



# Helping Controllers

The purpose for presenting *The Controllers* studies is to create an awareness in your disciple about his sinful strategies of control so that he may repent and establish a firmer relationship with Christ and submission to His control.

The goal of these studies is NOT to pin a label on a disciple as a controller of people or a controller of circumstances but rather to have the disciple identify his sinful motives and controlling attitudes and behaviors *when he is walking in the flesh*. Be sure to stress that although his life may still be characterized by controlling attitudes and strategies, he is already a *new creation in Christ!* You should encourage him to dismantle his “sinful emotional survival plan” comprised of his motives, goals and control strategies, so that he can experientially live out his new identity.

## I. Goals for the disciple:

- A. To help *identify* his sinful motives and controlling attitudes and behaviors
- B. To recognize his sinful motives, which produce controlling attitudes and behaviors so that he can confess and dismantle them
- C. To encourage reliance upon and belief in the character, commands and promises of God rather than reliance upon his sinful strategies
- D. To accept God’s sovereign plan for adversity rather than trying to sinfully control, fix, change, avoid, ignore or escape it
- E. To find satisfaction and fulfillment in his relationship to Christ rather than primarily seeking these through his circumstances
- F. To develop a lifestyle *characterized* by being under the control of the Holy Spirit and God’s Word rather than controlled by his self-life strategies.

## II. Important concepts:

- A. *Everyone* resorts to controlling strategies when walking in the flesh.
- B. Ignorance of strategies leaves a person in a state of repeating sinful attitudes and behaviors or resorting to new schemes, usually compounding the problems.
- C. Perfection is not an attainable goal. Trying to reach perfection is a goal that is sinful. No man can become perfect. See *The Perfectionist* in *The Controllers* for further explanations.
- D. The battle between the flesh and the Spirit will continue in this earthly existence. (Rom. 7)
- E. Identification of the *motives and means of control* is the goal rather than labeling the disciple’s category as controller of people or controller of circumstances.
  1. Some disciples will not fit neatly into either the controller of people or the controller of circumstances categories.
  2. Some people may display a number of characteristics of both types of controllers. They are “switch-hitters”. To reiterate, the category is not important, but identifying his specific sinful strategies of control is the goal.

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3. All disciples should familiarize themselves with *The Controller of People, CTO*, as well as *The Controller of Circumstances* and both studies on *Patterns in Decision Making* to identify their thinking processes, motives, goals and behaviors since they often will use strategies of both.
4. A controller of circumstances can also manifest the attitudes and behaviors of the controller of people. (See the diagrams at the end of the *Controller of Circumstances* study for clarification.)
  - a. because he has reached “Stage Two,” in which his original strategies of ignoring problems and people-pleasing no longer work.
  - b. but he is still a controller of circumstances who has crashed through the wall of painful reality and has taken on more overt forms of control.
  - c. that is one reason why it is important to highlight both past and present traits.

### III. Instructions for use of *The Controllers* studies:

- Continue to gather data on his past relationships with parents, in-laws, ex-spouses, teachers, etc., as well as his present ways of relating.
- After your disciple has read *Understanding Controllers*, (section A), instruct him to highlight the areas that **now** characterize or **have** characterized his life in the past in the *Contrast and Comparison* chart at the end of this study.
- Ask him to evaluate his control strategies *in relation to his spouse and children*. The person your disciple is in his home is usually the person he *really* is because it is difficult to maintain an image while living with others day in and day out.
- When he returns with his chart, note which side is more highlighted. That usually determines which controller’s study you assign first. Recommend that your disciple highlight the traits that characterize his strategies, both in the past and in the present, in whichever study you assign.
- If he has nearly the same number of traits for each type of controller highlighted from the chart, you may begin with either *The Controller of People* or *The Controller of Circumstances*.
- When he has completed that homework, assign him *Patterns in Decision Making*, which coincides with his form of control, asking him to also highlight what characterizes his thinking and decision-making patterns.
- Then the opposite studies should be read to discover other strategies he may use. The opposite studies often characterize the disciple’s spouse and/or give understanding to other people’s strategies for control, with whom he also interacts.
- During each follow-up session on the various studies, ask him to read out loud the areas he highlighted so you are able to discuss his observations concerning his strategies. This exercise also is important because it gives you the opportunity to point out traits or thinking that you believe he exhibits, which he has not highlighted.

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- You may also ask him to do a confession from his highlighted lists and/or seek forgiveness of his spouse for sins that were not included in his original reconciliation list.
- Perhaps when several controllers' studies have been completed, it would be wise to have your disciple review the first study, *Understanding Controllers*, which outlines the sinful belief system that leads to all other controlling attitudes and behaviors. The truths contained in this study may be far more meaningful to him than the first time he read that lesson because he has identified the strategies that are the outflow of the core sins discussed in the first lesson.

### IV. Various forms of control:

- A. Control strategies may vary, depending on the relationships and *roles* in relationships. For example:
  1. A husband may be a controller of circumstances in relationship to his wife, who may not respect or affirm him. He may become a controller of people at work or in a ministry where he is affirmed and respected.
  2. A wife may control her husband but be a people-pleaser outside the home because she doesn't want to alienate her friends.
  3. A child may be a controller of circumstances in relation to his domineering parent, but choose a spouse who he can control and take on the characteristics of the controlling parent, becoming like the parent he disliked or hated!!
- B. The disciple may change forms of control from one marriage to the next. For example:
  1. A spouse who was overtly controlling and intimidating in the first marriage may realize that those strategies did not work, so he then assumes a people-pleasing, refusal to admonish stance in the second marriage. The opposite can also be true.
  2. He or she will often choose a spouse that is the opposite personality type from the first partner. If a woman has been a "doormat" in relationship to a domineering first husband, she may choose a second spouse who is a controller of circumstances who she can control.

### V. Importance of renewing the mind:

- The key to transformation is the **repeated** renewing of his mind. (Rom. 12:2)
- Renewing his mind is *crucial* to dismantling all areas of sinful control, so therefore, it is important to *remind* him to do so both verbally during your sessions and by the homework assignments you give him.
- Teach him that God's truth will often run contrary to his feelings and logic.
- Not only should you begin to encourage biblical ways to change controlling behaviors, but also the same must be done for the *thinking processes* by which he reaches decisions. It is very important that he counteract his erroneous beliefs with truth because they are the *cause* of his sinful decisions. See *The Battle for the Mind* diagram in *Renewing Your Mind, CTO*.
- If he can *catch* the sinful motive and thought, confess and renew his mind with truth, he will hopefully not *act* on them.

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- Assign repeatedly for his homework to *practice* renewing his mind. Ask him to give examples each week of how he renewed his mind and the result of that choice. .
- Remind him that what he chooses to believe determines his feelings, attitudes and behaviors. (Mark 7:21-23) .
- Get tough with a disciple who is lax in disciplining his mind. You may tell him to not permit his mind to “go down sinful corridors.” It is an indulgence he cannot afford. Tell him to be “ruthless” in catching and confessing his sin. .
- Remind him that his trust in God is developed by minute by minute choices to either believe truth or lies, irregardless of feelings. The more often he chooses to believe truth and to act on it, the sooner it will become reality to him.

### VI. Concepts for biblical thinking:

- A. Focusing on Christ and His finished work day by day, hour by hour and minute by minute
- B. Accepting and receiving God’s love for him and goodness toward him ~ Ask him to memorize and to repeatedly renew his mind with any of the following suggestions or similar ideas:
  - “I choose to believe God loves me through these difficult times.” (Ps. 25:8-10)
  - “He *is* working all things for good. I am called for *His* purpose and plan, not my own.” (Rom. 8:28)
  - “I will trust in God’s goodness, even in the dark times.” (Ps. 32:19; 27:13; 34:8)
  - “If I look for them, there will be ‘treasures in darkness.’ ” (Is. 45:3; 43:19) Assign him to go on a “God Hunt” and record on the *Daily Log* (located on the website under *Discipling Tools*) how God manifested Himself each day.
  - “I realize that God’s unearned and unconditional love for me is based on *His* character as the Giver rather than my character as the receiver.”
- C. Choosing to trust in God and all He offers ~ Perhaps asking your disciple to memorize and renew his mind with these truths will be helpful:
  1. His perfect character and His ways of working (Prov. 3:5,6; Ps. 18:30-36)
  2. His commands, which are designed to guide him and to protect him from the consequences of his own sin. When practiced as a way of life, they are not burdensome. (Ps. 25:4,5; 32:8; 1 John 5:3) Review *Establishing Confidence in God’s Word and Prayer*.
  3. His promises, which are guarantees (Josh. 23:14; Ps. 119:140; 2 Pet.1:4)
- D. Relying on the *fact* that the Holy Spirit’s power can change him ~ Ask him to memorize verses that assure him of that truth. (Phil. 2:13; 4:13)
  1. Encourage him to see his drive to control as weakness and sin, which God’s grace can overcome through His sufficiency. (2 Cor. 12:9,10)
  2. Perhaps he should repeatedly read Romans 8 if he has a difficult time repenting of sin.

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3. Teach the concepts of pride, humility and Christ's power and grace to set him free from the drive to control. (Phil. 4:13; Rom. 6:7,8; 2 Cor. 12:9,10) Review these principles in *Understanding the Call to Obedience; Pride and Rebellion, CTO*.
- E. Viewing God's discipline as an act of love, given to correct and to produce the fruit of righteousness. (Heb. 12:5-11)
- F. Choosing to believe his new identity is in Christ. He is a new creation; his old nature is dead and he has been given the nature of Christ Himself. (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 2:20; Rom.8)
- G. Giving thanks *repeatedly* for the hardships and difficulties, as well as for his many blessings ~ Include this assignment on his homework sheet frequently. Assign *Thanksgiving, Called to Brokenness* if ingratitude and negative thinking persist.
- H. Confessing his fears of letting go of sinful control strategies by asking him to list specific fears and implementing *Steps to Releasing Fears to God in Fear, CTO*

### VII. Biblical view of failure:

- A. Realize that he is not a *failure* (that is not his new identity!). Instead, encourage him that he is a child of God who fails at times. Therefore, he can start each day with a new slate. (Lam. 3:22,23)
- B. Realize he will fail repeatedly but that God loves and accepts him just as much when he sins as when he is obedient. Examples from Scripture to direct him to:
  1. Christ's response to Peter's failure in John 21:15-17
  2. Paul's failures as a strong believer in Romans 7 and God's response in Rom. 8:1
- C. Understanding that there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus. Jesus was condemned in his place. (Rom. 8:1)
- D. Believe that God will continue the good work He has begun in Him. (Phil. 1:6)
- E. Believe that God is stripping him of his forms of control because He desires to draw him into a deeper, more trusting and intimate relationship with Himself. (Phil. 3:10)
- F. Abolish perfection as a goal. He must understand that he will continue to sin until the day he dies. (Rom. 7) (See *The Perfectionist* in the *Controllers*.)
- G. Evidence of saving grace is a repentant heart and growth in godliness.

### VIII. Perseverance in following Christ:

- A. To hope in the Lord's love and grace to sustain and nurture him, rather than placing hope in God to change his circumstances (Ps. 42:5,11; 43:5) See *Hope, CTD*.
- B. To obey God *before* he sees blessing ~ Obedience is often required by God before He manifests Himself to the believer. (John 14:21; 2 Cor. 5:7) See *Understanding the Call to Obedience, CTO*.
- C. To persevere in obedience when the going gets rough and/or the trials seem endless Gal. 6:9; Jas. 1:2-4; Rom. 5:3-5)

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- D. To realize that learning to wait on the Lord is a great discipline of the faith, which God uses to develop character (Ps. 33:20-22; 37:7a; 34a; 27:14)
- E. To surrender perceived rights and expectations to the Lord
- F. To *repeatedly* surrender his loved ones to God's control, realizing that God can deal with them far better than he can. The Lord's ways are perfect for them also. (Ps. 18:30-32)

### IX. The gospel on a life-changing level:

- A. The disciple may demonstrate through his attitudes and behaviors that he really thinks he deserves salvation and other good things from God. See *Plan of Salvation; Understanding God's Grace and Love, CTO*.
- B. Some controllers are very performance-oriented in their relationship to God.
  - 1. Trying experientially to "work their way to heaven" even though they know the facts of salvation by faith alone
  - 2. Believing if they are obedient they can control God
  - 3. Bargaining with Him; thinking they can gain greater favor with Him
    - a. so He will not allow them to suffer
    - b. so He will love and accept them more fully
- C. Often these erroneous concepts are based on a relationship with a parent who was very controlling, negative, critical, a perfectionist, a legalist, and/or imposed high expectations on the child.
- D. You need to frequently remind him that God's character toward His children is not his father's.

### X. Difficulties in breaking his life-dominating demands to control:

- A. Sinful control has been his *only* means of emotional survival, and he may cling tenaciously to the old survival patterns.
- B. He may become very angry, defensive, argumentative and/or quietly resistant when the truth is shared with him because it threatens the *only* means that have sustained him thus far.
- C. He has a deep lack of trust in God and others; therefore, he is *terrified* to let go of control.
  - 1. The more aggressive, angry and intimidating he is, the more frightened and weak he is.
  - 2. His misery, which is the fruit of his sinful control and the Lord's discipline, is preferable to him rather than taking the risks necessary to follow Jesus. (Jas. 4:6; Ps. 32:1-5; Gal. 6:7,8; Heb. 12:5-11)
    - a. Unbelief in God and fear of loss of control dominate his thinking and therefore, motivate his behavior.
    - b. Misery is more familiar and comfortable than taking the risks required to obey.

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- D. You must consider your disciple's welfare more important than your own and take the risks necessary to continue to speak the truth in love. (Phil. 2:3,4)

### XI. Controlling tactics in the session:

- A. Talks continually so you are not able to accomplish your goals
1. You may need to refer him to "Good Listener/Poor Listener" chart in *Communication, CTO* early in the process.
  2. He may be sharing interesting experiences, but if he frequently gets off on "rabbit trails," he will control the direction of the session.
- B. Deflects serious subjects or admonishments by laughing at inappropriate times, minimizing of the situation, using humor to distract you.
- C. Comes to sessions with one crisis after another
1. Realize you may be dealing with a "crisis-causer."
  2. Realize that at times it is appropriate to drop your goals to deal with the crisis, but if this is a *pattern* you need to say,
    - a. "If we spend each session putting out fires, we won't be able to get to the *cause* of the fires."
    - b. "If we don't get to the cause of the crises, ultimately you will not be significantly helped."
      - 1) The causes are usually
        - a) bitterness, fear, pride and guilt that has not been dealt with biblically.
        - b) unresolved issues from events from the past or present.
      - 2) Lack of understanding of his strategies of control and how to be released from them are also causes for his continuing crises.
      - 3) At times, crises may also be caused by others, but they are compounded by his sinful responses.
    - c. Say, in such cases, "You are learning principles about solving problems. Please practice applying God's principles in your crisis rather than expecting me to get involved in each one of them. This will increase your dependency upon the Lord and His Word, rather than relying primarily on me."
- D. Demands (blatantly or subtly) to make session time a Bible study rather a time of forgiving, confessing sins, preparing for reconciliations and admonishments, identifying control strategies ~ See "Future Sessions" in *CTD* in the *Initial Sessions* on the website to understand what you should be accomplishing in the sessions.
1. Refuses to do certain necessary acts of obedience
  2. Finds excuses, rationalizations for not doing needed acts of obedience
  3. Does not do homework (See *Homework, CTD* for suggestions to deal with such situations.)

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### XII. Leadership over the session:

- A. You will not help him if he is continually permitted to control because he will not
  - 1. hear the things he must hear to grow spiritually.  
do the things necessary to grow in godliness.  
learn to submit to your leadership.
- B. You need to establish the session's goals *before* you meet with your disciple.
  - 1. Use the *Session Overview* from the website to establish the goals you desire to accomplish in the session.
  - 2. Be ready to pull your disciple back to your objectives when he tries to control.
  - 3. Realize that you are the determiner of what situations should be pursued if you are dealing with a big talker or a crisis-causer rather than allowing him to dictate the terms.
- C. Record instances of his controlling behaviors in a few successive sessions, so you have concrete data with which to confront his patterns and manner of control. Hopefully, when confronted with examples, he will repent. However, if he doesn't repent, you may need to "get tough" by saying such things as:
  - 1. "Perhaps you don't realize how much you try to control the sessions, direction of the sessions and/or me."
  - 2. "I'm not able to help you get to the root of your problems unless you allow me to lead the discipling process."
  - 3. In extreme cases, "If you continue to control the sessions and me, we'll have to stop meeting together until you are willing to let me lead you."
  - 4. You may need to risk the entire relationship rather than be controlled by fear of him. See *Admonishing* and *Role of the Discippler, CTD*, to encourage you to obey God.

***"Faithful are the wounds of a friend,  
but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy."***

**Prov. 27:6 NASB**

### XIII. Resistance to deal with particularly hurtful areas:

- A. Turn focus to a less threatening area. However, you eventually must revisit the tough areas or the tough assignments.
- B. You must require your disciple to go through reconciliations, which are frightening to him. After you have allowed several sessions to elapse without completing this assignment, you may have to terminate the discipling until he does the reconciliation assignment(s).
- C. Satan stands against this assignment more often than any other since frequently God works mightily through reconciliation to mend broken relationships and to set the captive free!
  - 1. Pray with your disciple to ask the Lord to rebuke the powers of Satan and the demonic who are influencing people.



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2. Pray through fear lists in preparation for reconciliation, including “even if...”, using the *Steps to dealing with Fears*, in *Fear, CTO*.

### XIV. The controller of people:

- A. He can usually identify his sinful strategies more quickly than the controller of circumstances because they are more blatant. However, if he is not teachable and is unwilling to change,
  1. he may be *outwardly* resistant and/or be openly angry and hostile toward your admonishments and insights about his life.
  2. he may use overt tactics to intimidate or to convince you he is right and you are wrong
  3. he may be a quiet person who keeps his emotions under control while still being intimidating when he communicates.
  4. he may try to shut you down or use convincing tactics.
- B. His intimidation tactics (whether overt or stoic) can often be “derailed” by a persistent, firm stand for truth.
- C. You must not be controlled by fear of him, but instead, be under the control of the Holy Spirit in relationship to him.
- D. You must persist in imparting truth about his strategies
  1. following the prompting of the Holy Spirit as to when to confront and when to let a matter drop for a while. (Is. 30:21)
  2. continuing through the lessons, which are designed to progressively reveal sin, praying that God will bring understanding to him of his sinful emotional survival system. (Eph. 1:18,19)

### XV. The controller of circumstances:

- A. He may have a difficult time seeing his controlling strategies as sinful because his sin is usually subtle.
- B. He is an agreeable person and will want to please you.
- C. He may struggle with facing the problems he is causing in relationships because of his lack of involvement, his avoidance of dealing with problems and his view of himself as a pleasant, well-liked person.
  1. His false identity is “good guy” or “sweet gal”
  2. Others are to blame for his problems.
- D. He may not be able to and/or desire to identify his feelings of anger, fear, self-pity, etc.

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1. He believes he doesn't have sinful emotions because he has suppressed to the degree that he no longer *experiences* his emotions. In rare instances, a disciple has shut down emotionally to the point he doesn't experience godly or pleasant feelings, as well as sinful ones.
    - a. realize he may have deadened or numbed himself in his efforts to block/ignore the reality of his sin, other's sins and his problems. This will sometimes be a Factor in building his self-esteem or his view of himself as spiritual.
    - b. realize he has conditioned his mind to suppress unpleasant thoughts.
  2. His idols are comfort and pleasurable, comfortable and secure feelings.
- E. Your role is to show him how he shuts God out, eliminating the need for Him by
1. not identifying sinful emotions. Therefore, if he doesn't acknowledge his sin, then there is no need for repentance, confession and forgiveness of others, which are *God's ways* of dealing with sin. (1 John 1:10)
  2. trusting in his sinful control strategies of ignoring his sin and problems; avoiding painful realities and people-pleasing.
  3. escaping through excessive behaviors, avoiding responsibility, retreating into fantasy, etc.
- F. Your role is not to permit him to minimize his sin or the sins of others.
1. Help him to identify his sinful feelings by
    - a. picking up on his words, voice, tones and facial expressions and euphemisms.
    - b. sharing that certain situations *should* elicit fear, anger or hurt.
    - c. Not allowing his use of euphemisms to minimize his sin such as "frustration" for anger or impatience and "concern" for fear.
      - 1) Correct such speech.
      - 2) Correction of speech patterns leads to confession and change in thinking patterns.
  2. Encourage him to pray
    - a. that God will reveal his sinful emotions to him. (Ps. 139:23,24; 26:2)
    - b. that God will release him from suppression and avoidance as major forms of control.
  3. Tell him he must give himself *permission* to experience his emotions.
    - a. When he has a fearful or an angry thought, tell him not to block it, but allow himself to *experience* it, even though it's unpleasant.
    - b. Then he can confess the sinful thought to the Lord and renew his mind with truth.

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- G. Encourage him to draw God into his experience by using God's tools for handling painful realities when they are recognized. See *Facing Emotional Pain*.

**Note:** In the following portion, the references for certain studies and verses, which support the concepts, are for the benefit of you, the *discipler*. Hopefully, they will equip you to explain concepts more fully and give you direction in how to help your disciple more effectively. Of course, the disciple will eventually cover most of the studies, but perhaps there are concepts he hasn't yet studied, which may need advance verbal explanations. Perhaps he needs your reinforcement of certain precepts from lessons he has already done for homework. He may need to review certain lessons because he has forgotten the teachings and/or he is not applying them. You may want to use some of the verses as memory assignments for his particular situations. These concepts may also be an encouragement for your own personal growth.

XVI. Encourage the disciple to highlight and confess the studies' concepts, which apply to him and to correct his thinking through renewing his mind with truth. Tell him that his actions and attitudes are *evidences* of his beliefs. The more he *practices* repeating truth in his mind, the easier it will become to respond to it on a life-changing level.

A. *Understanding God's Grace and Love*

1. Doubting God's infinite grace and unconditional love
2. Doubting the character of God, His goodness, commands and promises

B. *Studies 3 and 7 in Who's in Charge?*

1. Opposing God's mind, thinking and ways
2. Rejecting God's sovereign plan for the present and/or the past
3. Being angry at God because He is not changing his circumstances, His life plan, etc.
4. Believing he deserves not to suffer (Phil. 1:29)
5. Analyzing and intellectualizing situations that create doubt and disobedience (Jas. 1:5-8)
6. Raising up ideals, fantasies, expectations of others, comparisons with others (2 Cor. 10:5)
7. Believing he can control God, his circumstances and/or people through sinful means and/or thru his prayers, petitions and obedience. (Is. 30:1)
8. Quarreling or disagreeing with God's ways; being demanding of God (Is. 45:9; Rom. 9:20)
9. Indulging in self-pity, superior/inferior attitudes, negative and condemning attitudes (Num. 11:1-6)

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The Apostle Paul is an example of one who found the abundant life in God's plan for him, even though it included great affliction. In Acts 9:15, soon after Paul's conversion, God states, ***"I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."*** The passage in 2 Corinthians 11:23-33, known as the "Perils of Paul," record some of his trials. His response to suffering is vividly expressed in Philippians 3:7-11.

C. *Walking with God on His Terms of Relating; Costly Obedience*

1. Believing he is a "victim" of his past or present circumstances
2. Believing that God does not love him or that God is not good because He did not give him what he wanted

D. *Studies 3 and 4 in When Rights Are Wrong; The Cross in The Essentials of the Faith*

1. Forgetting, ignoring, minimizing and/or taking for granted, the sacrificial, awesome work of the Cross and all its accompanying blessings
2. Focusing on circumstances and people rather than focusing on Christ and His abilities to take him through difficulties. (Heb. 12:2; 1 Cor. 10:13)

E. *Christ's Radical Call and God Alone is Worthy in Essentials of the Faith*

1. Building a false image of God that God desires him to have a pain free life, filled with great pleasure.
2. Believing that God is not worthy to control his life, which is evidenced in his attitudes and behaviors