

Further Reflection and Discussion Material

Idols of Our Day – Control

Introduction:

On Sunday we zoomed in on Proverbs 3:5-6 and reflected on the question:

‘Do you trust God enough to Surrender your control?’

The idol of control is what Tim Keller calls a ‘Root’ idol, one that can exhibit itself in any different ‘Branch’ idols. Our desire to master our own life can show itself in the way we seek after success or wealth, the way we parent our children, or the way we respond to those in authority over us. The idol of control sounds something like:

‘I am only happy when things occur according to my plans and desires’

‘Life will have meaning/worth if I can just get control of _____’

Reflections

1. There are many areas of our lives where we have control over our choices. What areas of your life do you perceive to be in control of? Where is that perception accurate and where might the feeling of control be an illusion?
2. Where can you see the idol of control in your own life? What are the ‘branches’ it attaches itself to?
3. Often the idol of control can be seen in our emotions. One key area is how we respond to areas of uncertainty in our lives. Perhaps there are areas in our life that cause us to worry, become angry or even seek to manipulate others. What causes these emotions in your life?

Read Proverbs 3:5-6

1. In verse 5 there are two clear options. Firstly, to trust in the Lord with all your heart, or secondly, to lean on your own understanding. We see Abraham lean on his own understanding in Genesis 16, and trust in the Lord in Genesis 22. Explore the stories of Abraham to see what led him to respond differently in these two situations. What causes you to lean on your own understanding or trust in the Lord with all your heart?
2. There are four verbs in these two verses:
 - “Trust” – Wholly and securely rely on God’s promises and provision
 - “Lean On” – Depend on, trust that God will support you and you will not fall
 - “Acknowledge” – Declare, know and consider him about yourself
 - “Direct/Make” – Allow him to make plain the path, to smooth the way

Which of these do you find easier/harder?

How do you go at allowing God to direct your path, rather than directing yourself? How might you continue to let God shape your path?

How do we grow in our trust of God and our ability to hand over control to him?

Grow in our knowledge of God

When we grow new friendships, we grow in trust by getting to know one another better. What do the following passages teach us about God, his role in the world and our ability to trust him?

- Genesis 1
- Isaiah 45:5-7
- Romans 8:28
- Hebrews 1:3
- Hebrews 13:8

Acknowledge our hurt before God

When we are hurt in relationships it can cause us to withdraw trust and to step away in self-protection. Sometimes we can perceive that God has hurt us, through answers to prayer we didn't understand, places we couldn't see him at work, or through broken relationships with other people. Sin causes us to be hurt, and if we are honest, to hurt others. This hurt can feed into our relationship with God and cause us not to trust him. It is important that we recognise when this happens and seek to respond by bringing our cares and concerns to Him. Explore some of the following passages to see what they can speak into the importance of acknowledging our hurt before God and allowing his healing work in our lives?

- Phil 4:6-7
- Matthew 6:24-35
- Psalm 10:14
- Isaiah 61:1-3 / Luke 4:18-19
- Psalm 30:11-12

Seek to participate with God in His work, rather than asking God to participate in ours.

If we are to give over control to God, it doesn't mean that we do nothing and simply wait on God to act in every area of our lives. We need to acknowledge that we only see in part (1 Cor 13:12), that God is wiser than we are (1 Cor 1:25) and that we do not always have our minds in line with God's (Is 55:8-9). Explore the three passages below to see how we can participate in what God is calling us into.

- Ephesians 2:8-10
- Romans 12:1-12
- James 1:22

How will YOU grow in YOUR trust of God and YOUR ability to hand over control to him?

Discuss with your group one thing God has been challenging you on through this sermon and reflection notes. Take time to share how you might respond differently this week and pray for one another.

Encourage members of the group to follow up the next time you meet to see how you are going following through on what God was challenging you about.