

Things we are forced to let go of (by laws and rules and regulations):

- Smoking cigarettes in public places
- Fox hunting

Things we are forced to let go of (by things beyond our control):

- Holidays ruined by bad weather (BB camp)
- Appointments missed because buses don't come / traffic jams etc

Deeper things we are forced to let go of (by laws and rules and regulations):

- Our working lives
- Our responsibilities eg in running Brownies (upper age limit on leaders)

Deeper things we are forced to let go of (by things beyond our control):

- Relationships ended by the death of a partner
- When our children grow up and move away

Things we decide for ourselves to let go of:

- Smoking cigarettes
- Drinking alcohol etc

Deeper things we decide for ourselves to let go of:

- A destructive form of behaviour (anger, jealousy, being controlling)
- An addiction to a particular role - like Martha's addiction to her many tasks at home

Sooner or later, like the Prime Minister, we are all going to have to let go our principal life's work. And whatever we may subsequently do, giving that up is not easy, because our sense of self-worth is so bound up with it. In our society, we judge ourselves and others by the jobs we do, which is why, when we meet new people, we want to know what they do, not what they think.

I have no doubt that this focus on activity is a legacy of Christianity, particularly Protestantism with its emphasis on our daily work as a calling. But Christianity said something else as well: namely, that your real value and ultimate sense of worth do not depend on what you do, but on who you are. Feeling valued was about recognising yourself as destined for eternity, rather than being a good banker or brewer.

**Rev Dr Alan Billings
Thought for the Day, 14 May 2007**

Like Martha, Jesus asks us - in the middle of our daily lives - to take account of what we are holding onto and to decide what we should let go of.



1. Holding on causes tension and restricts freedom



2. Letting go does not mean losing or having to give something up



3. Letting go means allowing things to exist as if they were in the palm of your hand

1. Martha's:

- Tension (causing her to judge others)
 - Restricted freedom (making her expect that things are always going to be like this) ...
- Why might she be holding on like that? Maybe:
- because she took over the role when their mother died
 - because as a child she was told she wasn't clever
 - because she'd never married and was compensating for her 'loss'

If we are holding onto something which has affected us in the past, we carry on hurting ourselves.

Sometimes we convince ourselves that we need to hold on so we can keep learning from it. But if we *stay attached to it* then we continue to harm ourselves and those around us; we need to let it go

2. You can keep that thing as something to learn from, while letting go of *your attachment* to it, let go of it emotionally.

So Martha could continue to do the housework - but if she was less attached to it then she would stop being worried and distracted by it. And she would lose:

- her tendency to judge others
- her expectation that things are always going to be like this ...

3. People who let go feel like children making sandcastles: happy to spend lots of time working on something lovely; equally content when the tide comes in to wash that thing away.

People who let go know that they can't control what is happening in the world;

- they know what they want to happen;
- but they can accept that if it doesn't, there is some good reason for it even if they can't see what that might be;
- they feel that if they remain open they will find it;
- they're sure that if they let go of what they think it should be then they will find it is far better.

Jesus said, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.'