

You Have to Do This One Thing Before You Step Into Your Next Blessing

A good friend of mine once reminded me that the spiritual life is made up almost entirely of paradoxes: You have to die in order to live, give in order to get, sow in order to reap. As we were talking, I realized that for several years the Lord has been helping me to understand these paradoxes and given me the grace to embrace them, graciously teaching me to die to myself, give generously and sow the kinds of crops He wants me to harvest.

But I also realized there is one paradox I haven't ever fully embraced—letting go in order to hold on. Jesus said, “Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it” (Luke 17:33). We have to be willing to give up in order to gain.

I have never been very good at this. As a child, I always clung to everything in my life that had any meaning to me—special dolls, stuffed animals, relationships. I kept every card and letter I ever received. I cried when I said good-bye to our old station wagon—though my parents were replacing it with a nicer car. I didn't want to part with it because of all the memories!

My response to moving, which my family did a number of times while I was growing up, was similar. How could I let go of old friends and familiar territory? They meant so much to me! But eventually the day would come to say good-bye, and happy or not, I had to bow to it.

On the other side of the move would be new friends, new—and sometimes better turf, and positive experiences. Old relationships, too, would be retained. But it was still hard

for me to let go of what I was accustomed to—what I knew to be good.

Peter had to overcome this difficulty when he walked on the water. Think about it: He had to give up his understanding of physical principles—that the human body is heavier than water and therefore bound to sink; his perception of reality—that the natural was more real than the supernatural; and his sense of security—that the boat was a more sure bet than Jesus. But when he let go of all he knew, a miracle occurred, and he stepped into a new dimension of experience.

Unfortunately, Peter embraced the concept of letting go only momentarily. When he realized how contrary his actions were to his old way of thinking, he reached back to the familiar and began to sink.

In other instances, Peter wasn't able to let go at all. When Jesus told Peter He had to be brought down in order to be raised up, for example, Peter rebuked Jesus (see Matt. 16:21-22). He couldn't let go of his own idea of how Jesus would bring about God's kingdom. Jesus reprimanded Peter in return. "You are not mindful of the things that are of God, but those that are of men" (Matt. 16:23).

That's a hard word: "You do not have in mind the things of God." I know I stand convicted. The "things of men"—my own understanding, fears, desires, concerns and dreams—are preventing me from letting go in a lot of areas of my life right now. God is challenging me to step into that new dimension of experience Peter had to let go and to hold on to nothing but Him. Will you join me in stepping out of the boat?

Prayer Power for the Week of Feb. 4, 2018

This week, ask the Lord what you need to release to Him this week. Continue to identify with and pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world as you pray for worldwide revival. Pray for more laborers for the harvest and

ask God what you can do to advance His kingdom. Remember our allies as you pray for our own country and its leaders. Specifically lift up our president and those working with him to ensure our protection and prosperity. Read Matthew 16:21-23, Luke 17:33, Galatians 6:2.