

## ILLUSIONS: Control

Scripture used: [Genesis 3:1-3 \(NLT\)](#)

### OVERVIEW

Pastor Hurmon continued the Illusions series. Today, the highlighted illusion is our sense of control. We all wrestle with it. We think we can have great power to influence and direct people and events. Yet we only have partial control. But part of us longs for complete control – at home, at work, with relatives and friends. While a worthy and attainable goal at first glance, pursuit of complete control, conscious or not, is an illusion. There is no complete control, as we do not have the power or the responsibility to effect a guaranteed outcome.

### KEY POINTS

1. Full control is not possible in a broken and imperfect world. [Genesis 2:16-17](#) gives us a picture of both the substantial choices we have, and the limits of those choices. We have to exercise discipline over our impulse to control more than we can. We must acknowledge our own limitations, no matter how many resources we have. During the pandemic, our Church had to deal with the quarantine and the lack of physical community and presence, but realized its mission by investing in our online presence. We found God working again and again in remarkable ways even within the limitations of the moment.
2. In [Genesis 3:4-5](#), God warns Adam and Eve that, if they eat the forbidden fruit, “Your eyes will be open. You will see good and evil.” Our having absolute control leaves no place for the power and providence of God. It leaves us at the mercy of our imperfections. God is Creator, we are created. We must stop judging God. We have such confidence in our abilities in the 21st century, yet we will always have huge gaps in our knowledge, moral integrity and character, and wisdom.
3. By exercising total control, we are also at risk of missing God’s character. The Juneteenth holiday harks back to the founding motto of the nation: we the people. We are together in shared consent, and the inclusion of those able to participate fully in our civic life is constantly increasing, as it should. Yet, there is another way to view our rights. We might see “rights” as petitions, grievances, or requests for exclusivity. “Me” becomes domineering over “we”. If that happens, the country’s future is at risk. This can happen in the family, when a person in the family wants total focus and authority, and creates an environment of abuse or dysfunction. Power without character can become demonic. God restrains Himself so people can have free will, and part of his restraint is allowing humanity, as choice-makers, to deal with the consequences of our choices.
4. We can have control over the inputs, but not over outcomes. God poured Himself into shaping the environment. What we do with it and how we exercise our authority is now our responsibility. After their sin, Adam and Eve are dealing with the tough consequences. God does not abandon them to the consequences, but he allows the consequences and works within them to begin the process of redemption. God puts them out in the garden, but He preserves the tree of life, and He has an alternate plan to restore access to all the blessings that He intends. He reserves the last word. In Revelation, the tree is once again available for the healing of mankind, and the power of death and sin are broken as the relationship between God and humanity is fully redeemed.

### DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - What are the aspects of your life that feel fully under your control? What aspects do you try to control, but your control is limited? Are there areas of your life where you are constantly anxious, fearful, or overstressed because you are trying to control something you can’t fully control?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Consider [Genesis 3](#). One way to understand this passage is that Adam and Eve wanted more control over their lives. Or, in another perspective, they didn’t fully trust that God’s provision for their lives would be enough or would be satisfying for them, and they wanted more independent control. How do you resonate with this desire? While autonomy and choice-making is generally a good thing, the illusion of absolute control can often harm us. For example, ultimately, we are mortal and we aren’t in ultimate control of our health or lifespan. Recognizing the limits of our control allows us to make wise choices throughout our lives, and to appropriately trust God with our most important choices. How have you found this to be true or struggled with this?
- 3) **DO** - Reflect on where you are trying to control something that is not yours to control. Join us next Sunday!