

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 6/3/2024
Unclenching Our Fists

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, June 4 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for peace in the Holy Land. Ask the HOLY SPIRIT to guide the leaders of Israel and Hamas to find grounds for ending hostilities. Pray for those who are caught in the middle of conflict that they might receive dignity and care.*

I like to do an activity with parents and new teens that pairs them off as parent and child. The parent is to clench their fists for two minutes while the child tries to get them to open their hand. They can only talk. They can't make any physical contact. At the end of two minutes, I ask the parents how their hands feel. They complain that their hands are aching and that it was very uncomfortable. I ask the teens how the activity was for them. They talk about how frustrating it was trying to get their parents to do what they wanted without success.

I then point out that holding on tightly to their child is what the parents have been doing for thirteen or so years. Making sure they're safe and guiding them as they grow. Now, however, the teens are starting to seek greater freedom from their parents. The teens, though, often think they should have a lot of freedom while the parents are used to granting little or none. We then talk about earning freedom and autonomy a bit at a time, achieving the trust of their parents by showing respect and responsibility when freedom is given. And that parents also need to begin to relax their hold on their children as they are becoming their own person.

The illustration of the clinched fist applies to other situations, too. In varying degrees, we all cling to the past and hold tightly to what has become familiar. We often don't like change and will resist it in whatever ways we can. We want things to stay the same and to keep doing what we always have.

But life is full of changes. Just as children grow and become more independent, other areas of life also see changes. Often these are inevitable. The more we resist, the more uncomfortable things become.

Yet change is not always bad. Many parents find value in a changed relationship with a child who has moved into adulthood. Other changes also bring new joys and blessings that might have been missed if the change hadn't been embraced.

If we find ourselves resisting a change, it can be valuable to ask why we're fighting it. It is important to think about what benefits might come from the change. Doing these things can help us slowly open our clenched fists and find joy and blessing in something new.

In CHRIST's love,
Pastor Jeffrey