



STUDY 1
UNDERSTANDING CONTROLLERS

**“He who trusts in himself is a fool, but
he who walks in wisdom is kept safe.”**

Prov. 28:26

The Controllers

UNDERSTANDING CONTROLLERS

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CHARACTERISTICS OF CONTROLLERS: ROOT CAUSES

- I. The root of all sinful beliefs, motives and strategies of both types of controllers is pride. **Pride** is manifested by
 - A. Unbelief in God's character, His commands, promises and resources to satisfy, fulfill and equip him to live the Christian life
 - B. Unbelief in God's unearned love, grace, power and faithfulness having effective applications to his life
 - C. Belief in Satan's lies concerning
 1. who God is and how God relates to him
 2. who is he in relation to a holy God
 3. his position and identity in Christ
 - D. Reliance upon and trust in self rather than God

“PRIDE IS THE SIN OF MAKING ‘SELF’ OUR GOD.”¹
OSWALD CHAMBERS

- E. The sins of unbelief and self-trust include:
 1. Not understanding and receiving God's grace and unearned love or realizing these are freely given because of the character of the *Giver* and not the *receiver*
 - a. He does not believe God loves him just as much when he sins as when he is obedient. (Rom. 8:35,37-39)
 - 1) He may focus on his unworthiness rather than God's mercy, grace and love. Therefore, he refuses to accept God's love for himself as he is.

- 2) He may strive to become perfect to merit the approval of God and others.
- b. He may think he *is* worthy or can *make* himself worthy of Christ's love and favor.
 - 1) He may think he *deserves* a happy life because he views himself as basically good, and he is proud of his achievements and/or outward religiosity.
 - 2) He believes God exists to serve him rather than the truth that he exists for God's purposes. (Rom. 8:28)
 - 3) He equates his biblical knowledge and/or leadership with being a strong Christian.
- c. He focuses on his performance to win attention, approval and love from God/others.
- d. He may think he can cause his own *spiritual* growth, rather than seeing that only God causes growth through His grace and power. (1 Cor. 3:6,7)
2. Becoming his own god, unwilling to let the one true God control his life and the lives of others with whom he is involved
3. Refusing to trust God with all his heart, believing He is not worthy of that trust but rather, trusts in himself (Prov. 3:5,6)
 - a. He does not really believe that God has the means to satisfy and fulfill him in a relationship with Him. (John 4:14)
 - b. He does not truly understand that God's thoughts and ways are higher than his own thoughts and ways, so his mind and will stand in opposition to God's. (Is. 55:8,9)
 - c. He lacks trust in God's commandments and does not believe they will bring beneficial results. (Matt. 11:28-30)
 - d. He does not trust in God's promises. (2 Pet. 1:4)
 - e. He does not trust God to work through his human authority for his ultimate benefit.

- f. He often views his Heavenly Father as having the same ungodly character that his earthly father had. (Ps. 18:30-32)
 - g. He judges God's love in terms of receiving or not receiving what he demands/desires from Him, rather than on the basis of biblical truth.
4. The controller lacks understanding about the biblical doctrine of suffering.
- a. He regards suffering as negative rather than, as God views it, as positive in the believer's life to accomplish His purposes. (Ps. 119:75)
 - b. He fears suffering and does all he can to block it, to prevent it or to avoid it.
 - c. He views himself as not *deserving* to suffer. Instead, he believes he *deserves* good gifts from God.
 - d. He may believe obedience to God will, or at least should, prevent future suffering. He tries to bargain with God.
 - e. He refuses to be content with the people and circumstances God has sovereignly placed in his life.
 - f. He does not choose to believe that God has sovereignly designed a *perfect way*, which includes hardship, to accomplish what He wishes in each Christian. (Ps. 18:30-36)
5. He does not place his hope in the Lord to uphold him and to tenderly care for him in the midst of trial. Rather, he places his hope in God changing his circumstances, with his considerable help!
- a. He often tries to control God and/or take God's role by
 - 1) demanding God do things *his way*.
 - 2) insisting that his ways are much better than God's ways.
 - 3) trying to "fix" people and situations.
 - b. He often gets angry at God and loses hope when he loses control over his world. He quarrels with God. (Is. 45:9)

NOTE: The controlling Christian may understand biblical principles intellectually, but not respond to them on a life-changing level.

- II. The sin of unbelief causes **fear** in its many forms. See *Releasing Fears* for a development of this subject.
 - A. Fear of not being in control of people and/or circumstances in his life
 - B. Fear of exposure of his sin and/or of consequences for his sin
 - C. Fear of God's sovereign control over his life
 - 1. He believes that God does not know what is best for him and will not work all things for good. (Rom. 8:28; Ps. 18:30)
 - 2. He believes he will not receive what he desires from God, and thus, will be unhappy and unfulfilled. (John 10:10b)
 - 3. He questions and rails against God's plan and refuses to graciously surrender to it, believing he can change God's mind and get Him to acquiesce to his demands. (Is. 45:9)
 - 4. He fears tragedies from the past may be repeated.
 - 5. He fears surrendering to God as The Blessed Controller of his life.
 - D. Fear of rejection
 - 1. A controller may fear God's rejection if he fails to please Him.
 - 2. A controller often fears rejection of others, which may be manifested by
 - a. avoiding intimate relationships.
 - b. avoiding taking uncomfortable risks in obedience to God.
 - c. being unwilling to handle being hurt by others in a biblical manner.

- d. escaping commitments and responsibilities that are fearful to him.
- e. avoiding having his sin and weaknesses exposed.
- f. avoiding accountability; vulnerability.
- g. avoiding the risks of giving love or accepting love.

E. Fear of failure

1. He may fear the loss of God's love and acceptance, which he views as conditional, earned and based on his performance.
2. He may fear personal failure, such as loss of reputation, success and popularity.
3. He is often very performance-oriented because it is his means to acceptance.
4. He may be a perfectionist who will not accept failure and/or blames others for his failures.

F. Fear of the future, the unknown

1. His fear of the future often motivates him to make his own plans apart from God's direction and to try to execute them. (Jas. 4:13-15; Is. 30:1)
2. His fear of the future may cause him to withdraw from responsibility, to procrastinate on making decisions and/or to avoid risk-taking in obedience to Christ.
3. His fear is a manifestation of not trusting God or His plans, and not yielding control of his life to Him.

III. The motives of pride and fear produce **self-protective attitudes, strategies and behaviors and unbiblical goals.**

- A. He establishes unbiblical goals based on his erroneous beliefs and sinful motives.
- B. He attempts to reach his unbiblical goals through sinful strategies.

- IV. The person whose life is *characterized* by sinful controlling strategies must realize he has a new identity in Christ.
- A. His old nature has died, and he has been given the nature of Christ. (2 Tim. 2:11; Gal. 2:20)
- B. The good news is that he now has the ability in his new nature and the resources of the Holy Spirit within him
1. to shed his sinful controlling strategies.
 2. to live out his new identity *experientially*.
- C. The changes will come as he
1. establishes God's goals, which are
 - a. to glorify Him with his life. (1 Pet. 4:11; Is. 43:7; 1 Cor. 10:31)
 - b. to grow in godliness; to be conformed to Christ's image. (Eph. 5:1; 1 Tim. 4:7,8; Rom. 8:29)
 - c. to know God intimately. (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20; Phil. 3:8-10)
 - d. to serve His eternal purposes. (1 Pet. 2:9; John 15:5,8,16a)
 2. identifies and repents of sinful motives, attitudes, thinking and behaviors that constitute his sinful emotional survival system. (Eph. 5:15-17)
 3. makes godly decisions that will develop a life *characterized* by being under the control of the Holy Spirit and God's Word.
 4. understands he will never attain perfection – that he will battle the flesh until the day he dies. (Rom. 7:15-25)

“ You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

EPH. 4:22-24

The chart on the following two pages describes the traits of the controller of people and the controller of circumstances. Please highlight the traits that *characterize* your life, both in the past and in the present. Since you may exhibit one pattern of control in your family unit and another outside the home, please highlight how you respond in your family because who you are at home is who you truly are.

When the chart is completed proceed to the lesson which *most* characterizes your life, either *The Controller of People* or *The Controller of Circumstances*.

A CONTRAST AND COMPARISON OF CONTROL STRATEGIES		
	CONTROLLER OF PEOPLE	CONTROLLER OF CIRCUMSTANCES
Strategy	Attempts to control people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Controls his world by overt or stoic intimidation over others 	Attempts to control circumstances <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Controls his world through mental strategies and pleasing others
Goal	Wants people to respond a certain way <ul style="list-style-type: none"> believes others exist to please him 	Wants circumstances to be comfortable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> believe he exists to make others happy
Motivation	Lust for Power <ul style="list-style-type: none"> performance is a means to control 	Lust for Pleasure, Comfort, Peace <ul style="list-style-type: none"> performance is a means to acceptance
View of Self	<i>Spiritual</i> because he focuses on others' sins rather than his own <ul style="list-style-type: none"> biblically knowledgeable = mature Christian victim/martyr because others don't please him; blames others feels superior to others takes himself too seriously - lacks humor 	<i>Spiritual</i> because his sin is subtle and covert <ul style="list-style-type: none"> likeable person; "nice guy;" "nice gal" = mature Christian victim/martyr because can't please others or they "use" him Feels inferior to others
Attitude Toward God	Angry at God because he cannot control Him to get his way <ul style="list-style-type: none"> excuses / justifies his sin believes God does not love him because God does not meet his expectations of love refuses to trust God--He is not worthy of that trust 	Angry at God because He doesn't make his life comfortable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ignores / minimizes his sin believes God does not love him because circumstances aren't pleasant, peaceful fears God's sovereign control – He may not bring happiness
Controlled By Fear	Fears the future so he tries to control it <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fears rejection if he does not control others fears failure if loss of reputation or superior position Fears loss of control over others fears loss of his reputation; demands acceptance Fears emotional vulnerability - it will take away his "control" position or acceptance 	Fears the future so he tries to ignore it <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fears rejection if he does not please others fears rejection so he withdraws to protect himself Fears loss of peace, comfort, acceptance fears suffering so does all he can to block, ignore, prevent or avoid it Fears emotional vulnerability – self-disclosure may bring rejection
Viewed by Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> as difficult, unpleasant, invulnerable influences others around them to feel like they are "walking on eggshells" is insensitive, unapproachable, frightening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> as pleasant and easy going; gets along well with most people accommodates/reaches compromises quickly anticipates and meets others' desires

A CONTRAST AND COMPARISON OF CONTROL STRATEGIES		
	CONTROLLER OF PEOPLE	CONTROLLER OF CIRCUMSTANCES
Self-protective Strategies	Attempts to convince <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses intellect and logic to convince • demands agreement with his opinions • frequently admonishes, even over petty things • unteachable; has tunnel vision • rewrites history to confuse responder • unreasonable expectations; often “ups the ante,” demanding more and more • makes everything a “win-lose” situation 	Attempts to avoid conflict at any cost <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • doesn’t want to make anyone angry • feels guilty when telling others “no” • avoids admonishing, addressing problems or rocking the boat • conflict is always viewed as negative or personal rejection • is a victim/martyr because he allows others to intimidate and control him • withdraws to protect self from emotional pain
	Intimidates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physically or emotionally abusive • controls through fear tactics • loses control of temper; angry • is dictatorial; authoritative 	Uses mental strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minimizes and/or ignores difficulties • looks through “rose color glasses” • retreats into pleasurable entertainment (TV, movies, computer, etc)
	Manipulates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses bribes or threats • withdraws to punish • enables, rescues to preserve reputation or to maintain control • rejects others as a means to control/retaliate • makes mountains out of molehills 	Forgets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conditions mind to forget • avoids being overwhelmed/responsible • fails to see what is important • makes promises to alleviate immediate tension, then does not follow through • makes molehills our of mountains
	Enables/rescues in order to protect reputation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • easily hurt by others or hardened towards others • focuses on sins of others to justify control • controls and enables to meet own desires/demands • Rejects others when demands not met • Wants others dependent upon him • Very analytical of God, himself and others • Projects into future; makes plans to avoid potential problems • Marries a controller of circumstances 	Enables/rescues to please others or avoid suffering <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pleases to receive acceptance; wants to be needed • excuses, ignores or minimizes sins of others • controls/gives to others to meet own perceived needs • Rejects others to avoid further pain • Wants to be dependent upon others • Avoids analyzing God, himself and others • avoids expressing “opinions” that might not be accepted • Marries a controller of people
Results	Feels superior to others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • intense person; very tense when unable to control • intolerant and unforgiving 	Feels he deserves to be punished by those he displeases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • flexible and rolls with the tide • very tolerant; wants peace at all costs

A CONTRAST AND COMPARISON OF CONTROL STRATEGIES STAGE 2		
	CONTROLLER OF PEOPLE	CONTROLLER OF CIRCUMSTANCES
When Reality Hits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compares ideal with his inability to control others • intense fear • intense anger at those he cannot control or at God for allowing uncooperative people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compares reality with ideal or fantasy • dissatisfaction • helplessness, hopelessness and despair • anger because of giving & not receiving in return
When Strategy No longer Works	<p>Sees that strategy is not working - pain is inevitable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • usually uncontrollable crisis has hit • loss of control is inevitable • feels abandoned or betrayed by God/others • Becomes totally overwhelmed by inability to control with current strategy • becomes more controlling out of pride/fear • experiences great anxiety and doubt • escapes, rebels, irresponsible • “gives up;” depressed; suicidal 	<p>Sees that strategy is not working – pain is a reality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • usually painful crisis has hit • emotional pain is unavoidable • feels abandoned or betrayed by those he has tried to please • Becomes totally overwhelmed by inability to control with current strategy: • comes out fighting” (assumes traits of controller of people) • experiences great pain and doubt • escapes, rebels, irresponsible • “gives up;” depressed; suicidal
Controlling Husband	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • makes decisions without wife’s input • regards his wife as inferior or a “possession” • disdainful, judgmental, demeaning, disrespectful • threatened of wife’s opinions • confronts his wife harshly and unjustly • makes more and more demands of her 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fears wife; controlled by her intimidation • passive and withdrawn • allows his wife to lead; fears failure • pleases her to be affirmed or to diffuse conflict • controlled by wife’s opinions • refuses to admonish/confront her
Controlling Wife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • becomes the primary decision maker • fights for control of decision making • intolerant when demands not met • views every decision as “win-lose” • may “appear” submissive externally but finds a way to still control, thinking her way is best • views husband as inferior or weak • disrespectful of him • thinks he is the problem • condemning, disdainful, demeaning • critical of his lack of leadership but then criticizes him when he does try to lead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • finds security in being controlled and dominated • tolerates sinful behavior and/or physical abuse • tries to meet all of his expectations or demands; be the person she thinks husband expects of her • sees her role to make him happy • thinks she is the problem or at fault • tries to suppress growing bitterness toward him • avoids expressing her opinions • refuses to admonish/confront him
Hope for the Controller	<p>Hope lies in a vital relationship with Jesus Christ and His power to free him from this life-dominating sin.</p>	