

# Reflections on the River

## Week 29 - Letting Go

Scripture - Philippians 3:13–14

*Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

*“A released trout disappears in an instant, but the lesson it leaves behind can remain for a lifetime.”*

Every fly angler remembers a trout that seemed almost too beautiful to release. Sunlight shimmered across its flanks. Crimson spots glowed against golden sides. For a brief moment, the fish rested quietly in cold water cupped between careful hands before vanishing with one effortless sweep of its tail.

The moment lasts only seconds, yet it stays with us for years. Not because we possessed the trout, but because we witnessed something wild exactly as God created it. The joy came from participating in creation's story rather than interrupting it.

Catch-and-release is more than a fisheries practice. At its best, it is an act of stewardship. We acknowledge that the trout never truly belonged to us. It belonged to the river, to future generations, and ultimately to the Creator who designed every current and every living creature within it.

Followers of Christ face a similar invitation. We naturally cling to accomplishments, relationships, dreams, and even painful memories. We convince ourselves that security comes from holding tightly. Yet the gospel continually calls us to live with open hands.

The Apostle Paul understood this better than most. Looking back, he could have lived with pride over his accomplishments or shame over his failures. Instead he chose a different path. 'Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,' he fixed his eyes on Christ rather than on everything he could not change. His hope rested in God's future, not his past.

Autumn quietly illustrates this truth. Leaves loosen their grip without fear. The river carries them downstream toward places they cannot see. Nothing in creation desperately clings to a season that has ended. Everything trusts the rhythm established by its Maker.

There are seasons when God gently asks us to release something into His hands. It may be control over tomorrow, disappointment from yesterday, a cherished plan that has changed, or a burden we were never meant to carry. Surrender is rarely easy, but it always creates room for deeper trust.

When a trout slips back into clear water, it leaves no trace except expanding rings on the surface. Faithful surrender works much the same way. The immediate act may seem small, but the ripples spread farther than we can imagine. Peace replaces anxiety. Gratitude overcomes fear. Hope begins to grow where control once ruled.

The next time you cradle a trout before release, resist the urge to hurry. Watch it disappear into the current. Then ask yourself: What is God inviting me to place back into His hands today? The One who faithfully cares for every trout in the river is more than able to care for you.

### **Reflection**

- What are you holding so tightly that it has become difficult to trust God with it?
- How has surrender led to unexpected freedom in your walk with Christ?
- What would it look like to pursue Christ with open hands this week?

### **Naturalist's Note**

Proper catch-and-release practices—using barbless hooks, keeping fish in the water whenever possible, wetting your hands before handling them, and allowing trout to recover before release—help preserve healthy wild fisheries. Stewardship protects today's trout while giving future anglers the opportunity to experience the same gift.

### **Prayer**

Heavenly Father, thank You for every good gift You have placed in my life. Teach me to receive those gifts with gratitude and to release them with trust whenever You ask. Help

me fix my eyes on Christ rather than on the things I cannot control. May my life reflect the freedom that comes from surrendering everything into Your faithful hands. Amen.

### **On the Water This Week**

As you release your next trout, linger for a moment before making another cast. Watch the fish disappear into the current and thank God for one area of your life that you are ready to place completely into His care.