



How Do I Deal with Control, Surrender, and Doubt?

Genesis 16:1-6; Proverbs 3:5-8; John 20:26-28

3/10/19

MAIN POINT

In order for us to live light, we have to learn the difference between control and surrender and how to deal with times that our lives seem “out of control.”

INTRODUCTION

Opening Illustration: Bring a bottled water or cup of water and some paper towels. Have someone try to see if, when you pour out the water, they can hold it all in their hands. (Be prepared for the water to spill on the floor, so you may want to have some paper towels on the floor below).

More than likely they will not be able to hold it all. There will be drops to slip through the fingers and make a mess on the ground. What you have witnessed is a picture of how we like to control things in our lives.

How does the water represent our lives?

How does the mess on the floor represent control?

If you skip the opening illustration: **What are things in our lives that we like to hold on to and control? What are some things that our culture tells us to try and control? What are some things that seem out of control in our culture?**

Transition: The reality is that too often we like to control things in our lives just like holding water in our hands. Too often we make a mess of things and it leaves a mess around us. In today’s lesson we are going to see how we recognize that the less that we try to control things and the more that we surrender we are going to learn what it is to live light for the Lord!

UNDERSTANDING

Have a volunteer to read Genesis 16:1-6

“Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. ² And Sarai said to Abram, “Behold now, the

Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.” And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. ³So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife. ⁴And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. ⁵And Sarai said to Abram, “May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my servant to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me!” ⁶But Abram said to Sarai, “Behold, your servant is in your power; do to her as you please.” Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her.”

Sarai’s barrenness was deemed a tragedy in ancient culture, where it was a mark of success to have many children and a sad failure to have none. From Sarai’s perspective, the flower was fading, and time was running out. Anguished humiliation throbbed within her. Significantly, she knew that God had promised Abram that a son coming from his own body would be his heir (cf. 15:4), but it had not yet been explicitly revealed to her that she would be the mother. That would happen when her name would be changed to Sarah (cf. 17:15, 16). At present she was still Sarai, who only knew the former.

Some points to remember:

- **Sarai tried to control the will of God by seizing the initiative from God.**
- **The result of control over surrender was the first marital triangle in biblical history.**
- **What can be some practical “Hagars” that we put in our lives instead of surrendering to the Lord’s plan?**

From these other verses there are statements or questions of control and surrender:

Finish the following statement...at the heart of control is... (fear, sin, playing God, lack of faith, what “I” can do in my flesh)

What are areas in our lives where we are controlling? (Controlling our bodies...possessions...relationships (spouse)...circumstances...work...our worth...behavior of our kids)

What are selfish reasons for control? (We try to be God...we think that our way is best...we want to be fixers)

What are some things that illustrate control in our lives? (helicopter parenting...micromanaging...religious guilt...perfectionism...worrisome anxiety)

Transition: As we process the connection of control, we begin to learn there are certain things that we can control and those that are not and yet they are within God’s plan. As we move to the next session we begin to learn to trust and surrender to God at all times.

Have a volunteer to read Proverbs 3:5-8

***⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
⁶ in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.^[a]***

***⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear the Lord and shun evil.
⁸ This will bring health to your body
and nourishment to your bones.***

Solomon was a man gifted with wisdom (1 Kings 3:5,12). And in his wisdom, he understood God's wisdom was far greater still. James walked in the inner circle with Jesus, and he knew he still needed greater wisdom. When we don't understand and doubt God's ways, we must recognize our limitations and turn to Him. We need to check our attitudes. Pride will keep the blindfold of doubt firmly in place; humility before God will drop it to the floor.

What is the relationship of control and trust?

How do we build our faith through giving control and trusting God? What does that look like in our lives?

Finish the statement: we don't surrender until we...(realize we are not in control and that things are out of control...trust that His ways are better than my ways...it's brokenness and letting go...fall in love with who God is...believe in His Word)

What are some illustrations of surrender? (You know in daily life what absolute surrender is. You know that everything has to be given up to its special, definite object and service. I have a pen in my pocket, and that pen is absolutely surrendered to the one work of writing, and that pen must be absolutely surrendered to my hand if I am to write properly with it. If another holds it partly, I cannot write properly.- Andrew Murray)

Transition: Just as we learn how surrender and control is a part of how we view our relationship with the Lord and the promises that He has given. This view can lead to doubts in our faith and unless we deal with doubt properly, we can be led astray. Let's see in the next section how someone learned how to deal with doubt.

Sermon Notes

Have a volunteer read John 20:26-28.

²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and

said, “Peace be with you!”²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

²⁸ Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

²⁹ Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

We don't know for sure if Thomas actually touched Jesus' hands and side before his blindfold of doubt fell off and he worshiped Jesus (v. 28). But we do know that when Thomas saw the truth, he did not try to make excuses or save face; he simply worshiped his Lord. Clearly, Thomas was seeking truth and hoped his doubts were wrong; otherwise, he wouldn't have been with these disciples who had told him such a wildly unbelievable story about Jesus rising from the dead. He would have walked away. This is a lesson for us. We must not embrace the negativity of our doubt but continue to seek it out. One way we do that is by being around people who do not doubt; they can help us overcome ours.

If Thomas didn't believe the others about Jesus' resurrection (vv. 24-25), why do you think he was with them again eight days later?

How can being around other believers help you overcome your doubts? Have you ever experienced this in your own life?

How did Thomas respond to the resurrected Jesus? What are some different ways he could have responded, considering his doubt in the presence of the other disciples?

Examine Jesus' words in verse 27. What does this teach you about what you should do with your doubts?

Sermon Notes

APPLICATION

Spend some time evaluating where you control is focused; how can you tell if your trust is wholehearted? What have you learned from today's discussion that helps your trust is placed in Christ through these times?

Are there any doubts in your heart that you need to own up to? Why is this such an important first step?

How might spiritual disciplines like prayer, Bible study, worship, and serving help us take additional steps toward overcoming our doubts?

How can this group help each other deal honestly with our doubts?