

## "Hold Tight!" August 28, 2005

Scripture: **Hebrews 10:23** (*The Message*)

*"Keep your eyes open, hold tight to your convictions, and give it all you've got, be resolute, and love without stopping."*

I'm sure many of you have heard the saying,

*"Life sometimes seems like an emotional roller coaster ride."*

Some of us love roller coasters and some of us hate them. Sometimes it makes us want to throw up and sometimes we scream in delight. Whether we like them or not, we are all on one. When it comes to this journey called life, we are all subject to life's ups and downs.

You see in life we experience those great times of being uplifted; and feeling like we are high on top of the world. And then, there are those times when we plunge down at a very rapid pace; and we find ourselves in the depths of life. We often wish we were the ones at the control switch, but usually it feels like the operator is a teen- age boy with a twisted sense of humor.

Frankly in today's world, our lives can easily slip out of control. Look at how busy we are? Many of our lives are on fast forward; we want to just through up our hands in desperation.

This is when we finally realize that some parts of our live are beyond our control. No matter what our coping mechanisms are, we can't fix it, can't stop it, and can't change it. The world around us becomes a war zone.

Here is what I mean. In his book "Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal and Delight in our Busy Lives," Wayne Muller writes about, "A successfully life can become a violent enterprise." Our lives become a war zone. Listen to these statements Muller writes: "We make:

War on our own bodies, by pushing them beyond their limits;

War on our children, because we cannot find enough time to be with them when they need our company;

War on our spirituality; because we are too preoccupied to listen to the quiet voice that seeks to nourish and refresh us;

War on our communities, because we are fearfully protecting what we have, and do not feel safe enough to be kind and generous to others;

War on the earth, because we cannot take the time to place our feet on the ground and allow it to feed us, to taste its blessing, and give thanks." (pg. 2)

I wonder can any of us resonate what Muller is saying here. Let's face it; life is filled

with ups and downs.

So how do we “Hold Tight” and live strong in today’s world?

In my role as a Pastor, I listen to a lot of life’s stories, full of ups and downs. I try to learn from some of the stories I hear. Some of you have shown me the secrets of a long and happy marriage; and how to grow old successfully.

Many have taught me how to meet the challenges that life brings. And because I hear and share in so many different stories, I think a lot. There are so many ups and downs from youth to adult age.

I remember how insecure I was growing up as a teenager. Maybe some you who are teenagers here today can relate. Do you recall entering a room and it felt like absolutely everyone was looking at you, judging your looks, your clothes or your hair? And any casual remark from the wrong person would bring tears.

Teen years are full of struggles; because that’s when we are trying to establish identity; we rebel against authority; we agonize about finding ourselves and discovering what we are meant to do in the world.

But it gets less intense, especially when we move into our 20s, 30s, and 40s. We then worry about being smart enough, attractive enough, or successful enough.

There are those who drive themselves to get ahead; work at impressing the boss; and we torment ourselves by buying bigger cars, houses, and other material things-- wondering how we measure up to our peers.

Well, “Does it get any easier once we get older? I tend to believe it does just a little. Not because our troubles decrease, but because we become less concerned with what other people think of us. And as we mature into middle age and beyond, life seems to smooth out, because the world’s opinion starts to matter less.

We know who we are now; we have achieved a measure of self-acceptance and peacefulness about ourselves; we no longer feel the need to impress everyone around us or be universally liked.

We have opened our eyes to the realities of life; and we now hold firm to our beliefs. The turbulence of our earlier years subsides, into something more comfortable and gratifying. It is at this time we hold tight; give life all we’ve got; and love without ceasing.

This is what our Bible passage is trying to say to us this morning. Paul is the writer; and he provides good instructions on how to hold tight and live strong. This is what he writes:

*“Keep your eyes open, hold tight to your convictions, and give it all you’ve got, be resolute and love without stopping.”*

When Paul says, “Keep your eyes open,” it means-- be on guard. Learn to balance the ups and downs; the highs and lows or the good and bad in our lives.

And don't forget to "Hold Tight!" This means, get a grip on things. When we are trying to juggle all the components in our lives, life gets messy, and then we slip and lose our balance.

Dr. Susan Johnson Cook in her book "Balancing Your Life" makes some very relevant points about this. She writes these words:

"Balancing the many components of your life and keeping each element rightly aligned is essential in order to be everything God created you to be.

In order to take your place on the stage of life and keep your place in the spotlight for the long term, you will need to be strong, healthy, and whole.

To live a wholesome life isn't easy. But there is one thing I learned a long time ago, set definite goals in life. And don't let your goals depend on people or circumstances outside of your control. The sooner we understand the limits of our control; life will begin to come more in balance. Let's take a look!

VIDEO: Mr. Holland's Opus

There is an exercise that I teach in Spirituality Groups that may help us better understand how to deal with "controlling our emotions." It suggests that we try making a list of at least five (5) important things that mean the world to us. Then ask yourselves this question:

"How would we feel about yourself if all five of these things were threatened at once?"

Could we still "hold tight," and live strong? Could we still give love and let love? The reality is, going through life's ups and downs isn't easy. But this is when God reveals our plan, our purpose, what we are to do in this world.

So don't avoid them, or get stuck; embrace them! This helps us to become the person God created us to be! So when life begins to feel like a roller coaster ride, stand still and know that God is God.

Discipline our minds and control our thoughts; don't be afraid, remember:

-Keep our eyes open.

-Give life all we've got

-Live strong and Hold Tight.

And then watch my God work! God will work it out! But you must "Hold Tight!"

Closing:

We have a choice to balance our lives every new day!

So as we leave here this morning, I certainly hope and pray that each and every one of us learn to live strong and "Hold Tight through life's ups and downs."

Have a good Sunday and go in peace. Amen.