

FOCUS ON FAITH

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ON THE ROLLERCOASTER

Unlike my son, I have never believed in the idea of scaring myself stupid by going on the adventure rides that you supposedly “enjoy” these days.

When he was just a young child my wife and I took our son to a well known theme park not so far from Bridgnorth and we had a really tough time convincing him that he was not old enough for some rides and that we weren’t brave enough to let him try anyway. He did have a go on some of them and to be honest I was petrified the whole time – but he loved it (and he still does). With a lot of persuasion he managed to get me on the log-flume ride by telling me there was nothing to worry about and that I’d never know how good it was until I tried. But when I look back – even now many years have passed – it still turns my stomach somewhat.

Perhaps it’s the fear of the unknown, the anticipation of potential danger or possibly the wisdom that comes through experience and longevity that makes me nervous of situations like these – or maybe it’s just that I’m a coward. Whatever it is – wild horses won’t drag me onto those types of rides.

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But maybe it also has something to do with control. You see it’s not the speed or the danger that I find difficult so much as having to sit on the ride and let it all happen to me. When I’m driving a car, I’m in charge and in a sense, master of my own destiny. I sometime enjoy putting my foot down (legally of course) but I am comforted by the knowledge that I can put the brakes on anytime I want. So whilst I don’t really feel I’m a control freak, I do have a tendency to not let others dictate the running when it comes to my life. Perhaps it’s my independent streak!

And that’s the rub. Other people do have influence and possibly power over us. Some people we let have that control whilst others like to take authority over our lives.

Think of it this way. Because we have a democracy in this country, politicians that we’ve voted for (or perhaps not) have the power to make decisions on our behalf. We expect the police and other law-enforcement personnel to act fairly and justly and so we obey their directions but we still get

that sinking feeling in the stomach when we see a blue light and hear a siren coming up behind us on the motorway.

On the other hand there are people who take control over us. Employers often do because they have the sanction to dictate our work and tell us what to do; they can hire or fire us; promote or demote us; make our work-life a joy or a misery. But other people’s actions may also affect our lives – for example, strike action may curtail our travel plans or stop us doing something else we want to do.

Life is often a rollercoaster of events and emotions; of successes and sometimes failures; of joys and sorrows; good times and not so good ones. And sometimes we feel in control and at other times we appear to be out of our depth.

And this for me is where faith comes in. People have said to me in the past that they wouldn’t want to be a Christian because that means God’s in control of them. Well, there’s good news and there’s bad news but I guess it depends which way you want to look at it.

God is already in control but He allows us to have control too. He’s given us freewill – the ability to make choices. We’re not robots programmed to do the bidding of an almighty operational director or even puppets whose strings are being pulled to make us perform. And the only form of control in the Bible that is advocated is that of *self-control*.

No, the God I read about in the Bible is interested in relationship and friendship rather than autocratic domination. Just look at the life of Jesus – His concern was for people’s best and He demonstrated it through miracles of healing, acts of kindness, compassion and forgiveness. And the Bible says that Jesus is the “**exact representation**” of God.

The God Christians believe in isn’t out to get us for the smallest misdemeanour we commit. His desire is to pardon, to give us hope and an eternal future with Him.

Life with God isn’t going to be any less a rollercoaster of a ride – in my view it probably will be more exciting – but you’ll never know unless you get on board and try it!

To find out more about the Christian faith and resources available plus information on services at local Churches together with contact details, please log on to www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk.