

Please do not reproduce or distribute without permission from the author

### **Just Some Puppet on a String**

Written by Randall Buursma

[buurra@calvin.edu](mailto:buurra@calvin.edu)

The following drama was used a part of our time of confession during the advent season.

Person 1 walks by another person 2 who has cords, strings, or cloths tied to the arms and legs, as if in marionette fashion. On a step ladder, behind person 2 who is tied up, is the puppeteer who has control over the devices that tie up the puppet.

1: Excuse me, but are you ok? You seem to be entangled in something. Do you need help getting out?

2: (Looking up at puppeteer, who nods and begins moving the arms as #2 responds.) Not at all. This is the way it is and there is nothing that I can do about it.

1: What do you mean that there is nothing you can do about it? Simply untangle yourself and you'll be free.

2: It's not that easy. These are wrapped around me as a sort of support system. They guide me in my actions. I need them. (All the while, the puppeteer is moving the arms, legs, head of #2 as if directing every action)

1: They guide you? I don't understand what you are saying.

2: I'm surprised you don't understand since everyone else has the same thing. I guess mine are a bit more noticeable.

1: Please explain what you mean.

2: Ok, let me think of an example. (Puppeteer begins humming "Santa Claus is Coming to Town", #2 looks up, nods, and then explains.) You better not pout, you better not cry, you better not pout and I'm telling you why-and do you want to know why?

1: Why?

2: Because on average, you will spend a fortune on your family, friends, and fellow workers during this Christmas season. You may not want to spend that much, you may even think buying presents takes away from the true spirit of Christmas, but you will spend the money because you are controlled by the "Ghost of Christmas buying" who through TV and newspaper ads and pressure from your kids will guide you to the products that you simply must purchase. There is nothing you can do about it. (Puppeteer continues to make motions.)

1: You do have a point. There is a fair amount of pressure to buy the right gifts for the right people at the right time, but that is a special holiday event that comes once a year. I have control over my life the rest of the time.

2: (Looking up at puppeteer who quickly responds with movement.) Oh, you do? Do you have a job help you pay for this gifts?

1: Why of course I do.

2: Tell me about the hours your job requires of you.

1: Well, we are often doing important projects that require important meetings that lead to an important process that usually takes a fair amount of time to complete.

2: Does it take away from important time that you would rather spend with your family?

1: Why of course I would rather spend more time with my family, but deadlines must be met and I simply do not have control that. (arm moves up, as if controlled by another puppeteer)

2: My point exactly.

1: What?

2: You don't have control over your life either. You merely hide your cloths better than others.

1: I'm not hiding anything. Listen, I can do whatever I want to do. And at this time, I am choosing to leave you. Good bye.

2: Where are you going?

1: I am visiting my sister in the hospital.

2: I'm sorry. Why is she there?

1: She is being treated for cancer.

2: Did she choose that?

1: Of course not. You don't choose sickness. You deal with it.

2: Yes, I agree. You don't have control over sickness. But I'm sure you can choose to make her well.

1: Listen, you know that can't make someone well simply by choosing that person to be well.

2: Why don't you just admit that you are as tied up as me? Your life is nothing more than a reaction to all the things you cannot control. (#1 phone rings)

1: (Answers phone-talking to other person) Hello, I can't, I'm on my way to the hospital. Can't you? Ok, fine, I'll go and stop on my way. (hangs up the phone) I'm sorry, but I've got to go. Something has come up and I must attend to it.

2: Something that you have no control over?

1: Yes, now if you will excuse me. (#1 begins to walk to away, stops, and looks back at #2, realizes what was just said and walks out).

(The "puppet" and the puppeteer begin to untie the Puppet and place the cloths on the communion table as the leader begins the time of confession. After all the cloths are removed and placed on the communion table, the ladder is placed off to the side.)

**Leader:** What do you do when you feel like you have no control over your life? For some people, they give up, feeling pushed and prodded by the forces around them. Some give fancy names such as peer pressure, economic downsizing, emotional stress, and physical limitation to the things that wrap around them, forcing them to take actions that destroy rather than bring hope.

*All: Lord, forgive us when we give up and act without reason or intent, reacting without trusting you for guidance.*

**Leader:** What do you do when you feel like you have no control over your life? Some people tie themselves to whatever will give them any sort of control over their life and their way in this world. They give fancy names such as the South Beach Diet, a 401K plan, a political party, or a Weapon of Mass Destruction hoping that by wrapping themselves in these possibilities, they will take actions that will save them.

*All: Lord, forgive us when we trust in things that cause us to act without careful reason or thought, reacting without trusting you for guidance.*

**Leader:** We forget that cloths that we cling to have replaced the cloths of faithful love that you, O Lord, have wrapped us in since our birth. May your image, created in each of us, strengthen and sustain us, and your love tie us back to you. Forgive us when we replace the life-giving, soul satisfying gifts from you with the life-taking, soul emptying trust we place in other people and other things. In the name of the one who came in all love, Amen.

Song: "O Come, O Come Immanuel"

**Leader:** Hear the good news from Isaiah, of the promise of one to come and the ties that bind us to him.

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Lord's Supper.