

ONE THING IS FOR CERTAIN

Control, Clarity, Security, & Certainty

It's hard to resist the human drive towards certainty; we naturally gravitate towards guarantees of stability. The problem is that this natural attraction towards certainty and control erodes our capacity for discovery, for the wonder we feel at experiences and encounters that confound our expectations and our attempts to control the world. The fact is, Christian faith is typically not killed by doubt. Instead, misplaced certainty is more likely to erode our faith and rob us of opportunities for growth and discovery. 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 acceptance and discovery that only exist in the midst uncertainty.

Start Talking

1. Do you enjoy the sensation of completely losing control right before a roller coaster descends into the first big drop, or do you find the lack of autonomy excruciating? Explain.
2. Growing up, were you more likely to try and sneak a peek at your Christmas presents, or wait it out to enjoy the surprise of the unknown?

Looking Back

1. In what parts of your life did you give up on claiming what you were owed this past week?
2. When did you find it easier to "win," than, "love," in recent days? What steps did you take to rectify any damage this caused?
3. What opportunities did you take to practice Jesus's command of sacrificial love? What opportunities did you miss?
4. Last Sunday we brainstormed ways followers of Jesus might make our church community famous for service and sacrifice in this area. What did you come up with? What first steps have you taken to making your ideas a reality?



What About You?

1. Can you think of any times in your life when your desire for control snuffed out the potential for discovery or wonder?
2. How do you conceive of the general trajectory of your life? What metaphors or images come to mind? (For some people, it's a mountain, a timeline, or a linear journey from point A to B. For others, it's a maze, a cycle etc... What about you?)
3. Do you find the idea that, "life isn't found by avoiding chaos, but rather by navigating the chaos, itself with acceptance and wonder" liberating or discouraging? Why do you think you feel the way that you do?
4. Have you ever experienced "fullness" during seasons of uncertainty or suffering?
5. When have you managed to completely control your life, relationships, and circumstances?
6. Everybody reacts to the stress of "not knowing" differently. Do you find yourself more tempted to avoid the pain of uncertainty by apathetically withdrawing yourself from risky situations, or by abusively and judgmentally asserting yourself in any areas where you are certain to compensate?

Look It Up

Read the following passage before answering the questions below: *John 9: 10: 1 – 18. Psalm 40:4.*

1. What do you think, "life to the full," actually looks like in a world defined by chaotic conditions?
2. What is the Pharisees' primary problem, in your opinion? What keeps them from accurately understanding what has happened with Jesus?
3. Why was Jesus's healing action threatening to the religious authorities of his time? How does Jesus describe the dynamic, here?
4. Stuart argued that Jesus framed times of uncertainty and suffering as inevitable, instructive experiences that actually move us towards lives of "fullness" rather than away from them. How does this make you feel?
5. Where do we see mere "certainty" actually functioning as an *enemy* of real faith in this passage?

Putting It All Together

1. What can you do to maintain trust (in God, in the goodness of existence, in the people around you) when you're hurting this week? How can you redirect your typical responses to pain as an exercise in intentional trust?
2. Why do you think "trust" is such a scary prospect for so many of us? In what way does "trust" entail a lack of personal control?
3. What might it look like for certainty and uncertainty to co-exist in your life this week?



4. What “certainties” do you need to let go of? Where would it be healthy for you to embrace the “unknowns” in your life this week? What “fullness” are you missing out on by holding too tightly to your own ideas and definitions right now?
5. Where do you see the addiction to “certainty” functioning as an idol in our culture? Where has this crept into your own life? What might it look like to turn away from that idol this week in two or three tangible ways?

