



### *Flo Harvey*

Greetings from the Sunflower State! I am Flo Harvey, member of Northridge Friends Church in Wichita, Kansas. My crazy, chaotic life revolves around my large family, my faith community, and my work as a floral designer with a bit of writing thrown in here and there to keep me somewhat sane. The Lord has challenged me these last few months on the subject of “holding on” and how that can be viewed as a positive or a negative, depending on the circumstances and motivation (or lack thereof). This week, I will be sharing a bit of what I have been learning about holding on and see where the Spirit leads.

Here is a recent picture of my family and me—Harveys, Harveys, everywhere!

*BIBLE READING: Matthew 6:19*

When I was in high school, I babysat a little girl who was quite a little scavenger. She always had a fistful of treasures: a piece of lint, wadded up string, a button, or maybe a Barbie shoe. If she was feeling generous, she would uncurl her chubby little fingers to allow a quick glimpse, but immediately close her fist tightly and off she would go. One day, her mom brought home a glittery pink tricycle as a surprise. The little girl was so excited! She hopped on the seat and reached out to the handlebars, but she just stopped. She couldn't grab the handlebars unless she let go of her prized "booty." She sat there for several minutes considering this serious dilemma. Finally, she climbed off the trike and went into the house. The choice was made. For that day, her worthless treasures had won.

Sounds crazy, doesn't it? But don't we do very similar things in our own lives? We cling so tightly to treasures we feel we can't live without, which leaves us unable to be open to new gifts, opportunities, and treasures God might have prepared for us. We choose to hold on to what we know: our comfort zones, safe decisions, sure investments, homes, jobs, and material things. But what if we uncurl our chubby little fingers, and with palms up, offer it all to our good Father, asking him what he wants us to keep or to let go? He just might have something better for us—like treasures beyond our wildest dreams, truly worth holding onto.

*SONG: I'd Rather Have Jesus*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Heavenly Father, we pray today for wisdom to know when the earthly treasures we cling to so tightly need to be released. We trust you have so much more in store for us to embrace and enjoy. Amen.*

—Flo Harvey

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*BIBLE READING: 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22*

She lied about me to a trusted friend and colleague, and my friend believed her. The hurt and the strain destroyed my work relationships and ended a close friendship with my boss. It compelled me to quit a job I loved. I was deeply hurt and extremely angry toward this offender, and I felt entitled to hold on to my hurt and anger for many years. Forgiveness was long in coming.

This is another situation where holding on to something can be damaging to us and to others. Clinging to hurts, unmet expectations, and disappointments—revisiting them over and over again—is never beneficial. It keeps us immobile, stuck in the mire of self-pity and woundedness, unable to step into mercy, forgiveness, and restoration. I now look back with much regret for the time I wasted and the effort expended to hold on to all that garbage. I pray often that I will learn to let go of offenses and forgive them quickly. Hurts and disappointments are never worth clinging to. Ever! May we instead hold on to God's grace and pour it out on others.

*SONG: Wonderful Grace of Jesus*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord Jesus, help us to wisely choose not to hold on to offenses against us. Show us the clear path to forgiveness and mercy, and guide us to the higher road. Amen.*

—Flo Harvey

*BIBLE READING: Mark 2:6-7*

I am one of those crazy people who *needs* to know the rules and regulations for anything in which I am involved. I have a greater sense of security and control when I am able to identify the rights and wrongs, so I can stay within those parameters. I can then avoid any costly consequences. Unfortunately, we, like the Pharisees, often hold on to rules and regulations, thinking them the greatest measure of a devout life. We can judge ourselves and others by this measuring stick of how we follow the rules, biblical and man-made. When we discover that the criteria aren't being met, we dismiss, judge, and even ban offenders from our personal or faith communities.

Don't get me wrong. Rules, regulations, and guidelines are very important. They keep us from harm in too many ways to count. But this holding on can be dangerous when it isn't balanced with love, mercy, and grace. Clinging to the law kept the stubborn Pharisees from embracing Jesus. Rules were more important to them than the relationship Jesus offered. If we, too, offer that same extravagant love to each other, people will be changed; hearts will desire to know and follow the important rules. Holding on to the law without love does not bring anyone to know Jesus.

*SONG: For All Your Blessings, Jesus*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Sweet Jesus, we need you so very much. Help us to choose to love and show mercy when sharing your commandments with others. Amen.*

—Flo Harvey

*BIBLE READING: Hebrews 3:13*

It is no surprise to those who know me, but I can be somewhat stubborn and set in my ways. Like most, I struggle with change and really like living in the safety of my comfort zone. I desperately avoid change, holding on to a semblance of control—no rocking the boat allowed!

As God has opened my eyes a bit, this holding on saddens me. It proclaims my lack of trust in God and my unbelief in his control over all things. When, in fear, I hold too tightly to my status quo, I leave myself closed to the possibilities, opportunities, and blessings that God might have for me and others. I have to be willing to live outside the box in which I have imprisoned myself. Instead of holding on to this control, I need to release my grip and give my fear, unbelief, and trust into the hands of the Almighty. This would allow him to move and work his will, and give me the chance to be still and know and trust him more. I could trust that he loves us and works all things for our benefit, even when all seems out of control and we don't understand. He holds the future secure in his very capable hands.

*SONG: I Surrender All*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Father God, please forgive us for thinking we are in control, and for not trusting that you are. Help us to trust you more and truly believe in your love and care for us. Amen.*

—Flo Harvey

*BIBLE READING: Philippians 2:15-16*

In the past couple of days, we've looked at instances where holding on can be harmful and keep us from God's best. Now we are going to talk about times when holding on is beneficial to our faith journey. Clinging to God's Word is one of the most beneficial activities we can do for ourselves and others in our lives. It speaks life into us. It changes hearts, imparts wisdom, connects us to the Holy Spirit within. Psalm 119 speaks of the many benefits of the Scriptures: they help to keep us pure, keep us from sin, lead us to trust, direct us, revive us, encourage us, educate us, save us. Wow!

Holding on to and delighting in God's Word has no negative effects. The positives are as numerous as the stars he placed in the sky. Instead of clinging to my stuff, causing harm, I am doing my best to dwell on and hold fast to the Scriptures. The Word of Life will always be a treasure of great value and something to which we can cling throughout our faith journey.

*SONG: Wonderful Words of Life*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: God in heaven, may we truly see the tremendous value and blessing in your Word. May we choose to read, study, and memorize it, and may it be poured out into our lives. Amen.*

—Flo Harvey

*BIBLE READING: Hebrews 6:19*

The world is a crazy place these days, and it seems to get worse day by day. The news is filled with violence, natural catastrophes, famine, war, disease. It can be overwhelming and depressing. I know people who refuse to watch news broadcasts because they become so overwrought by the news. It seems too much to bear. We know that no one is exempt from these troubles. The Harveys have seen our fair share of trials and tribulations. But no matter what the world throws at us, we do our best to hold tightly to our hope in Jesus, and to our faith in his Word that assures us, “In all things, God works for the good of those who love him” (Romans 8:28).

It hasn't always been easy. Many times we hold on by an unraveling thread, but we hold on. Our hope in God has literally been our saving grace. It kept us going, looking up, and reassured of better things to come. Unfortunately, many of our neighbors, friends, and family don't know Jesus. Therefore they don't have this hope to which we cling and nowhere to turn for help. We must be vigilant to hold out our hope, extending it to our community, because hope and love can be the change the world so desperately needs to overcome the chaos.

*SONG: In Christ Alone*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Father, we are thankful for the hope we have in you. May we be obedient to share our hope with a hurting and needy world. Amen.*

—Flo Harvey

*BIBLE READING: John 15:9*

I have been blessed to be the momma of eight precious children. I can say without a doubt, one of the best experiences in the world is holding your newborn baby in your arms. Nothing prepares you for the rush of emotion and all-consuming love that engulfs you. I could literally sit for hours on end, marveling at these tiny miracles, studying them in great detail.

Since coming to know Jesus as my Savior, I have felt much the same about holding on to him. The more I know him, the more I trust; the more I read his Word, and the more I try to live as he would have me live, I am overcome by his love for me. The more I marvel at him—his ways, his provision, and his mercy—the more my love for him grows. I could sit in his presence awestruck by every wonderful attribute for hours. They say that heaven will be a similar experience, only so much better! We will spend our days praising and loving our Creator, basking in the light of his love for us. If that be so, I pray that we indeed hold on to him with all our hearts, minds, souls, and strength. Holding on for eternal life!

*SONG: O, How I Love Jesus*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Jesus, how very much we love you! May we bask in your sweet presence, holding on to your nail-scarred hand. Let us journey toward our heavenly home together. Amen.*

—Flo Harvey