

## Letting Go<sup>i</sup>

### Praise:

Begin to prepare your heart and mind for the study by listening to and/or singing the worship songs from the services. Choose at least three songs from the following list:

*Everlasting God* – Chris Tomlin  
*Like a Lion* – David Crowder Band  
*Beautiful Things* – Gungor  
*Blessed Assurance* – various artists  
*Stronger* – Hillsong United

*Found in You* – Vertical Church Band  
*Our God* – Chris Tomlin  
*You Hold Me Now* – Hillsong United  
*Your Great Name* – Natalie Grant  
*Jesus Take the Wheel* – Carrie Underwood

### Prayer:

Following the praise music, pray for understanding of the scripture, enlightenment that the Holy Spirit may guide your understanding, discernment that you may see how this lesson applies to you, and courage to surrender those things that hinder your spiritual growth.

### Preparation:

(5-10 min)

1. Ask each person to write on a piece of paper three sentences that describe or summarize the message, “Letting Go.”
2. Have each person read aloud his/her summary. After all have presented, discuss the descriptions/summaries for the remaining few minutes (of the 10 total).

### Reviewing the Scriptural Basis:

(5 min)

Read aloud the following scripture. Have different participants read each verse. Take a moment to reflect on the verses and what they mean for you.

#### **Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT)**

<sup>28</sup> Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”

### Breaking it Down

(30 min)

Break into smaller groups of three or four people. Read the key segments of today’s message, and answer together the questions related thereto.

### The Healing Power of Christ

Today’s lesson, “Letting Go,” is based on the third step in the process of receiving the healing power of Christ for our hurts, hang-ups, and habits that keep us from being all that God has designed us to be. We learned that the first step is to recognize our need; the second step is to reach out to God and plug in to His power, and now we’re going to look at the third step of letting go. This third step is where we have to come to a place where we say to God, “I can’t, but I believe You can.” Getting to *that* place, though, can be a long journey because we often get stuck along the way. We get stuck in bad habits that we can’t break. We get stuck in broken or abusive

relationships that we can't get out of or can't fix. We get stuck in the anger and resentment of infidelity or betrayal that we can't undo or understand. We get stuck in painful memories that blindside us at the most inopportune times. And when we get stuck in these and other ways, we can't get *unstuck* by our own power. When we come to that realization, it's not long before the "Cycle of Despair" sets its hold on us: guilt-->anger-->fear-->depression (p. 72).

So, how do we get unstuck and break this cycle of despair? We have to come to Jesus and entrust our lives and our problems into His care. Bottom line: we have to relinquish control. We have to let go. Sounds easy enough, but try putting it to action, and you'll likely run into a few obstacles that hold you back. But, you CAN overcome them, especially when you recognize them.

## **Obstacles that keep us from "letting go"**

### **1) Pride**

It's not easy to admit to being "over our heads" and in need of help. It's why we'll drive aimlessly for miles and not ask for directions; it's why some of us suffer from serious back problems ("Nah, I've got this. I don't need any help."). Here's a classic: "If I want it done right, I'll do it myself." But, consider what the writer of Proverbs 10:8 (TLB) said about this attitude, "A self-sufficient fool falls flat on his face." In fact, in the Book of Proverbs, *pride* is associated with hatred (8:13), disgrace (11:2), conflict (13:10), destruction (16:18), and humiliation (29:23). Yet, in contrast, Jesus says, "God blesses those who...realize their need for him..." (Matthew 5:3 NLT). Asking God for help and letting go is not a sign of weakness. Matthew 5:5 (NIV) says, "Blessed are the meek...." This same verse is also translated, "Blessed are those who are *free of pride*..." (NIRV, emphasis added). We cannot allow our foolish pride to keep us from letting go.

1. Describe a time when your pride got you in trouble.
2. What area of your life is governed by pride?

### **2) Guilt**

Some of us are ashamed to ask for God's help. Some of us have tried to bargain with God ("God, if you'll let me pass this test, I promise to study more the next time." "Just get me out of this situation, and I'll never do it again."), and then failed to keep our end of the deal. Or, maybe we've already offered our lives and situations up to the Lord but then reneged on promises we made to Him. When we fail in keeping our word and promises to God, we become embarrassed to ask for His help. But, we can always count on HIS promises, His grace, and His mercy. If you've ever felt ashamed to call out to God, you're in good company. David, feeling so oppressed by the sins he had committed against God, wrote, "[P]roblems far too big for me to solve are piled higher than my head. Meanwhile my sins, too many to count, have caught up with me, and I'm ashamed to look up..." (Psalm 40:12 TLB). We mustn't let our guilt stand in the way of letting go. "[T]here is no sin that God cannot or will not forgive. He wants to forgive all your guilt. That's why Christ went to the cross!" (p. 75).

1. Share a situation or experience that you've tried to bargain with God.
2. What hurt, hang-up or habit has caused you to be ashamed to look up to Him?

### **3) Fear**

When we allow fear to become an obstacle in keeping us from letting go of our hurts, hang-ups, and habits, we are saying that we don't trust God with our lives. Faith, by definition in Hebrews 11:1 (NIRV), involves trusting in what we cannot see: "Faith is being sure of what we

hope for. It is being certain of what we do not see.” When we can’t see what’s in our future or when we’re uncertain of what we’ll encounter, our innate response is fear. Fear feeds upon itself; if we’re not careful, it can consume us. Yet, when we lean on our faith, we demonstrate our trust in the One who knows all and sees all, and He will guide our paths if only we let go and let Him.

1. What fear(s) do you have of letting go?
2. What, or whom, are you afraid of losing?
3. Describe a time where you overcame your fear.

#### 4) Worry

When we’re uncertain of the outcome of choices and situations, another natural tendency is to worry about that outcome. According to Baker, “Worry causes us to confuse the *decision-making* phase with the *problem-solving* phase.” (p. 77) To unpack this concept, let’s look at a few life-changing decision-making examples: deciding to change schools/jobs/careers; deciding to have children; deciding to retire/move. These are decisions we make, yet each of these decisions comes with its own set of “problems.” If I change schools/jobs, I have to gather and prepare a lot of paperwork (transcripts/resumes), establish new relationships/routines, etc. If I decide to have children, I need to say good-bye to life as I know it(!). If I decide to retire, I need to say goodbye to life as I know it(!).

All joking aside, we can’t worry about the “problems” of our decisions, or we might not ever make those decisions. Worry and trust cannot coexist. When we give our life and will over to God, we don’t have to have all the answers, but we trust that He does. We have only to make the decision and then “let God worry about problem solving” (p. 77).

1. What do you worry about more than anything else?
2. Describe a time when your worries about a decision prevented you from acting.

#### 5) Doubt

Doubt is another obstacle that keeps us from letting go. Sometimes we wonder if our faith is or will be big enough for God to use. The truth is, “It’s not the size of your faith that matters; it’s the *who* or *what* you put your faith in that matters” (p. 78). The Bible makes it very clear that even a little bit of faith in our great big God brings great big results: “...if you have faith the size of a mustard seed...nothing will be impossible for you.” (Matthew 17:20 NRSV) Jesus’ parable of the mustard seed was to illustrate that what appears to be small (our faith) can produce great results (the Kingdom of God). Hold fast to James’ words (James 1:6 NIRV): “...you must believe. You must not doubt.” Then, with this obstacle out of your way, you can begin to let go.

1. What doubts have been obstacles in your faith?
2. What has helped you overcome them?
3. What experiences have increased your faith in God?

#### HOW to “let go”

Recognizing the obstacles that hold us back from committing our lives to Christ’s care and control is important inasmuch as it leads us to the decision of committing our lives to Christ’s care and control. We make the decision, and He will go to work on healing our hurts, hang-ups, and habits. Letting go is just another step in the healing process. John Baker identifies four “how to” steps of letting go (pp. 81-82).

### **1) Accept God's Son as your Savior.**

If you haven't already, commit your life to the Lord (all that you are and all that you have). "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved." (Acts 16:31 NIV) If you know Jesus as your Savior, renew your commitment to Him.

1. Have you trusted Jesus as your Savior and Lord? If so, when and where?
2. If you haven't committed your life to Jesus, what's holding you back? What questions do you have about Him?

### **2) Accept God's Word as your Standard.**

Decide that from now on you're going to operate according to biblical principles: trust, forgive, do not worry, do not be anxious, turn the other cheek. Those standards are outlined in the Bible, and we know that "all Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives." (2 Timothy 3:16a NLT)

1. What is something you've learned in Scripture that has altered your behavior?
2. What standards do you find hard to practice?
3. What Bible verse serves as your "go to" for encouragement, support, strength?

### **3) Accept God's Will as your Purpose.**

Realize that God has a plan for your life and seek to fulfill it. Be like David and say, "I want to do your will, my God." (Psalm 40:8a CEB) Don't overthink it—just trust it.

1. In what area of your life are you reluctant to do what God wants you to do?
2. What would complete obedience to God's will in this area look like in practice?

### **4) Accept God's Power as your Strength.**

"[You and] I can do everything through Christ, who gives [us] strength." (Philippians 4:13 NLT) Most of us operate, by and large, through our own willpower, but consider redefining our willpower to "the willingness to accept *God's power* to run our lives" (p. 83). By that definition alone, we will find strength...and courage...to let go.

1. What would your life really look like if you truly "let go and let God?"
2. What is keeping you from letting go?

### **In Closing:**

This step toward receiving the healing power of Christ is about letting go and letting God. It involves trusting Him to take us where He wants us to go and believing that He knows how to navigate the roadmap of our lives better than we do. Giving Him control of our lives is not an easy choice to make, as many of us find comfort in being in the driver's seat; however, we must recognize that our "comfort" is merely a false sense of security. We really aren't in control at all. By default, we let go and let God, or, in the words of Carrie Underwood, we say, "Jesus, take the wheel. Take it from my hands 'cause I can't do this on my own. I'm letting go, so give me one more chance. Save me from this road I'm on.... Jesus, take the wheel." It's time to stop holding on and to start letting go.

### **Close in Prayer:**

Heavenly Father, this road I've been traveling is not where I thought I'd be. I've steered myself into some ugly situations, and I've caused some wrecks in my own life and in the lives of others. I'm not proud of my choices, and I'm afraid to face my hurts, hang-ups and habits that have landed me where I am. But I know it's time to let go, and I'm ready. So, right now, Lord, I commit my life

to Your care and to Your control. Guide me and encourage me through this process, Father, for I am weak and scared, but I know my hope and my healing is in Jesus. It's in His name I pray, Amen. Let's roll...

**The Blessing (say this as a group):**

*"[L]etting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But [letting go and] letting the Spirit control your mind lead to life and peace." Romans 8:6 (NLT)*

**Action Items for the Week Ahead:**

Review the key points of today's message and the scriptures related thereto. In the week ahead, reflect upon those scriptures, and consider the following:

1. PRAY about it: Ask God to take control of your life and make you into a new person in Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:17).
2. WRITE about it: Reflect on what your commitment to Christ means to you. How is your life different because of the Lord's presence? Describe any hurts, hang-ups, or habits you're having trouble letting go.
3. SHARE about it: Tell someone about what Christ has done for you and in you. Testify in your small group or to someone you trust about the healing power of Christ you've experienced.

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<sup>i</sup>This sermon series, "The Healing Power of Christ," is based on the book, *Life's Healing Choices*, by John Baker. ©2007 by Richard D. Warren and John E. Baker. All quotes used in this discussion guide are taken from this book and annotated accordingly.