

Giving Up Control • Week #1*Philippians 2:1-17***Open:**

- What is your experience with Lent?
- What questions or feelings arise in your heart and mind when you think of Lent?

Discuss:

- What causes you to clench your fists? What causes you to open your hands?
- What's the difference between your responses when you see someone with clenched fists versus open hands towards you? Why?

Read together Philippians 2:1-11 . . .

- What do you see as common things people cling to in control? (vs. 1-4)
- What does Jesus cling to control? Why?
- State in your own words Christ's attitude, as described by Paul.
- What did Jesus gain by giving up control?
- How hard is it for you to do the same? Why?

Something amazing happens when we surrender control. How have you experienced these realities in your own life?

- We regain the capacity to handle people and things with more grace.
- We release others to do what they might not have grown into doing if we were holding tight.
- We create space for God to move.
- We imitate Jesus who in heaven, and in so many life situations, and ultimately upon the cross, chose to unclench his hands and open them up for the advantage of others.

Referencing our Lenten devotional booklet, what is one thought or idea from Aaron Foster's piece that especially intrigued, provoked, disturbed, challenged, encouraged, warmed, helped, or surprised you?

- When do you struggle to surrender control to God? Why?
- How does holding onto control hinder your life with Christ and others?
- How does giving up control grow your life with Christ and others?

Practices for the Week:

For when you feel yourself taking control . . .

- Put out both of your hands. Picture that person or situation, sitting in those hands and squeeze tight. Clench your hands really tight.
- Now, say to God, "I give up. I surrender this person, that situation to you, God. I give up my right to have things go the way that seems advantageous to me. I give it up to You."
- Relax your grip now. Unclench your fingers. Open them up. What does that feel like?

Practice giving up control through the Service of Secrecy

This week anonymously perform an act of kindness for someone without trying to control the outcome or the response. Pray through who and how you should serve in this way. Perhaps someone you are at odds with due to your trying to control?

Meditate on giving up control by memorizing **Philippians 2:5-8**.

Readings that will help you give up control . . .

- *Celebration of Discipline*, by Richard Foster • Chapter 8 - *The Discipline of Submission*
- *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, by Dallas Willard • Read pages 172-174, the section entitled *Secrecy*, in chapter 9.