

Living in Control in an Out-of-Control World

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In our out-of-control world, the book of Nehemiah provides insight—and hope. A Jewish exile who was cupbearer to King Artaxerxes of Persia, Nehemiah was overwhelmed by grief when he learned his homeland was in ruin. He **prayed** day and night on behalf of the sons of Israel (Neh. 1:4-11), confessing his nation’s sins and **focusing on the character of God**. Nehemiah let his grief show when he was with the king, behavior forbidden in the king’s presence. When the king asked what was wrong, Nehemiah was “very much afraid” (Neh. 2:2b). But he pushed beyond his fear and told the king he was sad because Jerusalem was “desolate and its gates...consumed by fire” (1:3). At that point, the king could have killed Nehemiah for showing personal emotion; instead, he responded to his servant’s bold courage by not only sending him to Judah to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem but also supplying the necessary resources to complete the project.

Fear can literally stop us from doing what God calls us to do. It can be fueled by enemies (spiritual, physical, emotional, mental, social) who threaten us. It can be doing a job that’s humanly impossible, or when we have a lack of support, constant criticism, etc. Nehemiah provides examples of how to counteract fear-feeders when he says, *all of them were trying to frighten us, thinking, ‘They will become discouraged with the work and it will not be done.’ But now, O God, strengthen my hands* (Neh. 6:9). Nehemiah focused on God, trusting Him to provide supernatural strength amidst multifaceted, insurmountable problems.

Spend time in the Word daily to listen to God’s heart: *whatever you do [whatever your task may be], work from the soul [that is, put in your very best effort], as something done] for the LORD and not for men, knowing [with certainty] that it is from the LORD [not from men] that you will receive the inheritance which is your [greatest] reward. It is the LORD Christ whom you [actually] serve* (Colossians 3:23-24, AMP). **Applying** Colossians 3:23-24 enables us to **stay in control**.

| Living in Control | The Out-of-Control World |
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| Choose to love (John 15:12-13) | Directed by culture’s shifting standards |
| Walk in peace (Isaiah 41:3) | Chooses to live in conflict |
| Rest (Luke 5:16) | Is often tyrannized by the urgent |
| Be empowered by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18, Galatians 5:22-23) | Tries to escape life—being “drunk” or otherwise allowing the flesh to be in control |
| Apply 3 Ps: Pause, Pray, Proceed (Is. 30:15, Romans 12:21) | Has a different 3 Ps: Politics, Power, Pleasure |
| Have an attitude of gratitude , living in God’s contentment (1 Timothy 6:6, Phil. 2:14) | Incessantly grumbles and complains |
| Be joyful (Psalm 5:11) | Continually focuses on problems |
| Practice wise financial management: “If you don’t have it, don’t spend it.” (Luke 14:28-30) | Wants more...more...more |
| Speak the Truth in love (Eph. 4:14-16) | Lies “creatively” without remorse |

A Biblical Mindset for Living in Control

Choose to love: *This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friend (John 15:12-13, ESV).*

Walk in peace: *For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, 'Fear not, I am the one who helps you' (Isaiah 41:13, ESV).*

Rest: *But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray (Luke 5:16, NASB).*

Be empowered by the Holy Spirit: *Live life, then, with a due sense of responsibility, not as men who do not know the meaning and purpose of life but as those who do. Make the best use of your time, despite all the difficulties of these days. Don't be vague but firmly grasp what you know to be the will of God. Don't get your stimulus from wine (for there is always the danger of excessive drinking), but let the Spirit stimulate your souls. Express your joy in singing among yourselves psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making music in your hearts for the ears of God! Thank God at all times for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And 'fit in with' each other, because of your common reverence for Christ. (Ephesians 5:15-21, Phillips).*

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23, NASB).

Apply the 3 Ps of Pause, Pray, Proceed: *God, the Master, The Holy of Israel, has this solemn counsel: Your salvation requires you to turn back to me and stop your silly efforts to save yourselves. Your strength will come from settling down in complete dependence on me—the very thing you've been unwilling to do (Isaiah 30:15, MSG).*

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21, NASB).

Have an attitude of gratitude, living in God's contentment: *But godliness actually is a source of great gain when accompanied by contentment [that contentment which comes from a sense of inner confidence based on the sufficiency of God] (1 Timothy 6:6, AMP). Do everything without grumbling or arguing (Philippians 2:14, NIV).*

Practice sound financial management: *But don't begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it? Otherwise, you might complete only the foundation before running out of money, and then everyone would laugh at you. They would say, 'There's the person who started that building and couldn't afford to finish it!' (Luke 14:28-30, NLT).*

Be joyful: *But rejoice, all who take refuge in You, sing for joy forever! And may You shelter them, that those who love Your name may rejoice in You (Psalm 5:11, NASB).*

Speak the Truth in love: *Then we will no longer be like children, forever changing our minds about what we believe because someone has told us something different or has cleverly lied to us and made the lie sound like the truth. Instead, we will lovingly follow the truth at all times—speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly—and so become more and more in every way like Christ who is the Head of his body, the Church. Under his direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly, and each part in its own special way helps the other parts, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love (Ephesians 4:14-16, TLB).*

You can consistently live in control as you **walk in the power of the Holy Spirit**. Jesus says, *Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me (John 15:4, NASB)*. When we forget to say “no” to our flesh and “yes” to our Lord, we can *confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9)*, immediately allowing God to strengthen us to obey Him and live in His limitless strength. If needed, you can find a counselor at <https://sfacc.net> (the Find a Counselor section lists any insurance the counselors accept and describes specific skills). For practical help, you could study *Core Healing from Trauma*, a biblical counseling workbook available on Amazon (<https://cutt.ly/occdeiH>). You can also watch “Strengthening Your Core,” a 12-week video series on YouTube at <https://cutt.ly/Or6EiiW>.