

FEELING IN CONTROL -- REALITY OR ILLUSION?

By Robert J. Tamasy

You show up for work on schedule, your mind already thinking through your plans for the day: meetings, deadlines, specific tasks, or projects you want to work on or finally complete. You feel totally in control. Until you realize you aren't.

One of the certainties of life and work is how uncertain things can be. It was Scottish poet Robert Burns who observed, "The best-laid plans of mice and men often go astray." Stated a different way, the so-called "Murphy's Law" advises that if it is possible for something to go wrong, it will go wrong. Just when we start thinking we are in control, circumstances may conspire to prove that we're not.

I have experienced this hard lesson numerous times as a journalist. There was the time early in my career when I was working on a daily newspaper and thought I had the frontpage layout completed. Then I received an alert that a tragic school bus accident had just occurred. The deadline for sending the paper going to press was nearing, but I knew I couldn't ignore this breaking news story. Suddenly things felt out of control. Thankfully, about that time the more-experienced managing editor came to my rescue.

Several times while I was a magazine editor, articles we planned to use did not materialize and we had to quickly shift to plan B. Instances like that dispelled any notion that I was "in control." Before I became a follower in Jesus Christ and discovered the power of prayer, my first impulse would be to panic. Even later in my career, feeling out of control was always unsettling.

Giving my life to Christ proved transformational in many ways. One of them was learning how to handle the inevitable out-of-control moments. In fact, one of the first Bible verses I memorized addressed this directly. Proverbs 3:5-6, which I came to regard as my "life verse," gives this admonition: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths."

I sometimes struggle to navigate my way around unfamiliar places. The Global Positioning System (GPS) on my smartphone has been an invaluable tool. But life and work do not provide maps or GPS to show the best direction. This is why trusting in God's guidance, even when I cannot understand what He is doing or where He is taking me, has become so vital. Here are a few of the principles I have learned:

Recognizing reliance on God. Putting God first in our plans and actions and trusting Him is crucial for not losing our way. "Trust in the Lord and do good.... Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.... Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him" (Psalm 37:3-7).

Relying in God's course corrections. When traveling it is important to know when to take an exist and when to remain on the main road. The same is true as we negotiate the course of our

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lives, even in the workplace. “In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps” (Proverbs 16:9).

Remembering God holds the future. Our plans often fail because we do not know what lies ahead. In faith it can help knowing that God is in control. ““For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”” (Jeremiah 29:11-14).

© 2024. Robert J. Tamasy has written *Marketplace Ambassadors: CBMC's Continuing Legacy of Evangelism and Discipleship*; *Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today's Workplace*; *Pursuing Life With a Shepherd's Heart*, coauthored with Ken Johnson; and *The Heart of Mentoring*, coauthored with David A. Stoddard.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Some people are described as “control freaks,” wanting to feel they are in control of even the smallest details. How would you describe yourself in terms of having a need to feel in control?
2. Think of a situation or two when things seemed to be going smoothly and you felt in control, when suddenly you discovered they were not. How did you respond?
3. Can you think of any benefits – any positive aspects – to realizing that no matter how hard you try, some things in life just cannot be controlled? Explain your answer.
4. How can faith and confidence in God help in coping with times that seem to be spinning out of control? Does that simply mean shrugging our shoulders and resigning ourselves to whatever happens, or does it mean more than that?

Challenge For This Week

During the coming week take some time to consider how important feelings of being “in control” affect how you approach your work. If you find yourself feeling anxious or worrying more than you know you should, devote some time in prayer asking God for wisdom and strength in trusting Him more – and depending less on the circumstances you are facing. Find a friend – possibly someone in your CBMC group, if you are part of one – to hold you accountable to this.

NOTE:

For more about what the Bible says, consider the following passages:
Proverbs 19:21, 20:24, 21:1,30-31, 27:1; Matthew 6:25-34; Philippians 4:6-7

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