

LETTING GO

New Year's Eve 2024

Introduction:

ILLUSTRATION: A boy grew up in New York City – but he loved eagles. He took every opportunity to study them throughout his school years. After graduation, he saved what he could from his pay to observe eagles in their natural habitat.

Eventually, he camped at a remote location to observe their nesting habits and environment. For two days – nothing! Finally, he saw an eagle on a cliff-side, grabbed his binoculars, and made his observations.

Early next morning, camera at the ready, he watched one eagle soaring high. Suddenly, it tucked in its wings, and dived fast to the earth, disappearing from view. A few minutes later, he saw it flying higher and higher, prey in its talons.

All of a sudden, the beautiful eagle started plummeting to earth. What on earth had happened? Something was wrong. He noted the area where the eagle fell, and drove in that direction. There on the ground, was the dead eagle – blood on its chest, and a dead weasel in its talons. The weasel had bitten the eagle on the chest, piercing its heart.

How could this have happened? The man was shaken. He screamed at the bird *“All you had to do was drop the weasel! You didn’t have to die! You just had to LET GO! The weasel had no power if you had just LET GO!”*

- Letting go is one of the hardest things to do.
 - Requires letting go of both good and bad.
- The good of the past year is to build our faith.
 - For moving forward.
- The trauma, hurt, disappointments are harder to let go of because they affect our soul / emotions.
- How did the early Church handle these things?

1. Pray as a Group

- Acts 12 (Background Story)
 - Herod had James put to death (12:2)
 - Had Peter put in prison (12:4)

Acts 12:5 *But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him.*

- Church prayer; not two or three.
- Prayed “earnestly” – intense intercession
 - Lit “to stretch tightly in prayer”
- Power in agreement.
- Be open to sharing the need so the church can pray for you.

2. Rest

Acts 12:6 *The night before Peter was to be placed on trial, he was asleep, fastened with two chains between two soldiers. Others stood guard at the prison gate.*

- This is a different Peter from the one who was afraid in the storm! Jesus was the one sleeping at that time. (Matt 4:35-40)
- He could not change his circumstances.
- He was learning to let go.

3. Be Ready

Acts 12:7-8 *Suddenly, there was a bright light in the cell, and an angel of the Lord stood before Peter. The angel struck him on the side to awaken him and said, “Quick! Get up!” And the chains fell off his wrists. Then the angel told him, “Get dressed and put on your sandals.” And he did. “Now put on your coat and follow me,” the angel ordered.*

- What was this?
 - Encounter?
 - Revelation?
 - Vision?
 - God moment?
- Chains came off
 - This is personal restraint.
- The encounter set him free, but he was still a prisoner.

4. Follow.

Acts 12:9-11 *So Peter left the cell, following the angel. But all the time he thought it was a vision. He didn’t realise it was actually happening. They passed the first*

and second guard posts and came to the iron gate leading to the city, and this opened for them all by itself. So they passed through and started walking down the street, and then the angel suddenly left him. Peter finally came to his senses. “It’s really true!” he said. “The Lord has sent his angel and saved me from Herod and from what the Jewish leaders had planned to do to me!”

- Notice the steps:
 - Past one guard
 - Past a second guard
 - Gate opened to freedom.
- What could have happened at any of those stages?

Communion:

Galatians 5:1 *So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don’t get tied up again in slavery to the law.*

Romans 6:7 *For when we died with Christ, we were set free from the power of sin.*

2 Corinthians 3:16-18 *But when someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. For the Lord is Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord – who is the Spirit – makes us more and more like Him as we are changed into His glorious image.*