

Who's in Charge

✖ In the

spring of 1980, a series of earthquakes and small eruptions drew the attention of people living in the Pacific Northwest. Scientists and sightseers were drawn to Mount St. Helens. Steam vents, tremors and hot spots appeared almost daily.

Then on May 18, an earthquake shook the mountain. For a few seconds the north flank seemed to ripple, then broke loose and began sliding downhill as a massive avalanche. Eruption plumes shot up as quickly as 600 miles an hour. The blast traveled as a hot, churning mass of gas, rock, ash and ice. More than 50 people were killed or reported missing after the blast, and the eruption devastated 235 square miles.

The eruption of Mount St. Helens was a tragedy. It's also a powerful reminder that there are forces in this world over which we have no control. Even when the best scientific minds and equipment were keeping watch over the mountain, they could not predict what was going to happen next.

It's the same way in our lives. Despite our best efforts and knowledge and abilities, there are some events and circumstances over which we have no control. We can't control the stock market, which dictates how well our money might perform. We can't control another

person's thoughts and feelings, which dictate how strong our relationships might be. And even if we eat right and exercise regularly, we can't completely control our health. Accidents, disease and illness still happen.

When we act as though we CAN control events, circumstances and people, we make a huge mistake. Control is another form of selfishness. Trying to control shows that we've replaced our trust in God with faith in ourselves. But that kind of faith always results in failure.

Let's look at the struggle for control another way.

Have you ever spent time with 2-year-olds? Some of their favorite phrases are "mine," "no" and "I do it." They want to be independent. They think they know what they're doing. They have faith in their developing skills, abilities and judgment. Sometimes that streak of independence is frustrating to parents who have to wait as the child struggles to climb in and out of a car seat by himself. Sometimes it is dangerous. No matter how smart or capable a 2-year-old is, he should not play with the stove or try to cross the street by himself.

But children persist in testing the limits of their

independence. For instance, there's the little one who uses the kitchen drawers as a ladder to climb up to the counter. Like a kitten caught up in a tree, he gets stuck in a situation he's not equipped to handle. And only then does he start to worry about how he'll get down. Then comes the cry for help.

How often are we like that with God? Have you ever wanted to "do it yourself" rather than wait for Him? What happened?

I think all of us are tempted to rely on our own brains and brawn. But when we put our faith in ourselves, we lose sight of God's love and care. We're like that 2-year-old climbing onto the kitchen counter. Once we get stuck, we get scared, as the psalmist did: "In my distress I called to the Lord; I cried to my God for help" (Ps. 18:6, NIV).

Thankfully, we have the consolation of knowing that a power greater than ourselves can restore us—and will. "From His temple He heard my voice; My cry came before him, into His ears. He brought me out into a spacious place; He rescued me because He delighted in me" (vv. 6,19).

God wants to keep us safe. He doesn't do it out of a sense of obligation. He does

it because He loves
us. He delights in caring for us.

We have to trust God and let Him guide
us, as the Scriptures command: *"Trust in the Lord with all
your heart and
lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways
acknowledge Him, and He
will make your paths straight"* (Prov. 3:5-6). We have to hand
Him our
independence and our desire for control. We have to let Him
take the reins of
our lives in His hands.