



Come Matter Here: The Control Paradox | August 26, 2020

Discussion Guide

The Scoop

Humans tend to like control, and yet there's a paradox to control when it comes to experiencing meaning in life.

Key Verses

Ecclesiastes 11:4-6

Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap. As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things. Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let your hands not be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well.

Discussion

Almost all of us can admit that we like control in one way or another. However, there is a paradox of control which we are mostly unaware of in our daily lives. Too much control for a guaranteed outcome leaves us unsatisfied in the accomplishment. Too little control leaves us feeling helpless and gives us cause to give up. Yet, there are many valuable life decisions and experiences that we miss out on because we don't have control over the outcome or we fear the outcome will be undesirable.

1. How does the desire for control show up in your life? Are there benefits? Consequences?
2. Have you ever missed out on something because of the lack of control of the outcome?

In Hannah Brencher's book "Come Matter Here," she details her life-long fear of pet fish. After talking through this fear with her (at the time) boyfriend, she was able to realize that it wasn't a fear of fish itself, but rather, the lack of control of the situation. Essentially, the fish is guaranteed to die sooner than later and there was no amount of perfect caring for that could change that fact. Interestingly enough, it's this same view on relationships, passions, goals, dreams, etc. that prevent us from experiencing deeper meaning in this life. Hannah concludes that the outcome is the wrong measurement for meaning. Essentially, the value is in caring for the fish, not its imminent death.

3. Have you ever failed at something or been hurt by something that limited your future desire to engage people, try again, etc.?
4. If it's true that the value comes from the process rather than the outcome, how might that change some of your past, current, and future experiences?

Ecclesiastes 11:4-6 is a good reminder of a few really important life realities packed into one short selection of verses. 1st, it reminds us that we cannot experience any good outcome without first taking action...we have to be in the game. This selection of verses also reminds us that we are not ultimately in control by acknowledging that we cannot fully understand God's ways. The conclusion of sowing your seed each day and staying active "in the game" regardless of the outcome we can't predict is the key to life's meaning. God has invited us to be active participants in this life. Meaning does not come from winning or losing as we have wrongfully concluded. Meaning comes from the one thing we can actually control...being on the field and playing the game.

5. What does getting in the game look like in your life right now? How can you sow during the day and remain active in the evening?
6. In what ways can you shift your "control" perspective to engagement, involvement, and action rather than controlling the outcome?

What's Next?

This week is more about "the journey" than any other. This week as you continue your faith journey, take an intentional step toward a relationship, a passion area, or something you have always wanted to do. Focus on the act as the thing you can control, and invite God to be a part of the experience regardless of outcome!

You can find a template of our 5-minute faith journal at faithinfive.com to further engage your goals and connect them with your faith.