

Constraints – by James Bruyn, November 2020

I've been wondering if constraints are actually a gift from God, and part of the natural order of the way God has created the world.

My thinking comes from looking at Genesis 1-3. Everything God created in these chapters had their place and constraints put upon them as to where they had to stay. We couldn't survive if the sun, the planets or the moon weren't exactly where they are in orbit. When God's creation crosses the constraints created for them then bad things happen. Consider a river overflowing its banks, or a hurricane coming on to land. Grizzly bears were not meant to be in the Sahara and elephants wouldn't survive on a glacier. Each animal and plant has their place and constraints as to where they thrive.

There was a study done where kids were put into a playground. One group had a fence around them, one group didn't. The group that had the fence played far more freely and used all of the playground, whereas the group that didn't stayed quite close to the equipment and didn't make up games like the others did that used all of the allotted area.

In the same way God constrained Adam and Eve and said they shouldn't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We are not told what this "tree" is, only that it is a constraint that they have to stay within or a boundary they have to avoid.

The problem with us is that we don't like constraints. For some reason we like to focus on the constraints imposed on us, rather than on God's abundant blessings. Adam and Eve did what we continue to do today and violated the constraints God imposed on them. We all know too well what kind of problems that caused. I wonder how many problems we cause for ourselves when we try to infringe on the constraints placed on us, or act like there are no constraints. How many times have we pulled muscles or been in an accident when we've tried to exceed our abilities or tried to defy the laws of gravity?

What the restrictions imposed by Covid have highlighted for me is that I have a choice. I can choose to complain about the constraints imposed on my life by Covid, by my aging body, by where I work and live. Or I can choose to embrace these constraints by faith, trusting that the mystery of these constraints have passed through the hands of God who is too wise to have made a mistake and too loving to be unkind.

When I choose to embrace the constraints imposed on me then I am free to start to creatively explore how I can use the abundance of resources God has blessed and entrusted me with to do my work and to provide for my family. I am slowly learning that I can actually accomplish more, with less stress and greater joy when I accept the constraints God has placed on my life. Sometimes this has meant saying no, sometimes this has meant asking for help, sometimes this has meant learning to do things differently.

So I invite you today to embrace the constraints God has placed on your life at this season. Instead of focusing on the constraints on your life, start counting your blessings. Then seek God's wisdom as to how you can creatively use the resources God has blessed you with.

Although this probably won't come naturally, I assure you that you will be amazed at what God will do through your life.