13a brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: (taking hold of it, understand everything)

Paul understood that with all he had accomplished. With all he has done for the Lord. With the visions the Lord had given him. With the contentment he has given in his heart. Paul still understood that he had not “arrived”. He still does not understand it all. No matter who he is there is still so much more to learn. There is still growing to do.

**B. God has a definite plan for your life**

Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove to see whether it is genuine or not. what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

**The Message.** Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

**Psalms 37:23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delights in his way.**

No matter your age or condition God still has a plan for your life, and you will be where you are at until you fulfill that plan from the Lord.

**Phil 3:13b “forgetting those things which are behind,”**

There is a time when we no longer focus on the past but begin to put our focus on the present. Learning from the things of the past vowing not to repeat them but not dwelling on them.

**A. Forget your past failures**

1. Spiritual failures

2. Family failures

3. Occupational failures

4. Financial failures

**B. Forget you past successes**

1. Stop gloating over accomplishments

2. Stop resting on your laurels

3. Stop living in “the good old days”

**C. Forgive**

Forgiving past debts as we Forgive past debtors

**Luke 5:37, NIV “And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined”**

Are you ready for a new chapter in your life? In order to move forward into the blessings God has for you, you have to be willing to let go of the old. The things that are behind you are not nearly as important as what is out in front of you. It’s time to get ready for the “new”!

You may have had some unfair things happen, things that you don’t understand. But let me tell you, you have come too far to stop now. Instead of allowing those things to hold you back, why don’t you let go and take a step of faith into the new? It’s time to get a new, bigger vision; it’s time to get a new, fresher outlook; it’s time to rise up with a new attitude! Instead of settling where you are, pick up and move forward. Have the attitude that says, “I may not understand it; it may not have been fair, but I am not getting stuck on this page. I know God has a new chapter for me — a chapter filled with blessings, favor and victory!”

Jesus was speaking of the new life his believers had, the new faith they were experiencing, and he was warning them that they could not combine their old lives and their new lives, their old faith and their new faith.

**III. Plan for the Future**

**Phil 3:14a “reaching forth unto those things which are before”**

We need to set goals for this **SEASON.** It would be easy to go through this year again without setting goals for your life. Maybe you have failed before, and you don’t want to bear the pain. I will have to admit that if you never set any goals for your life and you never make any commitments in your life then you will never have to worry about any failure. But I will tell you this you will never have to worry about the feeling of accomplishment or the feeling of completion. It comes from setting goals and achieving them.

**A. Goal areas**

1. Spiritual

2. Attitudinal

3. Physical

4. Financial

B. Goal ranges

1. Short-range goals (1-12 months)

2. Intermediate-range goals (13-48 months)

3. Long-range goals (4-30 years)

**IV. Live Today to its Fullest**

**Philippians 3:14b “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”**

Press: -Definition: 1. to make to run or flee, put to flight, drive away

a. to press on: figuratively of one who in a race runs swiftly to reach the goal

b. to pursue (in a hostile manner)

**Romans 14:19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.**

**1 Corinthians 14:1 Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.**

Paul is not talking about the “Eat, drink and be merry” attitude that was prevalent in his day. He is talking about understanding your goals and the mark you are pressing for. It is not heaven**. Your mark is not heaven. Your mark is Jesus.** Your mark is as Paul writes in Philippians 3:8 “the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord”. He again writes in Philippians 3:10 “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering, being made conformable unto his death.”

This is what it means to live life to the fullest. Yes there are some Christians that are not living life to the fullest. They are living under clouds of burdens. They are living under the weight of this world.

**Remember the famous prayer that has been found on many plaques.**

**“Lord help me to accept the things I cannot change, change the things that I can and give me wisdom to know the difference.”**

**A. Accept things you cannot change**

**B. Change things you can**

**C. Pray for wisdom to know the difference**

**LET IT GO**