

Title: Letting God Be on Top: Surrendering to Christ and Stepping Into His Call

Sermon Summary: Drawing from Mark 6 and Matthew 10, this sermon explores the ongoing internal struggle between self-will and surrender to God. Using the metaphor of a hand-slapping game called "Slap Happy," the pastor illustrates how believers continually pull their hand out from under God's, seeking to remain in control rather than resting under His authority and protection. The sermon emphasizes that the Christian life was never designed to be lived in isolation or passivity. Just as Jesus sent the twelve disciples out with nothing but His authority and a simple message, He calls believers today to step beyond their comfort zones and act in faith. True victory over sin comes not through self-effort but through active partnership with Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and supported by community. The sermon challenges the congregation to identify what God has called them to do that they have ignored, avoided, or attempted in their own strength and failed, and to surrender that area fully to Him today.

Key Points:

- The Christian life involves a constant tug of war between self-will and submission to God, illustrated by the image of repeatedly pulling one's hand out from under God's and placing it on top
- Jesus never designed believers to live as solo Christians; community and accountability are essential to spiritual growth and overcoming sin
- God intentionally crosses the paths of believers with one another so they can see Him reflected in each other, as referenced in Acts 17:26
- Victory over sin does not come through white-knuckling or self-discipline alone but through surrender to Christ and partnership with His Spirit
- The disciples were sent out with no provisions, only authority, demonstrating that God equips those He calls and asks believers to trust Him beyond their natural capacity
- Jesus had more faith in His disciples than they likely had in themselves, and He similarly has expectations of modern believers that exceed what they think they can do

- Obedience to God's call often involves doing things that are impossible without Him, and experiencing those moments produces a unique joy and closeness with the Father
- Cheap excuses, shortcuts, and passive Christianity dishonor the grace that saved us and leave potential kingdom impact unrealized
- The pastor challenged the congregation to examine whether they have heard God's call and ignored it, and to take one concrete step of obedience today
- Serving Christ actively reduces the grip of sin, because engagement in kingdom work crowds out the pull of the flesh

Scripture Reference:

- Mark 6:6-13, in which Jesus sends the twelve disciples out two by two with authority over evil spirits and instructions to take nothing for the journey
- Matthew 10:1-10, which provides a more detailed account of the commissioning of the twelve, including the command to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and drive out demons
- Acts 17:26, which speaks to God intentionally ordering the times and places where people live so they might encounter Him through one another
- James 2, referenced in the context that even demons believe, and that true faith must result in following Christ
- 2 Peter 1, alluded to in the call to participate in the divine nature rather than returning to sin
- The book of Jude, referenced in a conversation about contending for the faith and the danger of treating grace as a license for immorality

Stories:

- The "Slap Happy" hand game the pastor played with his father as a child, used to illustrate the believer's tendency to keep pulling their hand out from under God's and placing it on top, representing the struggle for control in the Christian walk
- The memory of the pastor's father trusting him to drive the tractor and rake hay alone for the first time, which moved him deeply as a picture of God trusting and taking pride in His children when they step out in faith
- The pastor's high school shop teacher, Mr. Ted Williamson, who pulled him aside to warn him that cutting corners and outsmarting himself would limit

his potential, used as an example of God placing people in our lives to speak truth

- Miss Allison, an English teacher who granted the pastor a rare academic pass but challenged him not to take shortcuts, illustrating how God uses unexpected voices to shape us
- State trooper Ron Doherty, who stopped the pastor not to punish him but to tell him sincerely that he did not want to scrape him off the road, used as an example of authority figures whose care disarms rebellion
- The biblical account of the demoniac in the Gadarenes, the paralyzed man lowered through the roof, and the woman healed by touching Jesus's garment, referenced as events the disciples witnessed before being sent out, building their understanding of who Jesus was