



SESSION 5: LET GO OF CONTROL

What's the Big Idea?

Living well is about learning to let go of control over our lives. God demands everything we hold onto because only then will we have open hands to fully receive the peace, love and joy that God gives, and that we so desperately desire



Rewind: What's Your Story?

Would you rather be in control of everything in your life or just let things happen and see how they turn out?

Think of some of the things that are really important to you right now – making a sports team, getting good marks, having a good time with friends. Which of those would be the hardest to give up if you had to?

Who's the most controlling person you know – a friend, parent, teacher, you?

From The Wordspace



Get the conversation started ...

Get everyone to check out the WordSpace posts from this week on their phones or from a printout (you'll find them on the website.)

- Is there a post that stands out for you? Why so?
- Is there something in a post that raises a question for you? What is that?
- If you had to choose one post to share with a friend, which one would it be?

REFRESH

What's God's Story?

One of the more crazy but awesome things I've done in my life is to learn how to fly a fixed-wing glider. Going flying without an engine is way harder – and more fun – than it might seem. To learn how to fly you've got to start in a two-seater glider with an instructor behind you who will let you fly as much as you can without crashing the aircraft. The controls are linked together so that either person can fly the plane. One REALLY important thing is for both pilots to know exactly WHO is flying – especially when you have different ideas about what to do when the ground is rushing up at you.

So there's a system where the person who takes over the stick says: 'I have control' and then the other person says: 'you have control' Just so there's no confusion. It's worked ok so far – no crashes yet ...

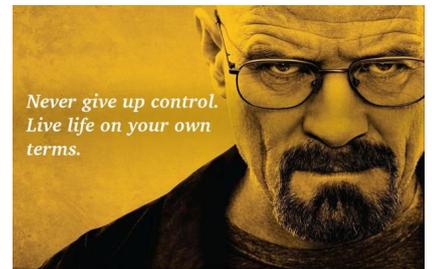
If you've been following this whole Enter Life series, you might remember that the way we described what went wrong in the garden of Eden at the very beginning was something like this:

God made us to be lords (small 'l') over creation. But we wanted to be LORDS. The universal human flaw is that we naturally do not want anyone or anything having ultimate authority over us. So when God said to his human creatures: 'you be 'lords' over what I've created, just let me be Lord over you', we said 'no ways God' we want to do this ourselves. The consequence of that massive breakup has been the loss of relationship between ourselves, God, and others. That allowed sin and evil to run rampant through the world that was created to be very good. It's taken thousands of years to repair the damage.

It's probably not really surprising then that one of the main things Jesus invites us to do, goes against some of our deepest instincts:

Let go control over your life ...

I'm not sure if it gets more scary than that. Here's how Jesus said it in Mark 8v34-38:



Calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, "Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead. You're not in the driver's seat; I am. Don't run from suffering; embrace it. Follow me and I'll show you how. Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to saving yourself, your true self. What good would it do to get everything you want and lose you, the real you? What could you ever trade your soul for?" (The Message)

People seldom give up control without a fight. There have been some epic battles in the Bible – not to mention the rest of world history (how different would our world be if control wasn't such a big thing for people?)

One of the most epic stories is when Jacob in the Old Testament – the guy who cheated and scammed his way through life – finally meets someone he can't overcome or control. The story is in [Genesis 32: 22-31](#).

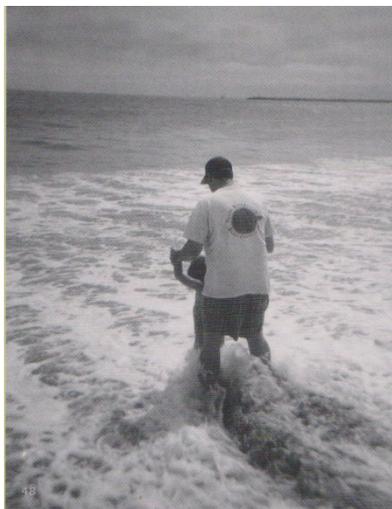
Jacob is about to cross the river Jabbok on his way home when a stranger attacks him out of nowhere and they fall to the ground in a wrestling match that goes on all night. It's an even contest and the stranger eventually has to ask Jacob to let him go. Then, everything changes. The mysterious opponent reaches out and just touches Jacob's hip – dislocating it immediately. Suddenly Jacob is helpless (and probably in a lot of pain). Why did the angel (that's what he probably was) not just beat Jacob earlier? A guy called Frederick Buechner thinks he knows why:

'The sense we have, which Jacob must have had, that the whole battle was, from the beginning, fated to end this way, that the stranger has simply held back until now, letting Jacob exert all his strength and almost win so that when he was defeated, he would know that he was truly defeated ... Jacob will not release his grip, only now it is a grip not of violence but of need, like the grip of a drowning man.'

Buechner goes on to say this:

'Power, success, happiness, as the world knows them, are his who will fight for them hard enough; but peace, love, joy, are only from God. And God is the enemy whom Jacob fought there by the river, of course, and whom in one way or another we all of us fight – God, the beloved enemy. Our enemy because, before giving us everything, he demands of us everything; before giving us life, he demands our lives – ourselves, our wills, our treasure.'

That's deep and awesome stuff. Read it again a few times if you need to! God – our beloved enemy, demands everything we grasp onto because only then will we have open hands to fully receive the peace, love and joy that God gives, and that we so desperately desire.



Jesus knew exactly what he was saying when he issued his most challenging invitation. Let go of your life, your will, the things that are most important to you. It's only when you do this that you'll be able to receive the things I've got for you: peace, love, joy – Zoe life in all its awesomeness. You can keep on fighting to control things – you may even succeed in this life; but you won't ever know the deep peace and satisfaction of the things you long for most.

Will you give up control?

What does it mean to do that – to 'deny yourself' to 'lose your life' in the hopes of saving it? Especially when you're a teenager trying to figure out who you are anyway ...

I think in many ways it comes down to this: **Take seriously what Jesus and the other Bible writers say about how to live life.**

You want that in a nutshell? Try this: Read Colossians 3 and 4 and do the stuff Paul says we should.

Here are a few other practical things to start with:

Practice worshipping God:

*I'm asking God for one thing, only one thing:
To live with him in his house my whole life long.
I'll contemplate his beauty; I'll study at his feet.*
Psalm 27:4 The Message

Paul says an amazing thing in [2 Corinthians 3:17-18](#): when we worship God and put God at the center of our lives, then we begin to be changed into more God-like people.

Practice saying thanks:

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

There's nothing better for getting our posture right before God than saying thanks. Being grateful requires us to admit that we can't provide everything we need. When we say thanks we are also saying 'I'm not in control of this – and I'm glad about that'.

Practice saying sorry:

'Sorry' is another great way of learning to not be in control. Sorry says I was wrong, I don't know everything, I get things wrong. In the Bible, saying sorry is more than just words. Sorry means a whole change of mind and a change in the way you live. One of the hardest things for control-freaks to say is 'sorry'.

Practice asking God for stuff:

Just like saying thank-you, and sorry, saying please also puts us in a good position before God. Please makes us realise we can't provide everything for ourselves. Please is a dependence word. And that's good is it's God – our Father in heaven – that we're asking.

Practice saying 'not what I want, but what you want'.

Jesus had to learn how to say that and he manages to get those words out in the garden of Gethsemane when everything in him just wanted to avoid the agony of the whips, the cross and the weight of all our sin. This is a hard one to get right but becomes easier the more we realise God's will is actually way better and more pleasing to us than ours.

Just do these things!

The headings for these 5 things say 'Practice' for a reason. Richard Rohr once said that we don't think ourselves into new ways of acting, we act ourselves into new ways of thinking. If giving up control of your life is difficult to imagine, then start by just doing a few of these things – even if you don't feel like it. Chances are your mind will change once you experience the peace, love and joy that living this way brings.


Replay: Your Story and God's Story
Some questions to help you replay your story ...

- How do you feel about what you encountered in this session – encouraged, discouraged, hopeful, disappointed, anything different?
- Did anything seem like particularly good news? Anything that was not so great news for you, or hard to understand?
- Imagine you were able to receive with open hands the peace, love and joy that God gives to those who let him have control. How might your life be different?

Redraw Your Picture of Jesus

The writer of 1 Peter said this about Jesus when he was about to be crucified:

'When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.' 1 Peter 2v23

The temptation to take control of an ugly situation must have been intense. Yet Jesus allowed his Father to be in control. Does seeing Jesus in action like that change or challenge the way you picture what Jesus is like?


Remix: Your Story re-imagined

What practical action, response, or new way of thinking do you want to take into the week?

**Re-pent ...**

Have you encountered something about the idea of letting go of control that makes you want to say to God:

'wow, I really need to let go of a few things in my life. Help me trust you more so I can receive the good things you have for me'

Jesus invites us to repent often and with freedom. It's a real gift from God – go for it!

Some questions to help you remix your story ...

- You don't have to get everything right at once. Choose one of the five practical suggestions in the post (worship, saying thanks, sorry, etc) that stuck out to you, and start doing that this week. See what difference that makes.
- If life with God excites you, but giving up control seems scary, find some small stuff in your week that you can start trusting God with - give God a chance to show you that he's trustworthy, and build your relationship from there.