



Dismantling Control Strategies in the Marriage Relationship

*“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does.
The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world.
On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.
We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself
up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought
to make it obedient to Christ.”*
2 Cor. 10:3-5

This study is designed to expand on the concepts introduced in the husband and wife chapters, as well as the lesson about patterns of control in the marriage relationship. As you evaluate yourself, please take note of your sinful motives, attitudes and behaviors and seek forgiveness of God and your spouse for them. Your self-protective strategies may have led to your becoming a “fortress” of invulnerability, by walling out others and by not developing an emotional and spiritual intimacy with your spouse. You may view yourself as very self-sufficient. If you have developed this form of emotional survival, you also wall God out, perhaps without your awareness, because you have little concept of how your lack of a biblical relationship with your spouse impacts your relationship with God.

You may have hardened your heart against your spouse, the outflow of which is a hardening of your heart against God. If you have a numbed, resigned, deadened or hardened spirit, ask forgiveness of the Lord and pray daily that He will soften your heart so you can restore your relationship with Him and your spouse. (Heb. 3:7,8)

The verses above assure you that God has given all you *need* through His divine power to demolish the strongholds of unbelief in God’s commands, promises and principles that may grip your life, including a hardened heart. Appropriate His limitless resources and choose to move forward in faith. Believe and receive! (Phil. 4:19; 2 Pet. 1:3,4)

Please read other sections that are not under your form of control or gender because there may be ideas and scriptures that apply to you and your situation.

If you are **a husband who is controller of people** when operating in the flesh, you must be aware of your sinful tendencies to lead in a domineering, dictatorial, dogmatic and perhaps, legalistic, condemning, judgmental way. You may view yourself as superior to your wife, and therefore, do not respect her or consider her opinions or input as having validity. You expect your wife to submit without question, and perhaps, wrongly believe that though your wife is submissive in her actions, she must *agree* with your decisions or conclusions. You may try to control her outwardly with overt intimidation, such as anger and threats. Your form of intimidation may be a cold, austere, stoic forcefulness and/or you may depend on your logic, which overwhelms her thinking, to control her.

DISMANTLING CONTROL STRATEGIES IN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

You may be oblivious as to how your demand to control your wife is causing a huge rift in your marriage relationship because of your continual expectation that she perform to please you and your refusal to encourage her opinions and input. You do not permit her to be “real” with you because you are completely focused on yourself, which produces the demand that she and other family members perform to your satisfaction.

Realize that your aggression and intimidation is a cover for your weaknesses and fear of loss of control. You are in direct disobedience to the commands of God to be a loving, servant leader of your wife! You must dismantle your sinful strategies by committing yourself to obeying God and learning to love your wife.

I. Confess these sinful motives *whenever* you are aware of them:

A. Pride, which is a demand to control your world, may be manifested in the following ways:

1. demanding to control your wife and children
2. refusing to receive admonishment or appeals from your wife or children
3. having “tunnel vision” ~ “I am right and anyone who challenges me is wrong.”
4. blaming your wife/others for your problems; focusing on their sins rather than your own
5. being defensive, angry, stubborn, insensitive in response to admonishment
6. being unapproachable ~ therefore, those who are intimidated by you will rarely risk your intimidation to admonish or share concerns with you
7. viewing yourself as the god of your household, in which family members exist for the purpose of pleasing you
8. being rigid, lacking joyful spontaneity, lacking a sense of humor, which creates a tense, angry, harsh, unloving, austere and/or cold home environment
9. influencing your wife and others to fear you greatly

B. Fears, which are generated by the loss or potential loss of control ~ Remember you do not have to *experience* the emotion of fear to have it control your life.

1. Fear of loss of reputation because of family members not living up to your expectations; fear of “what others will think”
2. Fear of loss of security that you find by being able to control those around you

DISMANTLING CONTROL STRATEGIES IN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

3. Fear of inconvenience or interruption, which prevents you from reaching your goals; often being so intent on reaching your goals that you ignore the suffering you are causing others who must comply with your demands
4. Fear of exposure of your sin,
 - a. which leads to your defensiveness, blaming or intimidating anyone who tries to admonish you, including your wife (1 John 1:8)
 - b. because that leads to the loss of your “image”
5. Fear of loss of your manhood or identity as one who controls others, by being “macho,” superior in thinking and/or spirituality, being right at all times
6. Fear of failure
7. Fear of the future and how it will affect you when you can no longer control and intimidate people
8. Fear of becoming vulnerable with your wife

II. Dismantle your sinful strategies.

- A. Allow God to teach you, as you rely on the His Spirit, to love and accept her, to be patient, compassionate, caring and tender. These are traits of a godly person.

***“Be kind and compassionate to one another,
forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”***

Eph. 4:32

1. Jesus describes Himself as “gentle and humble in heart,” and He commands you to be like Him. (Matt. 11:29; Eph. 5:1)
 2. Paul, the apostle, describes himself as gentle, “***...as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.***” (1 Thess. 2:7 NASB) What an interesting analogy Paul uses to define his gentleness!
 3. God commands you to “***...clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.***” (Col. 3:12)
 4. God informs you that love, joy, gentleness, patience, kindness, goodness and self-control are aspects of the fruit of the Spirit and therefore, are present when the believer is submitted to His control. (Gal. 5:22,23)
- B. Encourage your wife to tell you the truth about your hurtful, abrasive, intimidating and inconsiderate behaviors or words. (Prov. 19:20)

DISMANTLING CONTROL STRATEGIES IN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

- C. Lay aside your fears of acknowledging your sin and receive her admonishments without being angry, defensive, pouty and/or shifting the blame on her.
1. Implement the *1-2-3-4-5 Memory Outline, CTO* when you are tempted to respond in sinful ways.
 2. Do not continue to respond in self-protective ways, or you will probably once again influence your wife to withdraw from trying to relate in a meaningful way to you. (Prov. 15:31; 16:20; 19:20)

***“The way of a fool seems right to him,
but a wise man listens to advice.”***

Prov. 12:15

3. Review the section entitled, *Fear of exposure, consequences, discipline and/or failure*, in *Fear, CTO* and implement the principles discussed.
 4. Realize you are probably hiding behind an “image” of
 - a. being spiritual and/or superior, which is hypocrisy because you are disobeying God’s commands in relating to Him and to your wife.
 - b. being a “tough guy” or an “in-charge” guy, covering your weaknesses and sin with the demand to control others.
- D. Treat your wife with honor and respect, which is required by God. Honor means to value her; to consider her precious and dear. (Rom. 12:9,10)

***“You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way,
as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman;
and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life,
so that your prayers may not be hindered.”***

1 Pet. 3:7 NASB

1. Encourage her to verbalize her opinions; seek her input on pending decisions.
 - a. Show respect for her opinions by not demeaning her or her input if you disagree with what she says.
 - 1) Open yourself to the realization that she probably has wisdom that you have never allowed yourself to see.
 - 2) Resist the temptation of “win” each disagreement. Renounce your “win-lose mentality,” believing your logic is always right. Your logic may be an idol in your life.

DISMANTLING CONTROL STRATEGIES IN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

- b. Ask God to reveal your attitudes of disdain, condescension, judgmentalness or superiority. Ask your wife to point them out to you when she is aware of them.
 - c. Realize you may convey sinful attitudes *without verbalizing* them through your body language or facial expressions.
2. Try to find ways to draw her out by spending time getting to *know* her.
3. Become a good listener. Develop an interest in getting to *know* your wife. Review *Communication* and the *The Poor Listener/The Good Listener* chart, CTO.
- E. Do not expect your wife to
- 1. seek forgiveness or apologize for things for which she is not responsible.
 - 2. respond to your intimidation, “guilt trips” or anger by fearing you and disobeying God’s commands in order to please and placate you.
 - 3. alleviate your bad moods that are *your* sinful choices of response to your difficult situations.
 - 4. protect you from the responsibility of being involved in a meaningful, biblical way with your children.
 - 5. assume the responsibilities that belong under your jurisdiction as leader of the home.
- F. Be vulnerable about your struggles, joys, disappointments, failures, etc. with her. Your humility in doing so will begin to create oneness in your marriage.

If you are a **controller of circumstances wife**, you may have become a “doormat,” doing all you can to keep the peace and avoid conflict by minimizing, ignoring and suppressing the painful realities of your troubled marriage. Any attempt to admonish your husband is met with his hostility, defensiveness, intimidation and/or his unwillingness to admit he is wrong. You may have reached the point where you have given up trying to express your opinions or to confront him because of his sinful responses.

III. Confess these sinful motives *whenever* you are aware of them:

- A. Pride, which is a demand to control your world by
- 1. minimizing and suppressing painful realities rather than dealing with them, utilizing God’s principles ~ See *Facing Emotional Pain*, CTO .

DISMANTLING CONTROL STRATEGIES IN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

2. withdrawing from your husband emotionally and perhaps, physically as a means to protect yourself from his control
3. rushing into alleviate his anger, bad moods, etc. because you don't want to deal with an uncomfortable situation
4. doing whatever is necessary to please him; being far more concerned about pleasing him than pleasing God

*“Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God?
Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men,
I would not be a servant of Christ.”*

Gal. 1:10

- B. Fears, which are generated by the loss or potential loss of control
1. Fear of admonishing him; of his intimidation
 2. Fear of causing any conflict, which you always view as negative
 - a. God says there *will be* conflict with family members when you stand for Christ and obey Him. (Matt. 10:32-39)
 - b. Truth often comes forth in conflict, so solutions can be found.
 - c. Peace gained by disobeying God in order to avoid conflict is **not** the peace of Christ. (Phil. 4:9; Col. 3:14-16)
 3. Fear of being overwhelmed by his logic, intellect, his abilities to out-think, out-wit, out-maneuver you ~ Therefore, you may have quit trying to reason with him or to express your opinions.

IV. Dismantle your sinful strategies.

- A. Realize that you probably have a warped, unbiblical view of submission, which you need to change.
- B. Realize that you may have an unbiblical view that love is demonstrated by being a people-pleaser. You need to adopt God's view of love, which includes admonishment. (Prov. 27:5; Gal. 1:10)
- C. Learn to be under the control of the Holy Spirit instead of being under the control of your husband's intimidation, while still remaining in submission to him.
 1. Fear the Lord and obey Him rather than being controlled by fear of your husband. (Prov. 29:25; 16:6; Ps. 31:19)

DISMANTLING CONTROL STRATEGIES IN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

2. Risk your husband's wrath, displeasure or rejection to speak the truth in love to him. (Eph. 4:15.25)
 3. Understand that your husband does not respect you because he can control you and views you as weak.
- D. You must not view yourself as a "victim" of his intimidation.
1. You place yourself in that role by your sinful responses to his intimidation.
 - a. You may use your "victim-identity" to excuse your responsibility to obey God.
 - b. God does not excuse *sinful responses* to intimidation.
 2. You must put on the full armor of God and step out to obey Him. (Eph. 6:10-17)
 3. God *requires* you to admonish your husband in a loving, respectful manner. Review the principles and biblical way to confront in *Admonishing, CTO*.
 - a. You are not demonstrating your love for God or your husband when you refuse to admonish. (John 15:14; Lev. 19:17)
 - b. You cannot be more concerned about protecting yourself from suffering than obeying God. He says to wives, **"...do what is right and do not give way to fear."** (1 Pet. 3:6)
- E. You must respond truthfully when your husband asks, "What is wrong?"
1. If you answer, "Nothing," when he has hurt you or you are struggling, you are *lying* to him. (Eph. 5:25)
 2. If you are unwilling to be truthful, don't expect him
 - a. to figure out what is wrong.
 - b. to read your mind.
 3. If you are upset over a situation,
 - a. speak openly and respectfully about what concerns you. Do not "beat around the bush" using sarcasm, vague references, innuendos or the "silent treatment."
 - b. do not expect him to read your mind, your body language or to pick up on your hints about what is bothering you.

DISMANTLING CONTROL STRATEGIES IN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

c. do not have the attitude, “He *should* know what the problem is!”

***Most men do not pick up on hints, read women’s minds
or understand their innuendos.***

- F. You must not “rush in” to try to alleviate your husband’s anger, bad moods and/or depressed state.
1. Do not seek forgiveness or apologize for something for which you are not responsible.
 2. Do not respond to his “guilt trips” with which he tries to control you.
 3. Do not intervene to try to make him happy, but rather allow him to live with the consequences of his sinful choices to be miserable. Do not interfere with the Lord’s discipline, which **is** his unhappy state. (Heb. 12:5-11; Gal. 6:7,8)
 4. Go quietly about your business while renewing your mind rather than allowing his sinful attitudes to control your responses to him. Focus on God. (Col. 3:1-3)
 - a. Develop your relationship with God so that your comfort is received from Him in the midst of tension and discord. (2 Cor. 1 3-7)
 - b. Do not try to create a comfortable environment through being a husband-pleaser rather than a God-pleaser.

If you are a **controller of people wife**, you are usually eager to fill the void of your husband’s lack of leadership. You have little respect for your husband because you view him as weak because you can control him. This situation has probably increased your anger toward your husband. You may believe the lie of Satan that you must make the decisions because your husband does not.

V. Confess these sinful motives *whenever* you are aware of them:

- A. Pride, which is a demand to control your world, which may be manifested in the following ways:
1. demanding to control your husband and children
 2. having “tunnel vision” ~ “I am right and anyone who disagrees with me is wrong.”
 3. blaming your husband/others for your problems; focusing on their sins rather than your own
 4. being defensive, angry, stubborn, insensitive in response to admonishment

DISMANTLING CONTROL STRATEGIES IN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

5. being unapproachable ~ Therefore, those who are intimidated by you will rarely take the risk to admonish or to share concerns with you.
 6. influencing your husband to fear you greatly
- B. Fears, which are generated by the loss or potential loss of control
1. Fear of loss of reputation because of family members not living up to your expectations; fear of “what others will think”
 2. Fear of loss of security that you find by being able to control those around you
 3. Fear of inconvenience or interruption, which will prevent you from reaching *your* goals; being so intent on reaching your goals that you ignore the suffering you are causing others who must comply with your demands
 4. Fear of exposure of your sin, which leads to your defensiveness, blaming or intimidating anyone who tries to admonish you
 5. Fear of your husband’s inability to effectively lead you
 6. Fear of losing your false identity because you believe you are superior in thinking and/or more spiritual than your husband
 7. Fear of the future and how it will affect you and your children when you can no longer be the decision-maker for your family
- C. Realize you promote your husband’s weakness in leadership in the following ways:
1. Undermining or questioning his authority
 2. Being negative and critical of his goals, ideas and decisions
 3. Disagreeing with many of his decisions in a disdainful, unacceptable manner
 4. Saying, “I told you so!” or giving frequent reminders of what you view as his poor decisions
 5. Not giving him the opportunity to *practice* decision-making, which takes time to learn
 - a. not being patient with his rate of learning
 - b. not graciously allowing him to fail

DISMANTLING CONTROL STRATEGIES IN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

6. Complaining, “My husband won’t take the leadership.”
 - a. If he tries, you create a power struggle because you do not like his decisions.
 - b. If he tries, you may “punish” him for what you view as wrong decisions by becoming contentious, withdrawn, pouty, sullen and/or angry.
7. Demanding to take over God’s role in your husband’s life
 - a. You try to perform as his “Holy Spirit,” demanding his spiritual growth in your timing and on your terms.
 - b. You may influence your husband to retreat spiritually, emotionally, sexually and/or physically because
 - 1) you are demanding change.
 - 2) you refuse to accept and to love him for who he is. (Rom. 15:7)
 - 3) he resists your control by withdrawing from a relationship with you, which then escalates your attempts to change him.
 - c. God alone causes spiritual growth in His time and on His terms! Therefore, do not intervene with your sinful forms of control, which become a barrier to God’s way of working in your life and your husband’s. (1 Cor. 3:6,7)

VI. Dismantle your sinful strategies.

- A. Step back and allow your husband to take the leadership in decision-making.
 1. You will probably not like or agree with many of his decisions, but God still commands you to submit.
 2. You must resist the temptation to snatch the leadership from him again to regain control of your world.
 3. You must submit and not be critical of the decisions he makes so that you encourage his leadership.
- B. You must realize that you have probably been very critical of his lack of leadership, and now you are tempted to be critical when he assumes leadership. This contradiction makes it obvious that you **cannot** be satisfied and magnifies your need to obey God by
 1. submitting to your husband.

DISMANTLING CONTROL STRATEGIES IN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

2. releasing your situation to God's control and allowing the Lord to develop your husband's leadership abilities.
 3. dealing with your fears biblically.
- C. You must be willing to lose the individual "battles" that you have repeatedly won by controlling him, so that you may win the "war," which is a biblical marriage that brings God's blessings.

If you are a **controller of circumstances husband**, you must be aware of your sinful tendencies to let your wife assume the leadership in your marriage and home. You do so because you are fearful of causing conflict and find it a much easier course to ignore problems, which compound because of your lack of leadership. You refuse to admonish your wife, take the leadership in the marriage and persevere in getting the role reversal in your marriage turned around because you do not want to suffer.

Instead, you may opt for the easiest course, which is to continue to disobey God by allowing your wife to continue to assume your responsibilities and to control you. Perhaps you even blame her when her decisions create problems.

You may be oblivious to your own sin because you view yourself as the "nice guy" and can't understand why your wife is angry or is unhappy with you and the marriage. You may retaliate by withdrawing more and more from her displeasure, by walling her out emotionally and sometimes, sexually, in order to maintain some semblance of control over your world and retaliate against her sin. (1 Thess. 5:15)

VII. Confess the following *whenever* you are aware of these sinful motives:

- A. Pride, which is the demand to be in control of your world
1. through denying, ignoring unpleasant situations that require your attention
 2. by seeking pleasurable "escapes" from painful realities
 3. by "forgetting" things that are important to your wife, family or others because they are not important to you and/or they are uncomfortable to think about
 4. by being unwilling to take necessary risks to obey God
 5. through minimizing and suppressing unpleasant realities
 6. by loving yourself more than you love God or your wife (John 14:15; Eph. 5:25)
 7. by being lazy and irresponsible
 8. by being indifferent to those around you

DISMANTLING CONTROL STRATEGIES IN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

9. by being a wife-pleaser and perhaps a child-pleaser rather than a God-pleaser“Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God?

*“Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God?
Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men,
I would not be a servant of Christ.”*

Gal. 1:10

B. Fears, which accompany the loss of control or possible loss of control over your world

1. fear of your wife’s rejection, displeasure, anger ~ See *Facing Emotional Pain, CTO*.
2. fear of the discomfort involved in making decisions; in thinking about existing or potential problems
3. fear of taking risks of obedience and the uncertainty involved
4. fear of failure if you make the wrong decision
5. fear of admonishing your wife about her sin and lack of submission (Heb. 13:5b,6)
6. fear of causing any conflict, which you always view as negative
 - a. God says there *will be* conflict with family members when you stand for Christ and obey Him. (Matt. 10:32-39)
 - b. Truth often comes forth in conflict, so solutions can be found.
 - c. Peace gained by disobeying God in order to avoid conflict is **not** the peace Christ offers in submission to Him. (Phil. 4:9; Col. 3:14-16)
7. fear of taking the leadership in your home and the demands it will make on you

Note: You are far more fearful of your wife and of taking risks of biblical obedience than you are of God. He commands you to fear Him and His ability to dispense consequences, which will impact your marriage and children far more than you realize. (Prov. 29:25; 16:6; Ps. 27:1) You must be under the control of the Holy Spirit rather than being under the control of your wife’s intimidation.

VIII. Understand three *typical responses* of husbands to unsubmitive wives:

- A. **Withdraw:** The power struggle is over. You view your wife *as having won* the leadership, whether it was gained with outward conflict or without conflict.

DISMANTLING CONTROL STRATEGIES IN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

1. This is your response if you are not aggressive by nature, are a wife-pleaser, fear rejection and hate conflict.
2. You are fearful of her and fearful of making decisions because she rarely agrees, so you give up rather than stand up to her intimidation.
3. You allow her to assume the leadership because it is the easier course.
4. You consider only the immediate relief from a painful situation, but disregard the long-range painful consequences to your marriage and children because of promoting the role reversal in your marriage.

B. “Come out fighting”

1. This is your response if you are a more aggressive husband. Or you may have tried to please your wife over and over, but because of your failure to do so, have given up and assumed a more aggressive posture. See *Stage 2 of the Controller of Circumstances, CTO*.
 - a. You have hardened your heart toward your wife, which is a *sinful means* to give you courage
 - 1) to stand up to her demands to control and to convince you.
 - 2) to do as you please regardless of whether your wife submits.
 - b. You may sinfully try to force her to submit by
 - 1) trying to “conquer her” through emotional, verbal and/or physical intimidation or abuse.
 - 2) demanding that she submit.
2. A continual power struggle and fighting characterize this type of marriage.

C. “Do as you please”

1. You violate her trust when you *verbally* agree to submit to her demands or nagging to get her “off your back,” but then proceed to do what you want to do.
2. You are untrustworthy because you make promises, which you break.

IX. Dismantle your sinful strategies.

A. Assume the leadership over your wife and family that God requires of you.

1. Your wife and children will never respect you as long as they can control you.

DISMANTLING CONTROL STRATEGIES IN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

2. Your wife *wants* you to be the leader because she was designed by God to be in submission to you. However, because of her sinful tendencies and your abdication of the leadership role, she assumed it and may fight to maintain it.
 - a. If your wife tries to get her way, you must guide her by not allowing her to lecture, to convince, to control or to manipulate to achieve her goals.
 - b. God was displeased with Adam for submitting to his wife's leadership and rebuked him for listening to the voice of his wife. (Gen. 3:17)
 3. You should be willing to take a stand for what you view is a right decision, even if your wife rebels, retaliates or rejects you.
- B. Realize you influence your wife's tendencies to fear, to control and to make necessary decisions when you are indecisive, withdrawn, disengaged and/or a procrastinator.
1. Realize that you must be firm with her, yet loving. Do not bow to her manipulation or intimidation. Instead, focus on God. (Col. 3:1-3)
 2. Do not delegate too many responsibilities to her or delegate responsibilities that God wants you to carry.
- C. Risk her displeasure and rejection rather than compromise God's truth, as Christ did in response to those who rejected Him. (John 1:11; 1 Pet. 2:19-23)

**Husbands and wives who are sinfully relating to each other must evaluate their sinful attempts to control and be willing to forsake them.
Then they must realize there will be a major period of adjustment as each spouse begins to change entrenched habit patterns that have been the means of emotional survival, perhaps for many years.
This should be considered a wonderful opportunity to rely on God and to set forth on a new adventure in faith!**

Make this your prayer:

***“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”
Ps. 139:23,24***

DISMANTLING CONTROL STRATEGIES IN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

You will go through a **transition period** as each type of controller learns to live biblically and new habits are formed. It is not easy to change ingrained controlling strategies. Not only have you established sinful habit patterns, but your spouse has learned to relate to you, based on your sinful strategies.

Your ways of relating may have produced a difficult marriage, but be aware that you may resist change because from your warped perspective, it is far more “comfortable” and easier to continue in sinful patterns than to take the risks necessary to obey God. Your control strategies have created a self-sufficiency that is maintained by walking in the flesh.

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 to replace them with God’s design for the husband and wife.

Both may fear the vulnerability that will begin to develop as the marriage becomes more meaningful and less superficial. Your sinful tendency may be to pull back emotionally and to protect yourself from exposure, possible hurt and loss of control over the relationship. This fear and all other fears should be dealt with by implementing the *Steps to Releasing Fears to God* found in *Fear, CTO*.

Continue to renew your mind with these steps when fears return and move forward in sharing your thoughts, feelings and heart with your spouse. Consider drawing up a fear list and praying with your spouse. Instead of withdrawing and retaliating, submit to God’s commands by forgiving and relinquishing your perceived rights and expectations.

***“If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness,
we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light,
as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another,
and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”***

1 John 1:6,7

Both may be involved in “escapes” that have taken time away from the marriage relationship since neither has wanted to spend much time with the other. Of course, the escapes that are sinful must be forsaken. Prayerfully examine what must be eliminated from your agendas that are acceptable pursuits, to make your spouse your top priority.

A lack of trust has been created between you and your spouse, caused by the sinful initiatives and responses of both of you. Realize that it takes time and perseverance to build trust. Be patient and learn to wait on the Lord, placing your hope in Him to sustain you. Sanctification is a *process*, and both of you will have *many failures* as God changes habits. Do not continue to relate to your mate as the person he or she *used to be* when there are honest attempts being made to live biblically. In the face of your spouse’s failures, remind yourself of how difficult it is to break *your own* sinful patterns. Be merciful! (Matt. 5:7; 7:12)

“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

Luke 6:36 NASB

DISMANTLING CONTROL STRATEGIES IN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

Since the transition time may be lengthy, you must frequently forgive your spouse for sins and failures. *“And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” (Eph. 4:32 NASB)* Forgiving paves the way to accepting one another as the Lord accepts you. (Rom. 15:7) Relinquish the perceived right to have your spouse be who *you* want him or her to be. Forgiving, accepting and releasing rights are necessary disciplines involved in unconditional love.

Seek forgiveness of God and your spouse as soon as you are aware of your transgression. Obedience is crucial in this area because reconciliation and restoration are necessary to proceed with God’s agenda. You can no longer ignore or excuse your sin or pretend it didn’t happen, which may have been the way you dealt with your sin in the past. Persevere in learning to lovingly relate. Because you will fail many times, perseverance is required to build your character and to finish the course. Do not expect quick results. You may live with the consequences of your past sinful choices for a long time. (Jas. 1:2-4)

*“Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings,
because we know that suffering produces perseverance;
perseverance, character; and character, hope.
And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out
his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”
Rom 5:3-5*

*“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through
perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.
Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement
grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus;
that with one accord you may with one voice glorify
the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.”
Rom. 15:4-7 NASB*

Review the principles and scriptures in *When Rights Are Wrong, Admonishing, Fear and Decision Making, CTO*. Hopefully, you will find them helpful in implementing the changes needed to build a meaningful relationship with your spouse.

The following sections address the *transition period* as the **controller of people husband** and the **controller of circumstances wife** establish their roles as God designed them to be:

- X. The **controller of people husband** must remind himself frequently that God’s foremost command to him is *to love his wife* in a sacrificial, giving way as Christ loves the Church. (Eph. 5:25)

DISMANTLING CONTROL STRATEGIES IN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

- A. You must realize that you have *trained* your wife through your sinful strategies, to not trust you to be accepting, kind, receptive, caring and loving. You have violated her trust repeatedly by
1. your demand to control her and your continual expectations that she must perform to please you.
 2. your hurtful attitudes, words, actions and behaviors; your treatment of her as one who exists for *your* purposes.
 3. your lack of acceptance of and interest in her as a person and your pursuit of what is important to you. (Rom. 15:7)
 4. your ability to control her with your “logic” or anger, either of which can be very intimidating.
 - a. Realize that you have influenced her to “shut down” trying to admonish, to reason with you or to express her point of view.
 - b. Understand that logic or anger may be *idols* in your life because you are proud of these forms of control and rely on them to accomplish your selfish ends, while forsaking God’s principles of relating to your wife. (1 John 5:21)
- B. She is probably totally controlled by fear of you unless she has reached *Stage 2* of the controller of circumstances, which is explained in that study. In that case,
1. she has given up on trying to please you because she fails your expectations repeatedly.
 2. she may be depressed and withdrawn, or she may have become aggressive and openly hostile toward you.
- C. Your task is to build her trust by initiating and responding to her with loving and accepting attitudes, actions and communication.
- D. You may become threatened of her when she begins to share her opinions, concerns and admonishments with you.
1. Understand that allowing your “image” to be dismantled by God may be a painful process of repeatedly *daily* dying to self. (Luke 9:23)
 2. Deal with your pride, arrogance and fears biblically.

DISMANTLING CONTROL STRATEGIES IN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

- XI. The **controller of circumstances wife** must frequently remind herself that she is commanded by God to not fear man, but to be under the control the Holy Spirit in relation to her husband. (Rom. 8:31; Ps. 27:1; Eph. 4:17-25)

*“ ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’
So we say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.
What can man do to me?’ ”*
Heb. 13:5b,6

- A. Risk your husband’s sinful responses and share your concerns, opinions and admonishments in a loving, respectful, gracious manner. (2 Tim. 2:24,25)
- B. Forgive him when he doesn’t respond lovingly, and do not retreat. (Mark 11:25)
- C. Entrust yourself to God’s care as you step out to obey Him rather than cowering under your husband’s control. (1 Pet. 3:14)
- D. Find ways to encourage, to praise and to demonstrate your love for him. Be affectionate. (Heb. 3:13; 10:23,24)
- E. Remember that his aggression and intimidation are a cover for his fears and weaknesses. He is just as fearful as you are; he just has a different way of showing it!
- F. Be mindful that if he begins to be more loving and accepting, that you may respond angrily to him rather than speaking the truth in love. Seek his forgiveness for each angry outburst. (Eph. 4:15,29)
- G. Learn to live under the control of the Holy Spirit in submission to your husband rather than being controlled by his intimidation.

The following sections address the *transition period* as the **controller of circumstances husband** and the **controller of people wife** deal with freeing themselves from the role-reversal in their marriage:

- XII. The **controller of people wife** must frequently remind herself that there are two primary commands given to her in relationship to her husband: to submit and to respect him because of the position he holds in her life. (Eph. 5:23,24,33; 1 Pet. 3:1-6)

- A. The transition time is a *crucial time* because
 - 1. you are accustomed to being the decision-maker.
 - 2. he is accustomed to you making the decisions and is probably fearful of having to make them.

DISMANTLING CONTROL STRATEGIES IN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

- a. He may fear failure and/or your anger or rejection if he does not please you. Resist Satan's temptations to be critical. (Jas. 4:7,8)
 - b. He may resist facing the painful realities involved in decision-making, which he has not had to deal with before. Resist Satan's temptations to take back his responsibilities.
 - c. He will need your encouragement at this crucial time in his life. (Heb. 3:13)
3. you will probably not like or agree with many of his decisions, but God still commands you to submit. Remember many decisions are not "black and white," which is often your view of things.
- B. Be willing to suffer in obedience to God. Relinquish your perceived rights to have things go your way. (Phil. 1:29) Review *When Rights Are Wrong, CTO*.
 - C. Purpose to seek his advice and counsel; ask his permission to do things. You have probably created a lifestyle independent of his advice, permission and counsel, which must be forsaken.
 - D. Stop giving *any input* into decisions in order to establish his leadership, if your husband is easily influenced by your thinking or usually changes his decisions after listening to you. As he grows more confident in his role and is strong enough to disagree with you, then you can gradually return to giving your opinions after first hearing his.
 - E. Stop disciplining the children when your husband is present in the home if he refuses to take the leadership in this area and/or undermines your discipline. Share with him your reasons for doing so in a loving manner. (Eph. 4:15)
- XIII. The **controller of circumstances husband** must frequently remind himself that he **is** the head of his home by God-given decree, and so he must *practice* fulfilling that role. (1 Cor. 11:3)
- A. Persevere in establishing and maintaining your leadership
 1. no matter how uncomfortable decision-making and leading is for you.
 2. no matter how great the temptation to let your wife take over again because responsibility may be frightening to you.
 - B. Remember that her aggression is a cover for her fears and weaknesses. She is just as fearful as you are; she just has a different way of showing it!
 - C. Realize that you may have to request that your wife not give input into pending decisions or of her assessments of situations if

DISMANTLING CONTROL STRATEGIES IN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

1. you continue to change your mind in order to please her.
 2. you depend on her to do your thinking, assessing and evaluating of present/potential problems, etc. because you are not doing it.
- D. Realize that you may have to ask your wife not to discipline the children when you are present in the home if you continue to rely on her to do so. You need to take over that role when you are in the home.
- E. Ask your children to come to you for decisions concerning their lives, especially when you are present and/or it involves an important issue. You may discuss decisions with your wife, but you should be the primary decision-maker in their lives.

XIV. A **controller of people wife** who has an **uncooperative husband** and is committed to living out the principles in 1 Peter 2:17-3:6 may encounter some of these problems:

- A. Certain responses may be present as you begin to submit, to release your husband from your control to God and to love and accept him as he is.
1. He may try to drag you back to the level at which you once functioned.
 - a. Your godliness may produce a guilty response in him.
 - 1) He wants you to remain sinful so he does not have to look at his own sin.
 - 2) He wants to continue to blame you because he can more easily excuse his sin, which was his former pattern.
 - 3) He continues to view you as you once were rather than seeing your changes.
 - b. As you become more consistent in submitting and in being transparent, he may
 - 1) become less threatened.
 - 2) be left to focus more on God and his own sin.
 - 3) respond to your changes positively, and the marriage relationship will improve.
 2. He may frequently test you, to see if you really have changed.
- B. The *transition period* may be characterized by an emotional drawing and repulsing of both you and your husband.

DISMANTLING CONTROL STRATEGIES IN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

1. He may emotionally draw toward you in response to your submissive, quiet spirit. Then his pride and fear may well up because his vulnerability gives you the power to hurt him again, so he withdraws.
 2. He may become more vulnerable to you, and *you* may respond by wanting to withdraw from him
 - a. even though you may have greatly desired an emotional bond with him, you are threatened by the growing emotional “oneness” that he desires.
 - b. because you are threatened by the invasion of your emotional privacy, over which you once had control when your relationship was more superficial.
 - c. because your vulnerability toward him gives him greater power to hurt you.
 3. You must deal with your fears biblically and continue to be open to him.
(1 Pet. 3:14)
- C. Your husband may frequently remind you of your *past* sins. If he does,
1. seek forgiveness for any sin for which you have not already done so.
 2. remind him in a loving manner that he has already committed to forgiving you if he did so.
 3. consider that you are making progress if he can't find any present sins to call to your attention!
- D. You should continue to seek his forgiveness when you sin, even if he tells you not to do so and/or gets angry. Obey God's command in Matthew 5:23,24. Remember, you are a role model of biblical living to your husband and children.
- E. You must realize that you may have a *long* period of living out God's principles before you see positive changes in your husband. God encourages you to persevere.

The evidence of your salvation is love so no matter what the condition of your marriage is, you are to love your spouse without putting conditions upon him or her. Through learning to love in this way, you *begin* to understand the magnitude of God's love, acceptance and patience with *you*. This understanding should produce a life characterized by thanksgiving and praise to the God of all mercies!

“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”
Jn. 13:35

DISMANTLING CONTROL STRATEGIES IN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God.

Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

This is how God showed his love among us:

He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us

and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another,

God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.”

1 John 4:7-12