



In our final reading for this week we move into the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel which contains the prayer that Jesus offers in preparation for his arrest. The verses that we are reading today represent a portion of that prayer that Jesus offers on behalf of his first century disciples as well as all those who would eventually decide to become his followers. In these final moments, Jesus prayed for you.

These words remind us of our challenge to follow Christ in the midst of an "out of control" world. "The world has hated them, for they are not of the world," Jesus says. Instead of expecting the world to submit to God, Jesus asks for God to protect us from the world. How does this prayer and the hope that Jesus offers help us to engage and live in an "out of control" world?

GPS for Families

GrowPrayStudy.org/family

Research links the lack of self-control to addiction, bad health, debt, procrastination, eating disorders, and more. The lack of self-control breaks down walls of protection, prevents the spirit from working in you, and exposes you to things that can destroy your future.

But don't buy into the myth that you can't teach self-control because it's a part of how a child's personality is wired. Most experts agree that anyone can learn self-control. It's not easy...it has to be intentionally and continually developed. But just like you would use your skill to build a wall back in places that are broken, you can build more self-control into your home. You can help your kids learn self control by:

- Implementing a consistent structure and schedule
- Pursuing moderation in eating, playing video games, TV, and computer usage
- Establishing a system for homework and chores
- Instilling financial habits of giving and saving
- Practicing delayed gratification when it comes to purchasing or acquiring items for your kids, and teaching them to actually "shop" instead of buy

It's like mental gymnastics; practice helps. Ultimately though, a strong role model is key. Maybe you need to sit down as a family to develop new patterns for all of you. If you do not practice the habits above, you will have a tough time enforcing them with your kids. Then pray specifically for the fruit of the spirit to become evident in your life.

MESSAGE "Losing Control and Security"

SCRIPTURE Psalm 23

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"I know the one in whom I've placed my trust. I'm convinced that God is powerful enough to protect what He has placed in my trust until that day."
(from 2 Timothy 1:12)

The issue is a fear that breeds insecurity. An insecure person will live in fear, doing anything to end the fear, to find a place where they are secure and safe. Sometimes this insecurity is reasonable, many times it is not.

- Fear of losing what we have
- Fear of uncertainty
- Fear of our mortality
- Control can seem to be the answer

The Questions:

1. Can we trust ourselves?
2. Are there people in our lives we can trust?
3. Can God be trusted?

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me."
(John 14:1)

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardship as a pathway to peace; taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it; trusting that You will make all things right if I surrender to Your will; so that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with You forever in the next. Amen.

This week we will focus on the last words Jesus shared with his disciples on the night of his betrayal. The men who gathered with Jesus for that final meal had no understanding of what the next hours would bring or the chaos, confusion and fear that would mark the next few days. Their life was about to spin “out of control.” With words of affirmation and hope, Jesus sought to give them comfort and direction for the difficult days ahead.

Jesus begins the passover feast by showing his disciples, “the full extent of his love.” How does Jesus do this? How is this act of service an “exhibition” of Jesus’ love for his disciples?

Spend some time today thinking about your relationships and consider this question. In my relationships, am I more motivated by a willingness to serve or a desire to control?

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Last week in our reflection from Paul’s words in Romans 8, we made this observation, “There is a limited amount of space in our hearts. The amount that is inhabited by fear limits the amount that can be occupied by love. Our need for control is a by-product of that fear.” In today’s reading, Jesus addresses that which love brings to fruition in our lives. While fear produces a need for control, love cultivates trust.

In verses 2-4, Jesus provides a concrete example of something we can trust Jesus to do. What is it? What significance and meaning should this have for us? How does the act Jesus refers to in these verses an expression of God’s love?

How does Jesus respond when Thomas asks Jesus to clarify “the way” the disciples must go to get to “the place where [Jesus] is going?”

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The chaos, confusion and fear that the disciples would face in the days ahead would be elevated by the absence of Jesus. The one who they had given their lives to following would soon be gone, but the promise Jesus offers in these words is significant. The absence of Jesus would lead to the presence of God’s spirit. Their isolation would be temporary. The “Counselor” would come.

After sharing the promise of the spirit being sent to the disciples by the Father, Jesus reminds the disciples of the gift he would leave behind with them. What connection do you see between God’s spirit working in your life and Jesus’ words, “Peace, I leave with you.”

We often turn to control when our circumstances or relationships seem “unsettled.” What part does peace play in helping us surrender control? How does the spirit bring peace in your life?

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We have already highlighted several portions, but if you have the time this week, read through the entirety of John chapters 13 – 17. Jesus goes to great length to offer words of instruction, hope and affirmation for his disciples. In these verses, we find the disciples finally “getting it” and yet Jesus seems aware of the fact that “a time is coming” when they will regress in their understanding and belief in him.

The life of faith is filled with ups and downs. For every moment we experience a breakthrough it seems we can also point to another moment where we stumbled. We release control. We take it back. Yet, we never give up. Jesus has overcome. He can do the same in us as well.

Is there a person, a situation, or circumstance that you need to again release your desire to control?

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