



LETTING GO OF CONTROL

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Honestly I'm a little tired of talking about COVID-19.

But ironically, it often seems to be my conversation topic of choice. Between time spent keeping up with headlines, time spent cynically questioning those very headlines, and time spent talking to friends and family, it all feels like a repetitive whirlwind that always lands me in the same confusion I started out in.

Last week I found myself increasingly prone to focus on all the things I cannot control instead of focusing on the God who oversees everything. It's safe to say that COVID has stuck around longer than any of us were expecting, and, quite frankly, it is really messing with every plan and expectation any of us had for 2020. It's okay to mourn the loss of so many good things because of the virus, but if every thought centers around anger or fear, you might be seeking control as a crutch for true faith.

A friend sent me a timely quote which deeply convicted me. It said, "The opposite of faith isn't doubt, it's control." Ouch.

My deep disappointment at hearing that I most likely won't be able to return to my university led me to realize I'd placed my faith in a future that was never guaranteed -- or owed -- to me. After reflecting on the quote, I began setting aside each morning to open my planner and pray through the day, surrendering my schedule to God instead of relying on my control or discipline. It helped to orient my heart from a state of prideful independence to a reality of trust. If today's unimportant agenda relies completely on God's plans, how much more is my life completely in His care!

The verse I chose to memorize this week was John 7:38, where Jesus speaks about the Holy Spirit having power over our hearts and minds: "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" Our speech, actions, and thoughts reveal where we put our faith. Do our hearts cling more tightly to our lie-laced fears or to our trustworthy King?

In 1 Samuel 15, Saul receives a direct command from God to punish the Amalekites by utterly destroying them, thus enacting God's justice on earth for their evil deeds toward the Israelites. Bible scholars gave this chapter the sobering title "The Lord Rejects Saul as King." Do you know why God rejected Saul? It was because Saul trusted himself more than God. Saul must've thought, "Destroy everything?! Even the fat livestock?! Surely God could not mean that."

Sound familiar? ...Perhaps like the dialogue between Eve and the snake in the garden?

Saul defends himself against the accusations of Samuel by claiming that he saved the best livestock to sacrifice to God, but Samuel replied, "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice" (15:22).

The same lie that brought sin into the world originally still grips our heart today. This lie convinces us that autonomous control will bring more comfort than obedience to God. It cost Saul his throne, his sanity, and ultimately his life. And, even more so, it required Christ to shed His blood on the cross.

Feeling out of control can tempt us to subtly flee dependency on God. The devil would love for us to believe that total trust is uncomfortable. Yet when we know the perfect God we're placing our trust in, obedience is freeing, not constraining! Instead of focusing on our helplessness or coping by trying to control the situation, we must remember that God has a plan.

God knows what is good for you. He is more invested in your joy and love of Him than you could ever be! The path He has set towards freedom requires total obedience. It requires us to loosen our grip on the things we want to control and trust that His plan is better than anything we could ever imagine.



Lily is a junior journalism student at Biola University who is passionate about sharing stories that matter. When not reading, writing, or brunching with friends, you can find her anywhere near the ocean!