

OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

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SERMON TITLE When things are out of your control

SERIES

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KEY SCRIPTURE Philippians 4:6-7

SYNOPSIS When things are out of your control, what can you do?

HIGHLIGHTS



☞ When Things Are Out of Your Control

Although it may be hard to admit, there are many things that we cannot change. We like to be in control of our circumstances. It starts very young. In fact, I recall hearing about a study of infant mobiles – the toys that hang over them in their crib. The study found that the most engaging mobiles were not the ones with a lot of color or creative toys, but rather those that the infant could interact with and have some control over. We love being in control and when we're not, it's frustrating.

There are actually quite a few things that may affect us, but which we have no control over... Simple things like how someone else is driving beside you, behind you or in front of you. There are some things that are not as simple, like when someone talks behind your back and bases their opinion of you on information that is incomplete or inaccurate... Frustrating and hurtful, but you really can't do much about it. Then, there are those very challenging situations that you still have no control over... decisions your company makes that affects your work schedule or salary... Decisions your adult children or other family members make that are not good, and may even affect how they interact with you. Those kinds of things can be awfully disheartening, but you have very little control in those situations. When we experience things that are out of our control it can be hurtful, frustrating, and often leads to worry and anxiety. So, what can we do?

☞ Philippians 4:6-7

Do not be **anxious** about anything, but in everything, by **prayer** and **petition**, with **thanksgiving**, present your requests to God. 7 And the **peace** of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Anxious = to care too much. Is it possible to care **too** much? We want to be caring, but not necessarily be driven by our concerns. Even though someone else is driving like an idiot, you still need to be a careful driver. Even though your company's decisions are negatively affecting you, you still need to be a good worker as long you're there. And, even though people in your life make poor or hurtful decisions, you still need to be loving toward them. If you allow those concerns to have too much power in your life, then you'll start making unbiblical choices in order to deal with them. So, when things are out of control and you feel the worry and anxiety creeping in...

☞ **Pray** = the word προσεύχομαι/proseuchomai is used. Euchomai means "wish" or "desire". Pros means "forward". This is where we get the idea that prayer is about putting our wishes or desires forward to God. But... In the context, proseuchomai denotes **an active exchange**. Prayer is essentially an active switching of your wishes and desires in exchange for God's. **Prayer is quietly sitting before God, listening, and allowing God's way of seeing the world become our way. So, pray and get God's perspective.** But, it's still okay to ask God for what you need or want.

☞ **Petition (supplication)** = this is more directly about **seeking God for something we need**. And, in our modern world a petition usually involves getting other people to sign on with you. So, petitioning often includes **asking for prayer and support from others**. That's one of the things the church is good for. We support each other and pray for each other.



So, putting those together in the context of Philippians 4:6, it suggests a progression from general prayer to specific requests. But that's not all...

☞ **Practice thanksgiving.** This can be difficult when you're in the thick of it. But it guards against a whining, complaining spirit before God when we bring our requests to him. So, when your company is making your job difficult, you can still be grateful you have a job. When people you love are making poor decisions, you can still be grateful they are living, and still have hope because God is big on second chances (sometimes many more.)

This sequence leads to the peace of God which guards our hearts and minds. Do you see that not following this pattern can lead to a hard heart and a troubled mind? So, the most fundamental thing we ☞ can do when things are out of our control is **go to God!** Pray, petition, and practice gratitude.

God has the ability to completely transform those situations so that they are no longer a point of worry or anxiety for you. But, even if that doesn't happen, going to God with those things will bring a sense of peace to your heart and mind, and will protect you from hard-heartedness and a seared conscience. So, go to God. But, there's a few more to consider...

☞ **Remember your primary responsibility** is to **obey** the will of **God**.

Ecclesiastes 12:13

Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

Ask the Lord for the wisdom, grace and calm to learn, accept, and obey His primary will for your life. Do not try to run ahead of the Lord's plans for your life. While you're waiting; while you're stuck in this out of control situation, do what you already know God wants you to do. Obey God; serve while you wait. Don't walk away, and don't give up. Keep on keeping on!

☞ **Remember the promises** of God.

2 Corinthians 1:20

For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. 21 Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ.

Joshua 21:45

Not one of all the LORD's good promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.

Take an inventory of all the precious promises you have in Christ and confidently know that He will fulfill all. **What are some of God's promises?**

Romans 8:28

And we know that in all things **God works for the good** of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

James 1:5



If any of you lacks **wisdom, he should ask God**, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will **forgive us our sins** and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Revelation 22:12

"Behold, **I am coming soon!** My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.

☞ **Remember God's priorities.** There are many good things we can do, but ask the Lord for wisdom in being able to contribute to His priorities. When you are seeking His interests first, other problems seem to take care of themselves. I know this can be tough. When troubling situations arise, I want to resolve them as soon as possible, but sometimes I can't. So, then, it's important to still do the primary things. I've been there when trouble is all-consuming and it sort of paralyzes you. I get it. But, you can't stay there.

Matthew 6:33 NLT

☞ **Seek the Kingdom of God above all else**, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

☞ **Remember God's training program** for your life. The Lord allows many things to come into your life for purposes that are greater than our minds can comprehend.

Isaiah 55:8-9

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. 9 "As the ☞ heavens are higher than the earth, so are **my ways higher than your ways** and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Remain open, teachable and flexible to allow the Lord to mold your character after the image of Christ. He is the potter and we are the clay. (**Isaiah 64:8**) **So, trust the process.**

*He's still working on me
To make me what I need to be
It took him just a week to make the moon and stars
The sun and the Earth and Jupiter and Mars
How loving and patient He must be
'Cause He's still workin' on me*

☞ **Remember your predecessors** - Godly men and women who have endured much worse.

Hebrews 11:39-40

These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. 40 God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.



Not all heroes of the faith experienced immediate gratification. Some fell victims to their circumstances **in** the will of God. Yet, all of them were blessed and commended of God.

☞ Also, it helps to know that **you are never alone** in your circumstance. Sometimes our predecessors are actually people we know right now. They've been through something very similar or possibly worse. They're still standing in their faith. A couple of weeks ago I referenced how God speaks to us through wise counsel, and one the greatest resources we have for wise counsel is that of those right here who are older than us.

☞ **Remember God's power** and grace is sufficient for any problem.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

I am a long way off from mastering this one! Delighting in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and difficulties? That doesn't sound right! Yet, it is the Word of God. When we **let the grace of God be our sufficiency**, we will enjoy sweet rest in mind, body, and emotions! And who knows, God may ☞ intervene! **He is most certainly able to!** We've all heard testimonies of God's intervention.

When things are out of your control, the tendency is to worry or get frustrated. But our primary concern is to always trust God and wait on him in all circumstances.

When Corrie Ten Boom was a little girl in Holland, her first realization of death came after a visit to the home of a neighbor who had died. It impressed her that someday her parents would also die. Corrie's father comforted her with words of wisdom. "Corrie, when you and I go to Amsterdam, when do I give you your ticket?" "Why, just before we get on the train," she replied. "Exactly," her father said, "and our wise Father in heaven knows when we're going to need things too. Don't run out ahead of Him, Corrie. When the time comes that some of us will have to die, you will look into your heart and find the strength you need--just in time."

Are you dealing with difficulties that are out of your control? Don't give up. Hold on to those promises and keep pressing on. But if you're struggling, maybe it's time to go to God and bare your soul. Maybe it's time to get some support and prayer from others.

☞ **(click to start music)** So, let's take some time and pray. The altar is always open and there will be others here to pray with you.