

Roadblocks: Control

Philippians 4:4-7

Maybe we avoid experiencing God not because we are worried that the encounter won't leave us transformed but because we are worried it will.

We love to feel like we are in control of our lives. When faced with fear, stress and anxiety, our default isn't to hope, long or pray; it's to come up with strategies to get control back. It's an understandable response, but it comes with a couple downsides.

Firstly, it rarely works – as much as we want to think that we can, we can't really control our environments or even ourselves. Our plans to wrest back control more often than not backfire, leaving us more stressed and anxious than we were in the beginning.

Secondly, and more importantly, it becomes a barrier between us and God. God is powerful and uncontrollable. If we come before him uninhibited, who knows what he might do in our hearts – our lives could end up looking very different. If we want to be in control of everything, we'll play it safe and keep God out.

We don't have to grasp for control when we feel worried – there is another option: trust. In times of worry and pain, our first port of call can be self-examination, repentance of our delusions of grandeur and control and a declaration to God that we trust him to be with us and provide what we need. Then we will begin to know his peace and be free and open to encounter him.

Questions for group discussion

1. What stood out to you in the message?
2. How can you respond?

Personal questions

1. Where in my life am I responding to fear or stress by trying to control my environment or others?
2. Has this become an idol in my heart?
3. What would it look like to trust God instead?