

HARD LESSONS IN LIFE: YOU CAN'T CONTROL EVERYTHING

Focus on what you can and let the rest go

Compiled by Joe Keim and taught in a group setting

1. Opening Thought

Life does not always go the way we planned.

- People change.
- Problems happen.
- Unexpected situations arise.
- Sometimes things feel completely out of control.

Many people become stressed, anxious, angry, or overwhelmed because they spend too much time trying to control things they cannot control.

But wisdom means learning the difference between:

- what you can control, and what you cannot.
 - You cannot control other people's choices.
 - You cannot control every circumstance.
 - But you can control your attitude, your actions, your responses, and your trust in God.

Peace often comes when we stop trying to carry burdens God never asked us to carry.

Illustration

Imagine trying to hold the wind in your hands.

No matter how hard you try, you cannot control it.

Life can feel that way sometimes.

The wiser choice is not trying to control the wind but learning how to adjust your sails.

2. Scripture

Matthew 6:27 –

“Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?”

- Worry does not solve problems.
- Constant anxiety cannot control the future.

Example

Many people spend hours worrying about situations that never even happen.

Proverbs 3:5-6 –

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.”

- We do not always understand life.
- God calls us to trust Him even when things feel uncertain.

Bible Illustration

Joseph could not control:

- being betrayed,
- sold into slavery,
- or falsely accused.

But he remained faithful to God through every season.

Philippians 4:6-7 –

“Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”

- God invites us to bring our worries to Him.
- Prayer brings peace when life feels overwhelming.

Illustration

Trying to carry every burden alone is like trying to carry a backpack full of rocks everywhere you go.

Eventually, the weight becomes exhausting.

God wants us to give those burdens to Him.

Romans 12:18 –

“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”

- We should do our part to live wisely and peacefully.
- But we cannot force everyone else to cooperate.

Example

You can apologize sincerely and still not control whether someone forgives you.

3. Discussion Questions

1. What are some things people commonly try to control?
2. Why do people struggle to let go of worry or anxiety?
3. What is the difference between responsibility and control?
4. How can trying to control everything affect mental and emotional health?
5. What are some healthy ways to respond when life feels uncertain?
6. How does trusting God help bring peace?

4. Practical Examples

- Relationships: You cannot force people to change or make good choices.
- Future plans: Unexpected changes may affect school, jobs, or relationships.
- Social media: You cannot control everyone's opinions about you.
- Family situations: Some family problems are outside your control.
- Health: Sometimes sickness or stress happens unexpectedly.
- Work or school: You cannot control every outcome, but you can control your effort and attitude.
- Daily life: Traffic, weather, delays, and interruptions happen to everyone.

Real-Life Illustration

Imagine two people sitting in an airplane during turbulence.

One panics and tries to control everything happening around them.
The other trusts the pilot and remains calm.

Neither passenger controls the plane.

But one experiences peace while the other experiences panic.

Trust changes how we handle uncertainty.

5. Challenge for This Week

Think about one situation that has been causing you stress or worry.

Finish this sentence:

"This week I will focus on _____ instead of worrying about _____."

Examples:

- "I will focus on my attitude instead of worrying about other people's opinions."
- "I will focus on prayer instead of constantly stressing about the future."
- "I will focus on doing my best instead of trying to control every outcome."
- "I will focus on trusting God instead of overthinking every problem."

Weekly Action Step

1. Write down one thing you cannot control.
2. Pray about it honestly.
3. Write down one thing you *can* control.
4. Put your energy into that instead.

Focus your energy where it can actually make a difference.

6. Closing Thought

You cannot control everything, and you were never meant to.

Trying to control every person, outcome, or situation will only leave you exhausted.

Peace begins when:

- you trust God,
- focus on what you can do,
- and let go of what you cannot control.

You may not control every storm in life, but with God's help, you can learn how to walk through storms with peace.