

The Illusion of Control

In the history of mankind there is perhaps no greater mirage leading men & women on, than the illusion of control. It is tantalizing to think that one can control events, other people, or one's destiny. Even Satan tried to tempt Jesus by offering power and control over all the kingdoms on earth.

However, a typical result of pursuing a mirage is that, in desperation one becomes blind to the things one runs over or tramples in pursuit of the illusion. There is such an obsession with the goal (it seems my life depends on it!) that seemingly less important things are overlooked. "Less important" things such as...people, relationships, people's feelings, one's own feelings, one's integrity....

Some people have even killed to maintain a sense of control.

There's something paradoxical in most of our pursuit of control, especially in interpersonal settings. It usually accomplishes just the opposite of what we really want. I want a better relationship with my spouse, so I try to control him or her. But my controlling behavior strangles the relationship. I want my child to grow up well-behaved, so I take control by angrily criticizing his every mistake. He grows up insecure and mistake prone.

Much of the time I think I'm doing a good thing by pursuing control, I'm really just being self-centered. I'm protecting myself from the terrible feeling of loss of control. I'm trying to stay one step ahead of that soul-terrorizing vulnerability of having to deal with reality as it is. I'm just sure that if I don't have control something bad is going to happen to me. Someone...or something...is going to get me! I'll be made a fool of, embarrassed, shamed. This is where I need to stop and deal with my own fears, because those things which I feel I most desperately need control of are precisely the things I can never control. I must ask myself, in an honest moment, to what degree have I *ever* really been in control?

Who has more power to control things, you or God? So, if God has the power to control our every thought and movement (and He does), why doesn't He? Why doesn't He just stand everyone up at attention and program our minds so that we become perfectly performing robots? Because He created us to love and worship Him. Love, by definition, is voluntary. God enjoys it when we turn to Him and profess our love for Him, and behave in ways that show we mean it. If He *forced* us to "act that way" there would be no opportunity for love.

So why do we spend so much time and energy trying to force, control, and manipulate others into loving us?