



STUDY 6
PATTERNS OF CONTROLLERS IN
MARRIAGE

God's call on your life is to learn to "walk by faith," experiencing the supernatural life in Christ. Therefore, you must renounce the old patterns of relating and replace them with God's design for the husband and wife.

The Controllers

PATTERNS OF CONTROLLERS IN MARRIAGE

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CONTROLLER'S SINS MANIFESTED IN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

- I. Controllers of people and controllers of circumstances often marry one another because in courtship, they initially mesh well.
 - A. The controller of people is programmed to believe others exist to please him/her and feels secure in controlling.
 - B. The controller of circumstances is programmed to believe that he/she exists to please others and feels secure in being controlled.

- II. Controllers often cover over existing or potential problems *in the courtship*.
 - A. The controller of people may hide (consciously or unconsciously) his/her anger and/or strong controlling drives to “win” a potential spouse.
 - B. The controller of circumstances tends to put on “rose-colored glasses,” ignoring painful realities and potential problems manifested in the courtship.
 - C. The controller of circumstances tends to feel he/she is at fault in most disagreements and may rush in to make “peace” by taking responsibility when he/she was not responsible.
 - D. Both may believe that the other will change when they are married.
 - E. Both may believe that the marriage will be good simply because they are Christians.

- III. Controllers of people who marry controllers of circumstances often run into trouble.
 - A. The controller of people is progressively angered by the controller of circumstance's inability to please him/her.

- B. The controller of circumstances wearies of continually trying to please the spouse. He/she usually gives with expectations of return.
- IV. The **controller of people in the role of husband** manifests some of these strategies of control:
- A. Makes decisions without encouraging any input from his wife, or if given, her input may be ridiculed or quickly dismissed
 - B. Is very threatened of his wife's opinions
 - C. Is a male chauvinist-type personality, regarding his wife as inferior
 - 1. Sometimes acts as though he is the "master" and she is his "slave"
 - 2. May treat her more as a "possession" than a person
 - D. Convinces himself that his wife is unimportant and
 - 1. detaches emotionally and perhaps physically from her
 - 2. is emotionally abusive, quietly intimidating and/or physically abusive
 - E. Is either stoic or explosive with his feelings
 - F. Fears being vulnerable to his wife because he views that vulnerability as loss of control over her and over the relationship
 - G. Is demanding, selfish and insensitive to her
 - H. Is very demanding sexually to build his ego
 - I. Views his wife's submission as requiring that she also *agree* with him, which is not what God requires
 - J. Is oblivious to how his intimidation is alienating her and creating a hostile, unloving atmosphere in the home

- V. The **wife who is a controller of circumstances** and is married to a controller of people manifests some of these controlling strategies:
- A. Becomes a mere extension of her husband, existing to do his bidding and to please him
 - B. May be described as a “doormat”
 - C. Is repressed and afraid to express opinions or think for herself
 - D. Withdraws emotionally, becoming invulnerable to protect herself from further rejection
 - E. Will not admonish him because of fearing his sinful responses
 - F. Will initially suppress the painful reality of her marriage, but
 - 1. bitterness and resentment will build when she can no longer deny reality
 - 2. expressions of her anger may not be overt because she is often terrified of her husband’s controlling responses
 - G. May finally overtly rebel when she awakens to the reality that she will never please him. See *Stage 2* in *The Controller of Circumstances*.
- VI. The **controller of people in the role of a wife** manifests some of the following sinful attitudes and behaviors:
- A. Becomes the primary decision-maker in the marriage relationship through overt intimidation and/or subtle manipulation
 - 1. Views her way as the only way – “tunnel vision”
 - 2. Uses her intellect, intimidation, “guilt trips,” martyrdom, lectures and/or bribery to cower him into submission to her
 - 3. Views every disagreement on a “win-lose” basis

- B. Will not be the decision-maker on rare occasions because her husband is strong enough to resist her control,
 - 1. which leads to many battles of the wills
 - 2. which may lead to her being emotionally and/or physically abused by her husband

- C. May *appear* to be very submissive to her husband; she may actually believe that she is submissive because she obeys her husband by serving his external needs, such as keeping a neat house, being submissive sexually and/or preparing meals he likes
 - 1. She actually controls him with her intellect and logic, convincing him that her ideas and input are right.
 - 2. He then “makes” decisions that agree with her input because he fears disagreeing with her.

- D. Is an “enabler” of her husband’s lack of leadership and irresponsibility because she
 - 1. fears submitting to his decisions, believing she has a better way
 - 2. refuses to entrust herself to God if he makes poor decisions
 - 3. will not step out of the leadership role
 - a. since she doesn’t want to suffer or want her children to suffer while she waits for him to assume leadership
 - b. because she won’t allow him to fail, so he will eventually learn that she is not going to make decisions and take over his responsibilities
 - 4. is very critical of his lack of leadership, even though she enables him to stay in that position
 - 5. is very critical of his decisions and may even refuse to submit if he tries to become the leader
 - 6. develops her self-identity

a. as a martyr because of his sin

b. as the “good Christian wife” because he appears to be the “bad guy”

E. Becomes increasingly angry at and critical of him; lacks respect for him because

1. he won’t take the leadership, and she resents being the leader

2. he will not admonish or take a stand against her, which is what she *really* desires even though she will probably get angry at him if he tries to do so

3. she views her husband as inferior to her and weak, because she can control him

F. Is oblivious to how her control and lack of submission alienates her husband

VII. The **husband, who is a controller of circumstances**, develops sinful patterns of coping with a controller of people wife.

A. Is controlled by fear of her

1. He is fearful of punishment, retaliation or rejection if his wife is not pleased.

2. He fears any conflict with her.

3. He feels threatened, oppressed, describing his relationship with his wife as having to “walk on eggshells.”

B. Tries to please her by whatever means he can

C. Abdicates his leadership

1. He may not admit it, but he is often fearful of making decisions when the opportunity is presented for him to do so.

2. He doesn’t want to think about life’s problems and how to deal with them

a. because they aren’t pleasant to think about.

- b. so he leaves the decision making to his wife, but then may resent her for taking his role and may blame her when her decisions are not to his liking.
- 3. He refuses to “tangle” with his wife or to confront her sin because he is more fearful of her responses than of disobeying God.
- D. Is oblivious to how his procrastination, lack of decisiveness, withdrawal, unwillingness to admonish and to address problems affects his wife adversely
- E. Does not realize his lack of leadership and refusal to admonish her influences her to disrespect him and to view him as weak
- F. May eventually tire of her demands and move into *Controller of Circumstances* “Stage 2” attitudes and behaviors
 - 1. He realizes the futility of trying to satisfy his wife because his efforts to do so have not been rewarded.
 - 2. He can no longer deny the emotional pain caused by his overtly controlling spouse.
 - 3. He refuses to be controlled or dominated, although he may not want to take the leadership if the opportunity presents itself to do so. He attempts to free himself from her control through one or more of the following sinful means:
 - a. He *withdraws* from all attempts to be the decision maker and family leader.
 - 1) He quietly lets her “do her own thing;” he may be considered a “milque-toast.”
 - 2) He usually emotionally withdraws in other areas of relationship, becoming disengaged and uninvolved, “tuned out.”
 - 3) He may withdraw sexually as a conscious or unconscious means to resist her control and/or retaliate in one area that he can still control.
 - b. He *comes out fighting* verbally and/or physically to fend off her control. Sometimes the battered wife is the controller of people.
 - c. He *verbally agrees* with her requests/demands in order to keep an immediate peace, but then does not do what he agreed to do.

d. He *hardens* his heart and *numbs* his spirit toward her.

VIII. **Two controllers of circumstances** may create a marriage that is characterized by the following:

- A. A superficial relationship, although reasonably harmonious
- B. The problems or potential problems with each other and children are glossed over, addressed superficially or not addressed at all
- C. A tendency to “drift” through life, being comfortable with the status quo, avoiding and ignoring
 - 1. anything that would “rock the boat,” including admonishments or conflicts
 - 2. unpleasant realities, unless perhaps a crisis demands their attention
- D. A lack of spontaneity, adventure or “spark”

IX. **Two controllers of people** rarely marry. They usually break up because of a stormy courtship. However, if they do marry, they can expect these difficulties:

- A. Their marriage will be combative.
- B. Their marriage will be an ongoing fight for control and leadership.

X. Both types of controllers will have some of the same attitudes and perceptions.

- A. Try to maintain some level of control and protection from emotional pain by becoming emotionally invulnerable and withdrawing emotionally
- B. Have some level of awareness of “hitting a wall” or a barrier in their spouse, which disallows a vulnerable relationship, but believes the spouse is solely responsible
- C. Be oblivious as to how their sinful patterns are contributing to the problems in marriage and blame the spouse

- D. Not love each other unconditionally
 - E. Have a sinful dependency on the spouse's form of control
 - F. Not see their unsatisfactory relationship as a form of *God's discipline*, which is designed to bring them to repentance (Jas. 4:6; Gal. 6:7,8)
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Both must realize that God wants to free them of their methods of control by submitting to Him and His Word. Each must be willing to obey, even if the spouse does not.
