

Calvary Assembly Life Group: “Control to Trust”

Week of Oct 20-26

Focus

The primary goal of the evening is to move from areas in our lives we try to **control** and move towards **trust** in God. We’ll start with questions to ensure your group makes the connection between the passage and the topic of “Control”. Then we’ll move into more application questions on the topic of control.

Video

Show the video that was prepared for this lesson. It is less than four minutes and will help to set up the conversation for your group.

Scripture

1 Samuel 4:1-11

The Philistines Capture the Ark

1 And Samuel’s word came to all Israel.

Now the Israelites went out to fight against the Philistines. The Israelites camped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines at Aphek. 2 The Philistines deployed their forces to meet Israel, and as the battle spread, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand of them on the battlefield. 3 When the soldiers returned to camp, the elders of Israel asked, “Why did the Lord bring defeat on us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the Lord’s covenant from Shiloh, so that he may go with us and save us from the hand of our enemies.”

4 So the people sent men to Shiloh, and they brought back the ark of the covenant of the Lord Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim. And Eli’s two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

5 When the ark of the Lord’s covenant came into the camp, all Israel raised such a great shout that the ground shook. 6 Hearing the uproar, the Philistines asked, “What’s all this shouting in the Hebrew camp?”

When they learned that the ark of the Lord had come into the camp, 7 the Philistines were afraid. “A god has come into the camp,” they said. “Oh no! Nothing like this has happened before. 8 We’re doomed! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? They are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness. 9 Be strong, Philistines! Be men, or you will be subject to the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Be men, and fight!”

10 So the Philistines fought, and the Israelites were defeated and every man fled to his tent. The slaughter was very great; Israel lost thirty thousand foot soldiers. 11 The ark of God was captured, and Eli’s two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

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Reflection Time

We recommend providing 4-5 minutes for the group to silently reflect on the passage.

- Just before the reflection time, encourage your group to use the time to identify questions that come to their minds.
- Have them begin to think about the main question of the evening you want to focus on. You can choose what main question you’d like to focus in on, but an example one would be **How is the Lord growing your own sense of releasing control to be more fully dependent on Him?**
 - o You may not even start here as the opening question, but then when you do get here, people will be prepared.

Questions for Discussion

Observation: The Israelites were afraid of the outcome of a battle, so they attempted to gain an edge by bringing a sacred item into their ranks. However, they still lost the battle in a tragic way.

Question: Why do you think the Israelites were defeated?

Example answer for Leader: The Israelites began to put their trust in a religious object rather than the person of God. Something that was meant to be a beautiful symbol became an idol.

Question: What is the Philistine response to the entrance of the ark?

Leader Note: This could be something to draw out the contrast between Israel turning to the ark and Philistines encouraging each other. The Philistines actually have the “right” response--although the “Be men” is an interesting phrase that you could explore in conversation.

Question: When you are under pressure do you tend to find comfort in having control, or in giving it up to someone else?

Quote (to set up next few questions): Charles Spurgeon said, “God is too good to be unkind and He is too wise to be mistaken. And when we cannot trace His hand, we must trust His heart.”

Question: When you are struggling to trust God in a situation, what do you tend to do?

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Question: How do you think control and trust are in tension in relationships?

Question: How does control and trust show up in our relationship with God?

Observation: When we want something, it is so easy to put our trust in lesser things that ultimately don't deliver. What the Israelites needed was the presence and power of God, but they looked to a relic to be their strength and courage.

Question: Is there a thing in your life that you are leveraging to feel in control?
(*Examples: finances, career, reputation, talent, image*)

Question: When do you find it particularly difficult to trust God? Is there a time you can point to when it was challenging to trust God?

Observation: Oftentimes the strategies we employ to feel in control are not inherently bad. Money, family, career, and relationships all have the potential to be beautiful blessings. When we knowingly or subconsciously expect them to be our first deliverer, we actually close a door for God to multiply their benefits.

Question: "When is a time that you decided to trust in God? or Share a time that you made a decision to trust God in a challenging situation."

Leader Note: If you are feeling like stories are tending to be negative in nature, this can be a good prompt to use to share a positive story of getting trust right. This could inspire others to not just focus on past failures, but ways they've got it right.

Question: What are the ways you are growing in your trust of the Lord in this season of life?

Prayer

Use this time as an opportunity to pray for individuals who are looking to grow in their trust and dependence on the Lord. One idea would be to ask the whole group (anyone who was comfortable) to **share in two sentences or less their hope for how to release control or grow their trust in the Lord.** This becomes a time to ask God for help to grow our trust.