

The Missing Piece

By Lee Ezell

I was very grateful for the words of the song this morning that Jesus, you are the center of my joy. That's what we were talking about last night in the Cinderella Syndrome, getting unhooked from the love junkie, a relationship addict, a person who is hooked on anything else other than the faith that is in us in Jesus Christ. I thank you for your kind reception. I've been thrilled to be back here at Biola again, and we didn't have such an awesome music group. When I was a music major, we weren't allowed to wear our hair like that and look good.

We had to look frumpy. But this is good. We're making progress here. Someone told me that my life is like a soap opera. So, I thought about that, and I thought, well, in a way, it really is.

So, I wrote, as the world turned, I was one of the young and the restless. I spent the days of our lives in a constant search for tomorrow. I was headed for another world and wound up on the edge of night. And then Jesus Christ, the guiding light, brought me through my secret storm. And he said, "Share with me in my dynasty, become one of all my children. And I will give you one life to live."

[Applause]

I'm thrilled that through my crazy soap opera life, I have learned some secrets and some biblical principles that I'm tickled to now pass along in my strange little way, which I enjoy doing. And those principles, along with some other things, are at the back table there for you. I forgot to mention I brought you some keys. I have a key that says "I hold the key" over my desk at the office because those people drive me crazy there. And in my kitchen, and if you are wanting to

remind yourself that you hold the key to your happiness, you might want to take a look back there and check that out.

I'm trying to learn these things. I'm getting older now. I'm 43. I would be 44, but I was sick a year, but I'm somewhere between estrogen and death, right in there. Between the Blue Lagoon and Golden Pond. That's kind of where I fit in life.

But I'm very thrilled that my husband could put his head in here this morning. I don't get to be with him much in my meetings. He is a presidential appointee, and a number of you have asked me if he is the gentleman you see being abused on the news at night. And he is the one who seems to get that attention. Honey, would you stand up and wave? Glad to have you.

I want to talk this morning about missing pieces in life. I know a little about it. It's different from having a piece missing, which is a totally different thing. But you know how we can dress up and we really look good, and we've got it all together? And then we can do something really dumb. And I can remember once when I did that, I was all dressed up. And I just did the dumbest thing at home. And my husband said, "How can you look so good and be so stupid?" I said, "Well, that's the way the Lord made me: pretty and stupid. Pretty, so you could love me and stupid, so I could love you."

But missing pieces that I want to talk about are something different. I find as I get to travel and minister that there are so many folks who, like me, feel they have a piece of the puzzle of their

life that has been, like, punched out. It is a place that, maybe it's a person that is gone. It's a piece, a dream, a hope. Maybe it was a divorce or a death.

It's something that is a gaping hole in our past, in our lives. And it seems like there's nothing that'll really fill up that hole and begin to make the difference. Being born and raised of alcoholic parents in an inner-city area of Philadelphia, I never did think that I would be, well, I was told I should not be a piece of the puzzle of life. My father really wanted Lee, the boy, and I could never pass the physical. So I always had this feeling.

What is it about you men? You always want a boy to pass on whatever you think you've got to pass on. I don't understand that. But anyway, I never did feel like the wanted child. I knew that I was unwanted, and I knew there are some people who, God has a Great and Noble Purpose for Ye. And then there are other people like me, that just sort of get born.

And I meet lots of people who say, yeah, I'm a mistake. I was sort of the last one in a long line. And so I understood what that was like. Even today, with all my sisters, there are five of us sisters together. We're still not close at all because of all we've been through in life. But we have decided that once a year we have an annual family picnic. And we decided on that day every year, wherever we are, we'll go outside and eat our lunch. And that's about as close as we get.

Very strange. But as I mentioned last night, my father lived in the basement of our home, which was plastered with pornographic pictures on the rafters and the walls all over. And I early got an idea of what men and women were all about and what women were for. We were poor, but I

didn't really know it that much, because everyone around me in our ghetto area in Philadelphia was the same. The city of Brotherly Shove is what we called it, because it was in our neighborhood a very desirable place to live.

I escaped through music and through drama. I have to say I was a regular on Dick Clark's American Bandstand, you know, the original. And his new book, I'm on the front inside cover at the front of the stroll line, looking really cool there going down. So I wondered if that would be my only claim to fame that would make me okay and validated. And then, as I received Christ at the Billy Graham Crusade, one of the very first scriptures I found in the big Bible, the big coffee table Bible thing that you open up and the flowers fall out and all those things.

Well, I found an interesting verse, and if you have your Bible, you might want to turn to it if you don't already know it. I can know you have most of it memorized, I'm sure. But take a look at Psalm 139. If you have an Old Testament, and if you don't, shame on you. Psalm 139, as David spoke to God, how well we know this beautiful passage beginning with verse 13.

I'm reading from the living Bible. David said to God, "For you made all the delicate inner parts of my body and you knit them together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex. It's amazing to think about your workmanship is marvelous." How well I know it. You were there while I was being formed in utter seclusion. You saw me before I was born, and you scheduled every day of my life before I began to breathe.

Those of us who accept the Bible as the Word of God have to align our philosophies in accordance with that word. And for me, I was beginning to make after I read that verse, the change in my pivotal thinking that maybe I was not an unplanned child or an unwanted child. Maybe there are no such things as unwanted children. Really? Because if God plans life, then it must have validity to it, as I would escape my inner city situation.

And I would come out here to California to be with all you smiling people. And as there, I got my first job fresh out of high school and was raped by that man whom I mentioned last night. It was a devastating experience. I was already so sick with the Cinderella Syndrome, thinking in my head that I really did believe that God was--bibbity, bobbity, boo.

I mean, he does a little magic wand number over the lives of people who are really sincere with him, and he kind of puts a little bubble over them and doesn't let any more bad things happen. It was crucial to me in that moment when I was raped, to say, why, God? There's no way this made sense to me as a virgin teenager. And I can remember as I escaped that night, sitting on the side of a street and stopping at a gas station, trying to clean myself up and looking in this little, crummy, little mirror and talking to myself in the mirror and saying, "Lee, this is life. Honey, you better toughen up. Because, you know, you were a mistake to begin with, and these things are going to continue to happen to you in your life. You are a loser.

"And besides, you know you're always in the wrong place at the right time. This is just the pattern of your life. You better not tell anybody because they'll all think you made it happen. And maybe you did. And there is something so strange that happens in the mind of a victim."

And I find it's pretty universal that victims feel guilty. And I talk to kids whose dad splits and leaves the home, and they feel guilty. They say, if I were a better kid, if I'd been a better son, my dad wouldn't have left. I meet abused wives who say, well, if I acted better, I'm not the wife I should be. I meet people who continually feel guilty for the actions and decisions of other people as we were talking about last night, which is so illegal. And yet I find that even here at Biola, since I have been here and opened my heart as a rape victim, I've talked with a number of rape victims and very few people know.

I'm so embarrassed that here I am all grown up, and I never reported that rape, even though 26 or so years ago, there were no rape hotlines crisis centers somewhere you could call and ask for help. I know the majority of rape victims still do not report it. And yet on the back side of their brain, the accuser of the brethren convinces them, somehow, you're guilty.

I would go through my questions of "Why, God?" Over and over in my head and decide to swallow hard, go on with life. I showed up at work the next morning and that salesman had taken off that night. He would not be returning for six months.

I was very emotionally, every way, physically, sick. And that's why I finally wound up at the doctor some weeks later, and he told me that I was pregnant from that experience. It was so bizarre because I argued with the doctor and I said, "You can't get it on the first time." He said, "Oh, who told you that?" I really didn't have any sex education, although it wouldn't have helped to me. But I could not accept the fact that I was an unwanted child with an unwanted child. This

is not fair, and it would take me three days to get up the courage to go and tell my mother. And as I began to try to make this scenario real to her, the only thing she could see is that she would have a pregnant single girl embarrassing her at home.

And she told me, I'd have to leave. And I understand that she, as an alcoholic, was pedaling as fast as she could. It was all she could do to get up and go to work in the morning, take care of the others who were at home. So, I did split with a car and \$50 in my pocket and headed south from that San Francisco area, not knowing where I would land or how I'd be taken care of.

Now it's easy to look back and see that it was part of God's plan initially to isolate me from family, from friends, from familiar surroundings, everything. So I would have to find a way to make that little tiny life of Christ in me, grow up enough to become my father and my mother and my husband and my friend and everything I would need in the days to come. A friend talked to me about having an abortion as I left that San Francisco area and it was a trip across the border to Tijuana, and it really didn't sound very nice to me.

I would quickly say to you that I was no heroic person in those days. I was just this little pimple faced teenager person that was used to taking the easy way out in life. And I do not know. I have to be honest with you. I don't know what kind of a decision I would have made had there been available to me, a state, county funded abortion clinic, family planning clinic. They call it on the corner where I could have gone and taken care of this thing that I didn't deserve. Anyone would have backed me, sure.

And yet in those days, those tearful days that followed, as I was isolated by myself, I went through my process of forgiveness, and I think it's so important that we understand, as we were talking last night about forgiveness, beginning with an act of the will.

First it began for me with the fear of the Lord. That was the beginning of wisdom, because I saw very clearly in Luke, if you do not forgive those who trespass against you, your trespasses will not be forgiven. And that is a fearful thing. I knew I couldn't afford being isolated out on my own pregnant to have anything in the tubes between me and God.

I knew I had to clean house and I had to forgive father and mother and make my list. And as an act of my will, say, "I will. Make me willing God, I will to forgive you." Do you remember? Yes. And I've relived the rape and all that I went through in the months afterwards, many times since then in my memory because forgiving doesn't always carry with it forgetting. I've seen ads for a new movie that's out now on TV.

It's called The Accused, and it's about a rape victim who goes to court, and nobody believes her. And it's some kind of a--I'm not going to see that movie because I know there are certain things I have to avoid, in God, in order to maintain my joy and my life in Him. I learned that in those days that followed, I learned that for me, I was thinking, maybe if I am an unwanted child. But the Bible says God forms life, then maybe somebody wants this child.

What began for me as an unplanned pregnancy, I decided, didn't have to result in an unwanted child. For me, abortion would become too permanent an answer for my temporary problem. I

would decide to go full term with the pregnancy somehow, landing in Los Angeles. And I went to a Baptist Church I found in the Yellow Pages because it said something about Christ in the Ad. And that was all I knew, was Billy Graham, Christ and Bible. I knew they were okay. So I went there and I found a big lady. You know, one of those mega ladies that's a greeter in the lobby.

Big lady like that. Rolly Polly. And her heart was as big as her whole body. And I hadn't been there long. When she looked at me, she said, Honey, I can tell a girl that needs a square meal and a place to stay. Do you have a place to stay? Why don't you come live with dad and me? Well, we need another person in our house. Yeah. Not only did she say, "Don't have an abortion. Ooh, that's naughty."

She said, "Let us help you. Let us enable you." The first people I would ever see who showed the way of how to walk with Jesus and open your heart. Not say, be warmed and be filled. But give what is necessary for that. And I can remember, as I found Los Angeles County adoptions in the Yellow Pages and decided, I would like any birth mother, want the best for my child.

I didn't think I was able to give that child home and father and mother and all the things I wanted that child to have. So, because I loved the child, I decided to adopt the child out as any birth mother does. Certainly, when something grows inside of you, you gain a love for that. You adopted children have certainly been loved on many different sides. And I can remember the night before I signed my final papers in Los Angeles County.

Remember seeing the movie, the old movie, The Ten Commandments on TV, the old classic with the old Brenner and all. And I remember watching as the mother of Moses put Little Charlton Heston in that basket. Remember that? Remember? Little Chuck with his big nose and send him down that river. That Nile River.

And I felt, you know, if there had been any of her neighbors out there on the banks watching, they would have said, "What, she's a meshuga. The mother throwing away the baby, what such a mother. You could die from such a mother. She doesn't love the baby." And yet the mother of Moses had direction from God that another mother was supposed to raise her son of his choosing. And as she placed that child on the Nile, God arranged for Pharaoh's daughter to fish that baby out. I was trusting God for some Pharaoh's daughter to do the same thing for mine over whom I could have no more control except to let go and commit.

I would later find the first person recorded in the Scriptures who would ever attest to the deity of the living Christ would be an unborn child in the womb of Elizabeth, John the Baptist, who leapt with joy as he recognized the deity of Christ coming into the world. So it would be for me. This child growing in me actually led me how to walk with Jesus and love Jesus. It's ironic, but so true that I felt that life in me was doing the same for me. I was coming to the conclusion that there are no illegitimate children, there are illegitimate acts.

There is adultery, incest, rape. But even though a couple may decide when to make love, I believe God decides when to make life. It would be later that I would discover the old gospel singer Ethel Waters, who sang, "His Eye Is on the Sparrow," "The Night I Received Christ,"

would be the result of her mother being raped at age twelve at knife point. Only God can make sense out of nonsense. And I would give birth to a baby girl in a county hospital.

And years ago, birth mothers had little or no rights or involvement with the child if they had relinquished the right for that child. And I would never see her or hold her. And I'd be gone at 1030 and I cried and I thought, you're going to have other children. I never imagined it would be the only child I would ever give birth to. For me, she would truly be the biggest missing piece of my life. The biggest unanswered question. This person would be punched out of my life and gone, really, forever. Adoption records are sealed and nobody can get into them. It would be gone.

In the months that followed, I determined there's got to be a way to find happiness and contentment in spite of your past, in spite of your presence of the unsure future. And there is, because God's given us the key inside of ourselves. I would see in the Bible that, gee, there were many people who had things happen to them. God purposely recorded that had--I mean, it was unfair. I mean, look at Joseph.

Come on now. He was a nice dude. Didn't do a thing wrong. Yet there he was sold into Egypt by his brothers in slavery, in jail for 14 years on a bum wrap supposed to have seduced somebody's wife. That guy had a string of things for which there were no explanations that kept happening to him in life.

And yet when his brothers appeared before him in Genesis 45, in that golden moment of revenge, Joseph looked at them and said, "Yes, I'm Joseph, your brother. But don't be afraid. You know, it was God who brought me here to Egypt." I felt like saying, "Hey, Joe, you don't read the Bible, because right back here, God didn't send you to Egypt. See the brothers, the brothers they did it to you."

And yet Joseph had already developed the habit of interpreting God in things present. That's why he could look at those brothers and say, "You know, you guys meant it for evil, but God meant it for good." So I trusted without understanding that the same thing would be true for me without knowing. I came to Biola after that. And no one here knew my untold secret. There was a handful of people in the world who did. As some of you here have shared your secrets with me, I would be unable to come to Biola by a couple of gals at the Baptist Church where I went, who decided to pay for me to come because they thought I had some potential.

And I would wait after Biola. And after some years of usefulness in ministry. Then I met my Prince, which we talked about last night. And I decided before we would marry, I would give him the acid test. And I would tell him about this missing piece in my life and see whether or not it blew him out. And he seemed to be so understanding because, you see, his first wife had been a beautiful gal. I could have looked like her. But I got here a little late this morning. I didn't. And she would give him these two beautiful little children.

And she played the piano at his father's church. Great Gal. And she died very suddenly of a brain tumor and left him with these two little kids, who were three and six. There was no answer for

that. A fine, dedicated Christian Lady. They prayed, they believed. And she died. My husband remarried. Beautiful redhead who also liked the first, played piano at his dad's church. And she helped him raise the kids for a little while. And her arthritis became bad. And when he took her to the hospital that morning, they said, this is lupus. And in 24 hours she was dead.

I don't play piano anymore myself. I never touched the keyboard. But you see, he understood that there are things that happen in the life of a Christian for which there are no easy answers. You just can't grab a scripture and massage it all over and say, oh, Jesus cares. I mean, it just is not enough.

And he understood. So I would marry. And I would become mother to his two kids, ten and 13, would raise them up. And shortly after we were married, I would sit in a Los Angeles County courtroom adopting his two little girls, wondering who sat in that seat for me, years before adopting my one child. I really felt as if I had committed to God's divine Apple computer.

You know, that big system he's got. I had committed. Maybe it isn't an Apple. I'm going to ask him when I get there. I don't know what it is, but it's a fantastic system that can track and keep things that we let go of that are committed to him, for he is able to keep that which we have committed unto him through the years of marriage and raising the kids.

I felt as if I was sort of the real mother of those kids. To me, parenting is more than a moment of time. No, being a parent as years of loving and caring and giving and sharing and crying and all

that. And I hope to that my birth daughter felt the people whom God chose to fish her out of the water, were her real mom and dad.

I really didn't feel there were any mistakes. And through the years my husband would say, don't you want to search and find her? And I would say, I don't want to interrupt her life. Maybe she doesn't know she's adopted. How can I intervene?

I, as an adoptive mom, would not have wanted any person knocking on my door saying, "Excuse me. I'm the real mother of your kids." I'd say, "Hey, honey, where were you the night that we stayed up all night here?" The night and this day because, parenting is years. So I left that piece committed to God.

And I really felt as if he had that in his hands, having relinquished for adoption as well as having adopted myself. And for any of you who are involved in adoption, you're adoptees, or maybe know someone who is. I brought a poem for you. You can just pick it up as you go out. It's out there at the table.

It's called "The Legacy of an Adopted Child." And I'll just read a verse for you. It says: "Once there were two women who never knew each other. One you don't remember. The other you call Mother. One gave you up. It was all that she could do. And the other prayed for a child. And God led her straight to you. And now you ask me through your tears that age-old question through the years; heredity or environment, which are you the product of? Neither, my dear child, just two different kinds of love."

I understood both those kinds of love, and I understood and believed in a God who has a system that never drops our addresses, their names, no other things we have committed unto him. Never imagining that in my future to come, two and a half years ago, I would pick up the phone and I would be talking to my missing piece person. This voice would say, "My name is Julie. I live in Michigan. You've never met me. But I'm your daughter. And I've been looking for you for three and a half years, and I finally found you." Beat me up, Scotty. This was just like, unreal. Come on. Is this truly happening? In the back of my head in that first conversation, I don't know how many times like a ticker tape running through with, "He is able to keep that which we are--able to keep that which we have committed." It was just--because here she was.

And she explained, I have two motivations for really searching for you, trying to find you. "One was," she said, "I think that you'd like to know that you're a grandmother." And I'm too young actually to be a grandmother.

But this beautiful child told me I was--I have two grandchildren. And she said that she had another motivation and that to me, was even sweeter, because that beautiful child, they're on the telephone, and our first conversation tried to do what she'd always wanted to do. And that was, she tried to lead me to Jesus Christ. It was so wild. I tell you, she started quoting the Scripture, and I knew she was coming in for the clothes. You know how you do. And I let her go for a while to see how good she was at it.

And she was pretty good. I gotta say that how sweet it was to be able to tell her. "Julie, I think that you're trying to lead me to Jesus. But you already did that 20 years ago." She would ask me many questions in that first conversation, for which I had no answers because of her search that had taken her through computers and through lawyers and Alma, the Adoptees Liberation Movement agency there had been gathered for her from computers, information that she had on papers. And she asked me, "Now, my birth father, was he 20 or 30 years older than you? I have two ages." And it totally took me by shock. I said, I don't remember. She said, "Did you ever meet any of his four children?"

I said, I don't think I did. And I changed the subject because if there was one thing I said in the back of my head, I said, Lee, you will never tell this child you're a mistake. You should have never happened, really. But you did by accident.

I changed the subject. I asked about her parents. I was concerned about how they felt about her searching for me. And they said, well, she said they were quite threatened at first, and then they realized that they have a place in my heart that nobody else can ever take. And they released to me the adoption papers and things that made it necessary and able for me to complete my search for you, she said, although I was really concerned about what we were going to find, I thought for sure we'd find some bag lady, some wino and pushing the basket type thing down Los Angeles.

And she said, it was a thrill to find that you're also a Christian and other things, which we shared in that first conversation, my husband decided, frankly, the only disagreement we did have over

it was that he told me, you have to tell her that you were raped. Otherwise, she'll think, well, she sleeps around, she got caught. But it didn't matter to me what she thought. I couldn't tell her that. So my husband very wisely, one night, before we were to meet face to face, got Julie's husband on the telephone and told him the situation.

And I can remember her sweet Christian husband, Bob, saying, "Wow, just to think that that actually happened more than 20 years ago, just to give me Julie." We knew we were dealing with something very special. Through the doors of a hotel room a couple months later, would walk a girl in our first meeting who looked remarkably like me except for the crow's feet and the cellulite and things like that. She was me 20 years ago.

I can remember her coming in the door with a baby, and she passed the baby to me, and she said, "Go to your grandma," and her husband is standing tall behind her, stuck out his hand, just like he had rehearsed it. And he said, "I would like to shake your hand and say thank you for not aborting Julie, because I don't know what my life would be like without Julie and my children."

And together we would later count and recount the uncountable ramifications of abortion as we three generations were together in that meeting. Julie told me, "My husband told me that you were raped, and that was really hard for me." She said, "For three days I was depressed. I couldn't put it together. It didn't seem to make any sense. So then I went to my pastor for counseling and we talked and prayed." She says, "Have you ever seen this in Psalm 139 back here?" She says, "God wanted me born."

Ezell. The Missing Piece

Hey, all my times, sitting in Dr. Mitchell's Bible class couldn't say better than that. That's right. And together we would celebrate her 21st birthday that weekend with one candle because it was her very first birthday, really in our lives.

And it would be her husband who would encourage me to go ahead and write the book, The Missing Piece. I had already written Cinderella Syndrome, and he said, "We've got to put this into a book to give hope to other people who have things they don't understand in their lives." And I can't resist, if you can turn the lights down, I'd love you to meet Julie. I'd love to show you this gal who is really an example that what you give away, you can never lose.

There you go. There's Julie. As we release the book, The Missing Piece together, we've really had a great time at the Christian Booksellers Convention, and this is Julie. On the left is her adoptive mom, Eileen Anderson, who lives with her in Michigan, and my husband and me there. I have the same dress on. Sorry.

And this is us, Mother's Day. Last year, Julie's adoptive mom came to Los Angeles, and she and I held a press conference at the Greater Los Angeles Press Club. Two mothers sharing one daughter on Mother's Day talking about missing pieces of life to a very cheerful bank of reporters. This is my grandkids, and this is Julie. Don't you think she's a beautiful example of the faithfulness of God? I do, for he is able to keep that which we let go of.

Thank you for the lights, as I would have opportunity to be with Julie's adoptive mom. And as we would compare notes, we would see, there was a divine correlation in our lives. As God

chose a Christian couple to raise my child brought her up in the Lord. I would discover that Julie's adoptive mom had married a widower named Harold with two children whom she adopted, and I would marry a widower named Harold with two children. I would adopt.

It was just a few coincidences like that that convinced us that God is the one who can make all things work together for good. Personally, I don't believe all things are good. I can't say praise the Lord for everything that I see happen unfairly in people's lives. But I'm glad we work with a God who's able to make them all work together for good.

Since the release of the book, we've had lots of exciting interviews. And two weeks ago, I finally got a videotape which is me giving this message at a church. And it's followed by interviews with Julie's adoptive mom and Julie. So it's something special to me. In our first secular television interview, it would be with Sally Jesse Raphael. She's a short little blonde gal with red glasses who has a syndicated sort of Donahue format show. And she seemed like such a nice Gal before the show.

And I can remember her opening the show. She looked into the lens of the camera and she said, "My guest today is not the product of love. She is the product of rape. How does that make you feel?" Made me feel like punching around.

Julie swallowed hard, and she said, "How many of us know that we are the product of love, even if our parents were married? And beside that, I personally believe that God wanted me born. So therefore I am the product of love."

That's my kid. I can remember being on ABC talk radio, Michael Jackson in his ABC radio talk show. And as I told him my story and we went through everything that had happened, he said, "Well, this is glorious. And you believe all of this was God, right? It was all God. In other words, God sent a man to rape you so you could have a baby. Is that right?"

I said "No, because, in accordance with what is in the Bible, I don't see that God causes evil, but God is the only one who can make good out of evil because we know a God who is even able to make the wrath of men to praise Him."

I don't believe there's anything that's happened to us in our lives that God can't take and make something beautiful out of when we let go and let God come into our lives. And I'm tickled to tell you at this point, there are a couple of producers in Hollywood who are talking about, and I need prayer for this, making our story of the missing piece into a two hour TV movie of the week. Why? What does it all mean? I think it means that if you love something, set it free. If it returns to you, it was yours. If it doesn't, it never was.

I saw a bumper sticker recently that said, "If you love something, set it free. If it doesn't return, Hunt it down and kill it." Well, that's the way we are, see? We have got our hands, our death grip on things that are ours that we possess. And no wonder God isn't working with them in our lives. I can remember in Brother Andrew's book reading how people in the jungles of Peru catch monkeys. Maybe you read this, too.

He said that they cut off the trees, these wooden gourds that grow up there, hollow them out, tie them down to the jungle floors. And then they go and take something that monkeys just love. And they take these treats, and they stick them deep down inside the gourds, hide behind the bushes and wait. And sure is shooting. Those little monkeys come down the trees, they reach in there, they grab that banana, and they can't get loose. They cannot get free. Whatever they do, all they have to do is let go. Right? No way, man. They got their hand on that thing. And the guys just go down, swoop them up, take them out, captive. And that's what's happening to us. Each of us has got our hands on something that we will not let go of. Maybe it is a relationship.

And you feel like such a prisoner. No wonder. Maybe it's a career. Maybe it's a ministry. Maybe it's the future. Maybe it's a missing piece for you that, for you holds anger and resentment. And you will not let go of that experience. Maybe it's a glass slipper experience for you. A dream, a hope.

I tell you, unless we take our death grip off these things and let go and give them over to God to decide, well, never be free. It's been my experience that many of the things that I have held on to so tightly and possessed when I let go of them, God gave them back to me in a brand-new way.

And the scriptures record that once God said to Moses, what is that in your hand? He said, oh, this is my staff, my rod. This is for protection. This is for men. This is important to me, God said. Throw it down. Throw it down, Moses, and let me take the snake out of it and give it back to you the right way.

And what was once recorded as the Rod of Moses was later recorded as the Rod of God. Because Moses let go. And I believe that dreams, real dreams that come true, are ones that we let go of and then we find again, in a new way, with God's fingerprints all over them.

If you let go of something, you can never lose it. And we cannot afford to possess something. Never try to own anything you can't afford to lose. We've got to let go. Let go of that victim idea. Don't think of yourself as a victim. Think of yourself. Try it as a trustee. I felt like such a victim, as a pregnant rape victim. But actually, I was a trustee. Don't say "Why, God? Why me? Why, God?" anymore. Say, "Do you mean, God, that you are trusting me with this? This is hard. Do you mean that you intend to walk through this with me and make something beautiful out of it? I'm ready to have you do that." He will if you let go.

Someone once said, we often dig the wells of joy with a spade of sorrow. And so, it was true for Jesus, who in the garden said, "If it's possible, let it pass from me, but nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." And he let go of that precious life.