

Clinging to...?

What is the real cost of the things we cling to?

In the last few weeks, the Lord has placed me in several different situations of coaching, mentoring, and encouraging, some light and fun, some very heavy. Over our years of pastoral care ministry, I have come to realize that each of us is on a path, from birth to the grave, that God has ordained. This is His sovereign nature over all of creation. God is in control. This brings us back to the topic of last month's *Zipline* article, the illusion of control. If we think we are in control of this life, when things go sideways for a time, we find ourselves flooded with negative emotions, such as anger, frustration, and fear. These emotional responses arise from a set of unrealistic expectations around God and what life should look like. And if we cling to these expectations too tightly, it will lead to discontent, first with our circumstances, and then with our God.

These expectations can be difficult to root out in our lives because of their subtle, often righteous-looking nature: "God, I am always seeking to serve You faithfully. How could You let this happen to me?" For many years now, Jola, my wife, has been in a discipleship relationship with a dear woman whose growth and insight has been amazing to watch. Often, she will come up with some very profound stuff, things that make you pause and really think. In a recent book study she led, she gave the following reflection questions as a journaling assignment.

- What lies am I allowing Satan to speak into my life?
- Do I even recognize them?
- Am I fighting back?
- What am I clinging to because I'm still clinging to a life that is familiar?
- What am I missing out on because of the clinging?

These elicited an instant "Wow, that's deep," followed by an immediate "Ouch, those could hurt!" These are difficult questions to ask as they can reveal things deep in us that we would rather keep hidden and buried. These are things that, if left in the dark, will tarnish our image of God, but if brought into the light can shatter the façade-like image of ourselves. I think this is what Paul was speaking of in Romans 1:21-23:

"²¹For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

²²Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things."

... and stuff, and expectations, and self. These question are very much worth asking during a Sabbath or personal retreat. If we can be of assistance with processing through them, please let us know. We would love to assist you as we journey on this road together.

In Christ,

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