

HOWE THINGS ARE...

Hi! I have this recurring nightmare... not exactly the same every time, but the basic plot is... I'm packing for a trip and I'm way over the luggage quota and generally late for my flight. In last night's rendition, I was actually at the airport attempting to pack. Apparently, I had already spent hours packing. I'm surrounded by piles of things still to fit in the suitcase when I realize that I haven't packed any clothes yet. The plane was about to depart, no time to make a trip back home. I had two full suitcases and piles of my belongings, none of which contained any articles of clothing.

The dream's not really about packing of course. No big dream mystery here: it's about control. I exceedingly like the feeling that it's possible to be prepared for anything (it's not possible of course, I just like the idea that it might be). Being prepared equals being in control:

Not packed = Not prepared = Not in control and thus, the last minute packing dream achieves nightmare status.

"The sense of being led by an unseen hand which takes mine, while another hand reaches ahead and prepares the way, grows upon me daily."
- Frank Laubach

Prior to the re-appearance of this dream, I was all set to tell you about how things that used to bother me don't anymore (like I'm mostly cured of control issues). For instance, I had a car problem the other day and at no point during the car problem did I feel even the beginning stages of panic,

even when the words "only the dealer can handle that" entered the picture. It was like I was a whole other person --- all calm and control issue free.

So about the car, my finances, basically my whole personal life, I'm more or less good with being out of control --- I'm generally confident whatever it is, it's fine. God reigns. God has a plan. I'm good.

Which leaves as fodder for the nightmares: work. (just so we're clear, I haven't changed my position on "I have a great job. Lucky me"... I just apparently haven't figured out how-to-be-out-of-control: the work version).

Lots of people at work have this John Piper quote tacked up somewhere in their cubicle:

"Lord, let us make a difference for you today that is utterly disproportionate to who we are"

It's a nice quote. I like it. However, say there's a defined task: my job. My idea of a goal would be: 100% of the defined task, my job. People I work with are fond of pointing out that the task is God sized. While it's nifty that God chooses to use us to accomplish the God-sized task, who I am (my strength) is not equal to the 100% goal. So let's be generous and say my own strength is one percent of what's required to do the job. Fifty times or even ten times my strength certainly qualifies as "utterly disproportionate to who I am". This means, at an utterly disproportionate 50 times my strength, I'm still falling short of the 100% goal. 50 percent of the task (fifty times my one percent) meets the utterly disproportionate make a difference standard... and it fails to be all that satisfying for me because my idea of the goal is 100%.

Guess what the problem is? It's not about having faith that God *can* do the task (the whole 100% of the task). It's about giving up my control* to allow God to do or [horror] *not* do the task.

* Yes, I know, technically I can't "give up control" seeing as how I never had control to give up. It'd be more accurate (and also wordier) to say, "give up the illusion that I ever had or could ever have control to allow God to do or not do the task".

And then theologically can I "allow" God to do or not do something? I'm pretty sure God of the universe needs not my permission. If you're going to be cantankerous then you miss the whole point of the story.

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