

## Half Truths: Hearing Grace in a World of Noise

### Control is the Goal

It's easy to feel overwhelmed by the competing voices and narratives that shape our lives. Often, these cultural messages—while well-intentioned—can leave us feeling burdened, anxious, or disconnected. We will explore seven pervasive cultural “half truths” that mislead our understanding of life, identity, and purpose.

This series of Small Group studies isn't about proving who's "right." Instead, the goal is to discover how Jesus is the truth, and to step into reality where his gospel liberates us from all the little lies that cling so closely. And his gospel is the best tool for healing our bad theology and tendencies to make ourselves little gods.

? Do you prefer to drive or ride?

#### The Half-Truth: Control is the Goal

I can engineer the good life. If I put in the right inputs (diet, exercise, spiritual disciplines, emotional regulation, 8+ hours of sleep per day, and 57 minutes of sauna/15 minute ice bath per week) then things will go well for me.

? Recall a time you tried to control the outcomes in your life. What happened?

*Possible answers: I scheduled every minute of my waking day to prioritize all the important things and be as efficient as I could be – I missed some last-minute adventures and unexpected blessings. I forgot to look up from my constant working to see my co-workers.*

? What truth is there in planning and taking responsibility for our actions? How can this become distorted?

*Possible answers: Planning and taking responsibility are huge parts of being an adult – I am building the life I want and setting myself up for the future to come. When I get too focused on my long term goals I lose sight of the “now” and miss things. I become my own little god, believing I really have control over all these aspects of my life.*

## Where Do We See This In Scripture?

As you read these scripture passages, consider what they say about this half-truth: control is the goal.

### Matthew 6:34 (NIV)

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

### Mark 4:35-41 (NIV)

<sup>35</sup> That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side."<sup>36</sup> Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him.<sup>37</sup> A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.<sup>38</sup> Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

<sup>39</sup> He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

<sup>40</sup> He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

<sup>41</sup> They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

### Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)

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

### James 4:13-15 (NIV)

Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.'<sup>14</sup> Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.<sup>15</sup> Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'

**?** What does this scripture say about control? What emotions do we see feeding the underlying need for control in these passages?

*Possible answers: We don't need to carry the burden of thinking we can control all the things. God sees me and knows the desires of my heart. Emotions may include: fear, anxiety, uncertainty, worry, etc.*

**?** What does surrendering control look like in practical terms? What is keeping you from giving up control?

*Possible answers: This is hard! It forces me to break down idols I have unintentionally set before me. Even though I think I know more than God sometimes, I set a reminder each afternoon to reset my heart for*

*the rest of the day and what he may have for me. I meditate on a verse each week to keep my focus on him. I meet with an accountability partner to ask me the tough questions and pray with me.*

How can we draw closer to the one that is the Truth?

### **For Discussion and Accountability**

? Where is one area in your life that you struggle with control - having too little, too much or unsure how to handle your control of the situation? How can we pray for you this week?

? How is your heart believing this half-truth right now? How can we come alongside you in this?