

# Knowing When to Let Go

## Part 1- *What Do I Release?*

Everybody is dealing with something. Whether it's marital problems, problems at work, or problems in general....we've all got our crosses to bear, and we've all got our share of baggage. If we're not careful, we could develop a very dim view of our fellow human beings, surmising that if everybody's got baggage, then no one is really equipped to offer the much needed stewardship and experiential guidance that we all need from time to time. But we know this isn't true. There are some really terrific folks who offer tremendous instruction and guidance in the Word. We admire them so much because they have learned how to release the things that hold them back.

People who lead extraordinary lives have mastered the ability to identify the personal, negative attributes that hamper their success. Overcoming them is their trademark. It's an impressive quality that can be found in nearly all the great leaders of our time. And they don't just release the baggage for their own good, but for the good of others as well. Now it is true what they say, when you let go of one thing that's been holding you back, you discover something else. There's no way to get around that one. It's the nature of life. It's one of the reasons why we were put on this earth...to grow...to discover our weaknesses and summon the courage to deal with them through the strength of Christ.

The subject of our teachings this month is "*Knowing When to Let Go*", but we don't want to put the cart before the horse here. Before we can even begin to talk about knowing when to let go, we've got to first explore exactly what are the things that God wants us to release, and then ask for His help to let them go.

As we talk about the things that God wants us to release, we don't need to look any further than Ephesians 4:22 NKJV, which says "*that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,*". God has issued a swift warning. When it comes to behaviors and deeds that are not Godly, but have their roots in the world, He wants us to put them off. He wants us to get rid of the conduct, thoughts, and attitudes that are negative. If we don't, they can potentially become more and more corrupt as we begin to lust after things that are not in our best interest.

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What do I mean by negative thoughts, behaviors, attitudes, and deeds? Well Ephesians 4 gives us a pretty good depiction of them. One of the things it mentions is an attitude of not caring about what is right or wrong, of living a life that is filled with impurities. Greed is another *no no*; it's an attitude of doing anything to get what you want because nothing is never enough. Other negatives mentioned are lying, stealing, and the use of profane words.

These verses strongly encourage us to make sure that we have a good handle on our emotions. Of course we're going to get angry from time to time, but Ephesians 4:26 tells us to be careful not to allow our anger to cause us to react vengefully. When someone does something that offends us, we shouldn't take it upon ourselves to get revenge. This would only put us in a worse position than where we were when we started. As Christians, God expects us to keep the peace, which means that we squash the anger before we slip up and allow the devil to use it against us.

Likewise, when someone says something nasty to us, the worse thing in the world is to say something nasty back. Both negative and positive actions have a snowball effect. Once you commit them, the effect of the harm or the good they cause becomes larger. What do I mean by that? Well let's take a look at the negative side. Quite simply, you should always expect that when you do the things it talks about in Ephesians 4 that there will be an after effect...a consequence...a negative result.

Our actions also have what I like to call a "*bounce*" effect. I call it this because when it comes right down to it, the ball is in your court; it always is. The ball represents the choices you make. You can't control people and circumstances; you can only control yourself. You can't make a person treat you the way you want to be treated. You can only govern how you respond to what is before you. You can bounce the ball in a negative direction by reacting and behaving poorly, or you can bounce it in a positive direction by reacting peacefully... with, in, by, and through the love of God.

It is so incredibly important that you make the right, positive, and Godly choice. Why? Because the after effects of that choice will always, always, always bounce back on you. And when it bounces back to you, it will have gained strength. It will hit you with more force than it had before. If you bounced it positively, it will bounce back with more positive force, showering you in blessings. If you bounced it negatively....watch out!

Sometimes our spouses get crazy. Some of them abandon their commitment and our marriages fall apart. We become disillusioned in the faith and ask "*Father, why did you let this happen to my marriage?*" We have to come to grips with the fact that there are times when our marriages fall apart because we bounced our ball in the wrong direction too many times. We haven't learned to put on a positive attitude and truly love our spouses with a Christ kind of love.

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God's love does not fail...it cannot fail. It's perfect! There is no glue, no bonding agent stronger than the love of God. It will hold every detail of our lives together. He wants us to have unwavering faith in that, and He will back it up every single time.

We trust in God's love by living it. You can't say you believe that God has your back and then behave in a way that runs counter to that. Your mind, heart, and soul have to act on one accord in order to bounce that ball in the right direction. When you know how to live right and you get committed to doing so, you can take a bruising from life and still stand strong in His peace. It's the only way to stand in front of a man or woman who has done you wrong and say *"Listen, I'm sorry for whatever I've done to make you feel that I didn't love, respect, or honor you. I'm sorry for all the things I've said that have made you feel less than who you are."*

This isn't about you feeling as though everything is your fault. It's about admitting to your spouse, loved one, and most importantly, to God, that you acknowledge your part in the way the ball bounced, and you're sorry for it. And you know what; this is a very important step towards letting go. When you acknowledge your part—a little bit of that *old man nature* dies and you make a little more space in your heart for the love of God to grow.

We have to stop helping people to mistreat us. Take a stand and refuse to keep the negative cycle churning. Any actions that we take out of negativity are going to hurt us in some way, because we will not be able to escape the consequences of those actions. God will forgive us for the wrong that we do. He will forgive us for the sin, but His forgiveness does not mean that we don't have to pay for what we've done. The sting may be a little less, but it will sting even so.

Asking His forgiveness means that we acknowledge the fact that we did something wrong. It also means that we understand the difference between right and wrong, and that we will do what we can to prevent the wrong from happening again.

Earnestly asking for God's forgiveness restores our fellowship with Him. It puts the relationship back in good standing. But what happens if we keep asking Him for forgiveness for the same things. Does He forgive us? Yes, He absolutely does, but remember that continuing to indulge the negative behavior takes a costly toil and at some point we are going to have to make a decision. That decision is one that causes us to take a stand against the negativity that keeps us tied to the baggage.

Let's take a look at The Message translation of Ephesians 4:22-24. It says *"Since, then, we do not have the excuse of ignorance, everything—and I do mean everything—connected with that old way of life has to go. It's rotten through and through. Get rid of it! And then take on an*

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*entirely new way of life—a God-fashioned life, a life renewed from the inside and working itself into your conduct as God accurately reproduces his character in you."*

God will not come inside us and start moving the bad stuff out. If that were the case then He would have removed Adam's doubt long before the devil tempted him. We have to make the decision to put off, surrender, and let go of our baggage, and we have to do so with the full assurance that when we let it go--God will replenish it with something infinitely better....His love.

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