

THE VALUE IN LETTING GO

Luke 18:18–22 | Sermon Outline & Bible Study Notes

“Holding on is believing there’s only a past; letting go is knowing there’s a future.” — Daphne Rose Kingman

TWO CORE QUESTIONS

- Do I really need it?
- Can I let it go?

These two questions frame the entire message. The first is easy to ask. The second will cost you something.

PART 1 — WHAT DO WE HOLD ON TO?

The Obvious Things

- Outcomes, timelines, and expectations
- Our identity and how others see us
- People — even those who are not good for us
- Hurt, fear, and the cost of moving on

The Less Obvious Things

- The version of yourself before the loss — before the divorce, diagnosis, or failure
- Conversations that never happened — apologies never given, goodbyes never said
- The meaning we gave to moments — promises, dreams, visions of a future that didn’t come
- Our suffering as proof — that what we lost mattered, that we loved deeply, that we were wronged

“Releasing the pain does not invalidate the experience.”

PART 2 — WHY DO WE HOLD ON?

- **Reason 1:** It’s familiar.

Familiar pain has a shape we know. The unknown — even if the unknown is freedom — is scary.

- **Reason 2:** We don’t trust the outcome.

What we’re really saying: “I don’t fully trust God with what comes after.”

- **Reason 3:** Letting go feels like losing.

We have attached meaning to what we carry. Releasing it feels like admitting it’s over.

- **Reason 4:** Just in case.

There is a difference between Spirit-led perseverance and fear-driven holding on.

Romans 5:3–5 — *Suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.*

Spirit-led perseverance is anchored in what God told you. Fear-driven holding on is anchored in what you cannot accept.

- **Reason 5:** We were never taught how to let go.

There is a difference between honoring your past and being imprisoned by it.

PART 3 — THE THEOLOGY OF AN OPEN HAND

Ball your fist. Feel the tension. That is what a closed hand looks like in the soul.

What a Closed Hand Says to God

- “I’ve got this.”
- “I don’t trust you with this yet.”
- “I need to be in control of this outcome.”
- “If I let go, something will be lost that you cannot restore.”

A closed hand is ultimately a trust issue dressed up as a survival instinct.

What a Closed Hand Can Mean

- Fear — losing security, love, or stability
- Control — believing it only works if we manage it
- Woundedness — protecting yourself from being hurt again
- Idolatry — clutching something as if life cannot go on without it
- Fatigue — survival mode so long, the fist is clenched by habit

The Scriptural Invitation

1 Peter 5:7 — *Cast all your cares on Him, because He cares for you.*

Psalms 55:22 — *Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you. He will never let the righteous be shaken.*

Matthew 11:28 — *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. He sustains you in the process of letting go. The releasing and the sustaining happen together.*

PART 4 — THE RICH YOUNG RULER | Luke 18:18–22

The Identity Test (v.19)

Jesus asks: “Why do you call me good?” He is not being modest. He is asking the ruler — and us — to settle the question of who God really is before anything else.

Key truth: God is not good because of what He does. God is good because of who He is.

Psalm 119:68 — *You are good, and you do good.*

Psalm 100:5 — *The Lord is good and his mercy endures forever.*

The real Identity Test is not what happens on Sunday morning. It is what happens Monday morning when He asks you to open your hand.

The Strategic Omission (v.20)

Jesus quotes only the outward commandments. He deliberately omits: “You shall have no other gods” and “You shall not covet.”

Jesus is not testing behavior. He is setting up a moment that will expose the heart.

The Broken Wanter

We don’t just want things — we attach our identity to them. Every one of us is rich in something.

- Rich in unforgiveness
- Rich in control
- Rich in pain
- Rich in people

Every rehearsed offense = a deposit into the account of unforgiveness. Every chosen plan over God’s plan = a deposit into the account of control.

Romans 7 — *Paul: “When the law said don’t covet, suddenly I was doing it all the time.”*

The One Thing (v.22)

Jesus didn’t say sell everything and figure it out. He said sell everything and follow me.

- This was a personal command, not a universal one — Jesus identified this man’s specific idol
- The man kept commandments outwardly; inwardly his identity and worth were tied to what he owned
- Jesus moves him from self-centered living to others-centered living

Matthew 25:40 — *Whatever you did for the least of these... you did for me.*

CLOSING — THE EXCHANGE

He came running. He asked the right question. He stood face to face with Jesus.

And he walked away sad — not because Jesus rejected him, but because he couldn’t open his hand.

A closed hand cannot receive. God is not asking you to empty your hands to punish you. He is asking because He knows what He has prepared — and it requires an open hand to hold it.

Isaiah 43:19 — *See, I am doing a new thing... do you perceive it?*

“The value of letting go is not just what you release — it’s what you finally have room to receive.”