

Are You a Control Freak?!

Greg V Hurd





What in Blue Blazes is going on here?

“Do not fret or have any anxiety about anything, but in every circumstance and in everything, by prayer and petition (definite requests) with thanksgiving, continue to make your wants known to God.

And God’s peace [shall be yours, that tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and being content with its earthly lot of whatever sort that is, that peace] which transcends all understanding shall garrison and mount guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

For the rest, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is worthy of reverence and is honorable and seemly, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely and loveable, whatever is kind and winsome and gracious, if there is any virtue and excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think and weigh and take account of these things [fix your minds on them].

Practice what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and model your way of living on it, and the God of peace (of untroubled, undisturbed well being) will be with you.

I was made very happy in the Lord that now you have revived your interest in my welfare after so long a time; you were indeed thinking of me, but you had no opportunity to show it.

Not that I am implying that I was in any personal want, for I have learned how to be content (satisfied to the point where I am not disturbed or disquieted) in whatever state that I am.

I know how to be abased and live humbly in straitened circumstances, and I know how to enjoy plenty and live in abundance. I have learned in any and all circumstances the secret of facing every situation, whether well-fed or going hungry, having a sufficiency and enough to spare or going without and being in want.

I have strength for all things in Christ who empowers me [I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him Who infuses inner strength into me; I am self sufficient in Christ’s sufficiency].”

Philippians 4: 6 – 13 Amplified Version



Control – To exercise authoritative or dominating influence over; to hold in restraint, to verify and regulate, the authority or ability to regulate, direct, master or influence.

Freak –Addict, nut or monstrosity; someone who behaves irrationally and uncontrollably.

“Control Freaks are people who care more than you do about something and won’t stop at being pushy to get their way.”

Les Parrott III, Ph.D

The term “Control Freak” has been a part of human phraseology for sometime. It has been used to describe someone who has an obsession for controlling situations, circumstances and even people. This person could be a manager at your place of employment, an associate, a friend, a spouse or even yourself, God forbid!

“The anthem of a Control Freak is Frank Sinatra’s “My Way” unfortunately they have added a new verse to this classic, “and you’ll learn to do it my way too.”

Psychologists call it a will to conquer, an instinct to master, a manipulative drive, a striving for superiority, and an urge toward competence. However, the drive for power and control can prove to be an eroding force in the life of the Christian.

In Philippians 4: 6-13, the Apostle Paul gives us a glimpse at the victorious life that is available to any child of God. It is a life free of anxiety, fretfulness, stress and mental torment. It is a life of total dependence on God that brings about a peace that surpasses all understanding and a Godly contentment that can weather any storm of life.

“It is not the circumstances, but what we think about them that determines our experience.”

Robert Kausen

The Apostle uses his own life to show us how life is really supposed to be lived. This life is in direct opposition to the life of a Control Freak. Anxiety, stress, worry and fretfulness are the daily diet of one that wants total control. They are unable to take heed to the inspired words of the Apostle Peter,

“Cast all of your care upon Him for He cares for you.” 1 Peter 5:7

This goes against the grain for those who seek control, because it empowers someone outside of themselves, violating their false beliefs of self-sufficiency and independence. Many Christians struggle in their walk with the Lord to,

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.”

Proverbs 3: 5, 6 KJV

Therefore they are stifled in their growth in the Lord and are unable to experience God’s best in this life.

“...I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

John 10:10b KJV

Let me first of all say that to yield total control over to God is a difficult task for anyone. Even the most passive, laidback individuals have random fits of stubbornness when confronted with handing over the wheel of their life. If we are truly honest with ourselves, we would state that some things in our life are in God’s hands, but most are in our hands. The struggle of spiritual growth is the transformation from self-possession to Divine-possession. (Galatians 2:20; Matthew 16: 24-25)

To allow the Divine nature to dispossess innate securities and self dependencies within the recesses of our soul, obliterating self-sufficiency and replacing it with Christ’s sufficiency within us.

“He must increase, but I must decrease.”

John 3:30 KJV

“The Idolatry of today is the idolatry of Power.”

Richard Foster



Through the Divine gift of Self-Awareness we are going to seek and destroy the malicious tendencies to control and manipulate our environment, and let Jesus Christ truly be Lord over our own private universe.

“Without Self-Awareness, my defense mechanisms are likely to dominate my perceptions.”

Will Schutz



In order to shine the light of the gospel on this area, we must first be able to recognize when we are seeking dominance or preeminence in the affairs of our life. Nobody searches for something until they have an idea of what it looks like. Control is often veiled and inconspicuous, so we must have a detailed mug shot of this perpetrator that comes to steal, kill and destroy.

One example comes from my own life. My first born son, who I love dearly, has reached the beginning stages of the rollercoaster of delight known as adolescence. Now in the previous twelve years of his life, relative control was shared and enjoyed by all. But thirteen brought about substantial changes that have led to seasons of chaos and temporary insanity to our lovely home. One of these instances involved the seemingly over-night attraction to the opposite sex. Thirteen, for me, is too young for a boy to be going out on a date, but of course my son had another view. A girl, in who he was quite fond of, had asked him out to a movie, and instead of calmly articulating my solid argument as to why he could not accept this invitation, I resorted to aggressive power tactics designed to headlock him into submission. My zeal to corral the problem made the situation worse. After having to repent to my son, I explained to him that this is my first time to deal with these circumstances and I was scared of him being put in harms way. I then logically and calmly outlined why he could not, and we came to an understanding.

My need for him to become eight again would only serve to be a stumbling block later, planting the seeds that would do irreparable harm to our relationship. So, I had to stop manipulating and start communicating.

The examples are endless, for instance Les Parrott details several accounts in his book “The Control Freak”.

“I was in the middle of a premarital counseling session with two very in-love people. We were reviewing the results of a compatibility test when a woman ignored the “privacy” sign, knocked on the door, and stuck her head in the office: “Oh, I thought you two might be in here, and I wanted to let you know your father and I are going to take you to dinner when you’re done with the counselor.” It was the groom’s mother. “We’ll be out in the car when you’re ready”, she continued, “but take your time—five or ten minutes maybe?” The young man wilted and started to put on his coat to leave. His fiancée was shocked not only by her soon-to-be mother-in-law’s intrusiveness but also by the soon-to-be-husband’s compliance. “What are you doing?” she asked him. The three of us spent the remaining thirty minutes of our session talking about controlling parents-and-in-laws.”

Dr. Parrott gives another example:

“When a friend of mine learned I was writing a book about Control Freaks, she immediately blurted out, “Oh, you’ve got to write a chapter about my boss. He is the most opinionated and demanding man I’ve ever met.” She went on to tell me that no matter how convincing someone else’s ideas are, he always insists on doing things his way—even if it is more expensive and unnecessary. She also told me it was nearly impossible for this man to delegate. Her boss leaves nothing to chance. He is known for his “just checking” calls to be sure his employees are doing what he wants, the way he wants. Only he knows how things should really be done. “Whatever job he gives you,” she told me, “you can be certain he will eventually critique it, amend it, correct it, improve on it, upgrade it, or in some other way put his stamp on it.”

Trying to get control makes us manipulative, opinionated, impatient, prescriptive, tenacious, insensitive and dictatorial. Compare these attributes with the Fruit of the Spirit prescribed in Galatians 5.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith (faithfulness), meekness, temperance:”

Galatians 5:22, 23 KJV

Notice the stark contrast in these two ways of life. Which one would you choose? Any one with any common sense would choose the latter, but it isn’t always so cut and dried, is it?



There are countless instances in the Bible of Control Freaks (Yes, it was a problem back then as well).

“I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds in which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doeth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casts them out of the church.”
3 John 9, 10 KJV

Diotrephes is in company with Haman, in the book of Ruth, the Judiazers of the First Century Church and their contemporaries, the agnostics. All sought their own way and sought to enforce it in the lives of others. You do not have to walk with the Lord a long time before you run into a Diotrephes, a Haman or a false teacher with a pet doctrine.

However there is another type of Control Freak that isn't as obvious as those in the company of Diotrephes.



**“And Isaac intreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren: and the Lord was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.
And the Lord said unto her , Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.
And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb.
And the first came out red, all over like a hairy garment and they called his name Esau.
And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob:”**

Genesis 25: 23-26 KJV

Here we are introduced to a Control Freak that we will most identify with: Jacob. Jacob was a privileged son of a second generation patriarch known as Isaac. His mother, Rebekah, showed Jacob favoritism and his father showed partiality towards his brother, Esau. We must note that sibling rivalry is almost always instigated by parents, and is often used as a means of control.

Rebekah having received the word of the Lord concerning her sons sees the leaning of her husband Isaac towards Esau as a threat, and instead of resting in the word of God, she begins to devise a plan to manipulate the blessing of the firstborn.

Jacob schooled in his mothers' ways, also devises schemes to relinquish Esau of his birthright.

“The Child is Father of the Man.” William Wadsworth

Hence, a lifelong habit of manipulation is birthed within Jacob that would hinder him for most of his life.

**“And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint:
And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom.
And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright.
And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?
And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.
Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright.”**

Genesis 25: 29-34 KJV



The Manipulation train did not stop there! Upon hearing Isaac command his son Esau to get venison from the field so he can pronounce the blessing upon him, Rebekah disguises Jacob and fools a blind Isaac into believing it is Esau. Robbed of both his birthright and his blessing, Esau vows to kill Jacob causing Rebekah to send Jacob out of the camp, giving him directions to her homeland. (Genesis 27:1-28:6)

The price of their manipulation was that they would never see one another again.

Jacob now alone begins to ponder the path he has taken. This introspection causes Jacob to see his selfishness in pursuing the goods of Abraham, instead of the God of Abraham. The Lord reinforces his covenant with him and Jacob makes a vow that would alter his life. (Genesis 28:11-22)

However, Jacob's lack of trust in the God of his forefathers is noteworthy. He is the first Patriarch to approach God with conditional terms.

“And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, IF God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, So that I come unto my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God;”

Genesis 28:20, 21 KJV

How many of us like Jacob have uttered conditional vows and prayers? Are they not a means of maintaining some control? Jacob did not utterly surrender to the will of God; he gave God a portion of his life, not all of it. Thank God for He is merciful, and He will meet us where we are at. Jacob's vow at Bethel may not have been a declaration of total dependency, but it was an open doorway for God to do a greater work in Jacob's life.

The roots of a Control Freak are stepped in the soil of FEAR, INSECURITY and LACK OF TRUST. Their manipulations are only a means of escaping what they fear the most. By ordering their universe, they are really seeking to squelch their inferiorities and weaknesses. For instance, one who is controlling and manipulative in regards to relationships is really masking a fear of rejection.

“...I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

Genesis 3:10 KJV



Fear of who we truly are causes us to hide behind the bushes of control and order.

“For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and love and a sound mind.”

2 Timothy 1:7 KJV

In his book, “There Were Two Trees in the Garden”, Rick Joyner states,

“When fear controls us, every perception is distorted. Until there is restoration of union with God, a person is utterly alone. You may have relationships with others but true union is not possible until the perfect love of God has cast out all your fears. To the fearful the world is a threat and life is a battle to gain control. When the fearful gain control of a situation the result is oppression. Fear causes overreactions to real or perceived threats to one’s position....The lust for power is fueled by the insecurity of man; his drive for control is often a defense mechanism to protect him from rejection. But power over others will not allay fears; it will increase them.”



“...If you have ever been repeatedly roped into somebody else’s way of doing and being, you know what it feels like to be had by a control freak. And that’s why everyone who has ever been in the presence of a bona fide Control Freak knows the feeling—not only of being annoyed but also of being demeaned. Those are natural products of the Control Freak in action. The very act of someone’s trying to control you sends several negative messages: I don’t trust you to be able to do it right; I don’t respect your judgment; I don’t think you are competent; I don’t value your insight (or skill or experience). Isn’t it true? You feel disrespected because the Control Freak seems to assume you know nothing. Control Freaks can rob you of confidence and self-control. Just how does this happen? Control Freaks’ techniques are numerous: showing false friendliness, giving expensive gifts, making empty promises, sulking, shouting, nagging, being chronically late, withholding affection, bullying, badgering, or just plain bossing people around them. The tools of the control trade are infinite.”

Les Parrott III



“The Anatomy of a Control Freak:

1. **Obnoxious**
-to be hurtful. Ephesians 4:31 & 32
2. **Tenacious**
“The difference between perseverance and obstinacy is that one comes from a strong will, the other from a strong won’t.” Example: Nabal (1 Samuel 25: 2-38)
3. **Invasive**
1 Thessalonians 4:11. “Why has the Lord put you on my heart?”
4. **Obsessive**
Control Freaks cannot see the big picture.
5. **Perfectionistic**
6. **Critical**
7. **Irritable**
8. **Demanding**
9. **Rigid**
10. **Closed-minded**

“It seems easier to be God than to love God, easier to control people than to love people.”

Henri Nouwen

“Selfishness is not living as one wishes to live, it is asking others to live as one wishes to live.”

Oscar Wilde

These tools of the trade are hard to let go of because we are convinced of their proficiency and power. Jacob too had to learn to give up the cache of manipulation. An encounter with God not only changed his name, but his character.

“And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, let me go for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, what is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.”

Genesis 32: 24- 28 KJV

Jacob, which means sup planter, is now being replaced with Israel. No longer a deceiver; and one that reaches for the heel. But a prince with God and man, Jacob's staff is a constant reminder of his dependence on God.

“We must learn to tolerate discomfort in order to grow.”

John Roger & Peter McWilliams

The deliverance from control and manipulation was a life long battle for Jacob. He had to surrender to the God who was really in control.

“In a world we find terrifying, we ratify that which does not threaten us.”

David Mamet

Why Control Freaks act the way they do:

1. **Anxiety** “Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow but only empties today of its strength.” Charles Spurgeon
2. **Extreme Vulnerability**
3. **Insecurity**
4. **Fragile Self-confidence**

“It is hard to fight an enemy that has outposts in your head.”

Sally Kempton

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds: Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;”
2 Corinthians 10:3-5 KJV

Anxiety and these other fear laden flu's are a result of our inner image of perfection and control crashing into the reality and fear that we cannot do all that we believe we can. We must replace this destructive fabricated image of self reliance and replace it with the image of Christ. Romans 12:2 KJV



Stephen Arterburn states in his book co-written by Dr. Meg J. Rinck, “Avoiding Mr. Wrong”,

“What could the Control Freak do to change?”

- 1. Surrender to God, who really is in control.*
- 2. Let go of their performance orientation, which causes them to be demanding of themselves and others.*
- 3. Turn away from the desire to have power over others, by submitting himself to God and practicing giving, not receiving.*
- 4. Look for their own flaws first rather than focusing on others’ failures.*
- 5. Connect with people who are in need of help or are in trouble.*
- 6. Wake up every morning and start with prayer, asking God to be in control and committing to God to give back control when it is inappropriately wrestled away.*
- 7. End each day with jotting down times in a notebook when he was controlling.*
- 8. Make amends to anyone who has been hurt by his controlling nature in the past.”*

