



# CONNECT GROUP NOTES

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## From Control to Trust

### Preacher

Ps Josh Plumb

### Scripture

**34** Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. **35** For whoever wants to save their life<sup>[a]</sup> will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. **36** What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? **37** Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? **Mark 8:34-37** NIV

### Thought

Imagine heading off to the beach with the family, standing on the shore, and looking out at the vast ocean and powerful waves. Then imagine seeing that while most of the waves were rolling into the shoreline, others were pushing and fighting against the tide and trying to break in the opposite direction of the beach. What a tremendous waste of energy and effort to struggle against the movement of the powerful ocean currents.

Yet, this is a picture of so much of our culture. It is constantly fighting the Truth of Who and What will truly bring fulfillment, peace, joy, and freedom in life. Even as Christians we are bombarded by media and messaging specifically crafted to drive us into discontentment, anxiety, and fear that we have less and ARE less than what we need to be. This isn't new by the way. Story after story, parable after parable in the Gospels reveal Jesus offering a Kingdom perspective - a counter-narrative that challenges the cultural narratives of the day. This Kingdom that Jesus pointed to wasn't just talking about ethereal “spiritual” concepts disconnected from life. Jesus' teachings dealt with money, institutional power, relationships, religiosity, and ultimately asked the question under all the questions: “Who and what do you trust?”



The question is as relevant today as it has always been. “Who do I trust?” It is built inside of all of us to cling and grasp onto the things we have been told will bring us security, happiness, and satisfaction. It’s only natural that we take control to assuage the fear, shame, and frustrations that we all feel at times. It can be so hard to trust that God really is at work in our situation, to trust *His* timing and *His* results. So we take control of our circumstances (and sometimes even other people) to ensure we are OK and get the outcome we want. Unfortunately, like those waves going against the ocean, ultimately, we are pursuing a lost cause.

Control is ultimately only an illusion. It is temporary at best and can be so damaging at its worst. Jesus’ words are tough here, but they are needed: “Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.” (Mark 8:35).

This is it. This is the counter-narrative...and it still stings as much today as it did then. It’s only in the act of death - death to clinging and grasping and power-struggles and manipulation and all the control mechanisms we concoct - and in surrender to the way and heart of Jesus that we will actually find the life we all are longing for.

Scriptures from today:

1. Mark 8:34-37
2. Galatians 2:20
3. Galatians 5:24
4. Philippians 3:7-14
5. Matthew 13:44
6. Mark 10:17-27

### **Discussion Points**

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1. The story of the Rich Young Ruler (Mark 10:17-27) gives us a window into the kinds of things that can keep us from fully surrendering to Jesus and His Kingdom. What are the things or desires in my life that, in thinking of letting them go, awaken fear or anxiety in me? How can I begin the process of trusting Jesus with them this week?



2. Are there things I really thought would bring me joy and fulfillment that ultimately are failing to do so and perhaps even robbing me from real life in God's Kingdom? Can I name those things today and begin asking The Spirit for revelation of God's perspective about this area of my life?

3. In Matthew 13:4-45 Jesus compares God's Kingdom to a treasure that is hidden in a field. To be acquired it must be sought after and my life fully surrendered to it in order to find it. Is this metaphor of a treasure how I view life in God's Kingdom? How can I rearrange the details of my life to see it this way more each day?

### **Personal application + Prayer**

What a challenging word for us today, Jesus. We so desperately want to follow you AND there can be so many areas we are genuinely scared to let go of in surrender to you: Parenting, finding a spouse, struggling with our spouse, career goals, bank accounts, releasing forgiveness, clinging to old hurts, questions of identity, addiction to other's opinions of us... our lists could go on forever.

Yet, you are so patient and kind with us. You have been so faithful throughout our lives, always at work even when we don't see or understand. Help us to think more highly of you. To know you and your character. Form us in such a way that we grow from our grasping for control to open-handed trust in you. Amen