ONE THING IS FOR CERTAIN

Part 2: Consider the Source

It's hard to resist the human drive towards certainty; most of us naturally gravitate towards guarantees of stability. The problem is that this attraction towards certainty and control erodes our capacity for the wonder we feel at experiences that confound our attempts to control the world. The fact is, Christian faith is typically not killed by doubt. Instead, a worship of certainty is more likely to erode our faith by creating an idol out of an unattainable condition— because uncertainty is unavoidable, pain cannot be prevented, and there's no fixing every situation in a broken world. And yet rather than offering a fix, Jesus emphasizes the opportunities for trust, growth, and discovery that exist only in the midst uncertainty.

Start Talking

1. Have you ever found the process of trusting someone else to be excruciating? When? Why was it so hard?
2. Can you remember the first time somebody let you down? What happened? How did you deal with it?

Looking Back

1. What did you do to maintain trust (in God, in the goodness of existence, in the people around you) when you were hurting this week? How did you do when it came time to redirect your typical responses to pain (anger, resentment, resignation, etc) as an exercise in intentional trust?
2. What did it look like for certainty and uncertainty to co-exist in your life this week?
3. What "certainties" did you need to let go of? What "fullness" were you missing out on by holding too tightly to your own ideas and definitions?
4. Where do you see the addiction to "certainty" functioning as an idol in our culture? Where has this creeped into your own life? What did it look like for you to turn away from that idol this past week?

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What About You?

1. Do you feel like everything would be okay if you could just have _____? What are you filling the blank with?
2. Do you feel a sense of desperation that you think would go away if only you were acknowledged or loved by _____ ?
3. Do you feel anxiety or fear around the possibility of losing _____ ?
4. How do you think our understanding of the Bible changes when we forget that it is largely filled with the stories of small, oppressed people, and instead begin to read it as what Stuart called, "establishment literature to justify the status quo of people in power?"
5. Why is it more important for our faith to focus on *who* we believe *in*, rather than *what* we believe *about*?

Look It Up

Read the following passage before answering the questions below: Luke 5:17 – 27. Proverbs 3:5.

1. What did first century Jewish theology have to say about sickness, illness, or tragedy? Why did it happen to specific people?
2. How would you compare the belief of the paralyzed man's friends with the belief of the Pharisees? Who or what does each faction seem to believe in?
3. Why is it significant that the paralyzed man's friends were willing to touch him, interact with him, and carry him to Jesus? What does it reveal about their faith? Their hearts?
4. Why do you think people typically don't approach Pharisees– those who have intellectual certainty on matters of faith– during times of desperation?
5. What is significant about Jesus's decision to say to the paralyzed man, "your sins are forgiven?" How do the people around at the time respond?

Putting It All Together

1. What does the worship of certainty look like in your life right now?
2. Who or what are you "opposing" simply because it presents a challenge to your sense of certainty?
3. What are you currently more desperate for than Jesus? Who or what are you currently *desiring* more than the approval and reassurance of Jesus?
4. What would it look like for you to lay down the idols of certainty and security this week? What are three tangible forms this might take? Where can you "tear down the high places?"
5. What can you do this week to remind yourself on a daily basis that the spirit of God resides within you, and is more than sufficient to get you through the uncertainties of life?

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