

# THE COUNSELOR

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## LETTING GO OF THE NEED TO CONTROL

### *Living the Surrendered Life*



Everyone wants to control their lives to some degree. We want stability and security. It's human nature. Some people are more obsessed and driven to control outcomes in their lives than others. Control issues can lead to many problems in a person's life. God designed us to depend on Him and He gives us the freedom to choose and follow Him. Life is unstable, always changing, there's no way we can stop it. Things happen all the time. Life is full of inconveniences, frustrations, disappointments and calamities. The more we try to control things the worse they become. We deceive ourselves into thinking we can control life. The reality is: **we are not in control**. How do we accept this and move forward? Is this an attitude of defeat? No. A person driven by strong needs to control is in bondage. Try to control the weather, the economy, the forces of evil, other people, and life in general, and you will fail every time. Yet people worry and try to control outcomes. God did not set us free to control everything. He is God and we are not. God gave us stewardship over certain things here on earth but we have no power to alter God's design and plans. Yet we still yearn to predict and control. Science aims to control by trying to understand the most intimate details of life. This is not all bad. God enables us to find cures for certain diseases and have great victories, but we are limited and He is limitless.

This article examines the need to control, the problems it creates, and ways to let go and live the surrendered life. We can be free from the need to control, and we must in order to live victoriously and effectively for Jesus Christ!

#### **Control-Oriented People**

There are different types of control-oriented people. Some have very strong needs to control things while others have very little. People on the other end of the continuum are those so matter of fact that they appear too loose in dealing with things beyond their control. They just aren't preoccupied with controlling things. They appear more relaxed. Most of us fall somewhere in between. We could all stand to relax more with regard to control. Let's take a look at those having strong control issues. They are usually insecure people. They may try desperately to control things because they have had bad experiences or traumas in their lives. Terrible things may have happened to them that were brought on by other people and circumstances beyond their control. They tend to be fearful but don't like to admit it. Fear and control go together. People try to control things out of fear. They frantically attempt to prevent bad things they fear might happen to them. Their fears may be real but most of the times they are unfounded, there are no imminent dangers. These people are often uptight as they try very hard to manage outcomes. They try to control everything, from the minute to major

things in their lives. Things must go their way. You might even say they are perfectionists or "control freaks." This behavior becomes obsessive compulsive for some. Their lives are shackled to doing things they think will keep them safe. They hate disruptions in their

routines and plans. Life is very frustrating for them. They tend to get very angry when things **don't go their way. Here are a few more** behaviors that are associated with people who have control issues:

- Obsessed with time. Driven by the clock.
- High expectations for self and others.
- Get angry over small things that don't go their way.
- Stressed out by delays, inconveniences, or scheduling problems.
- Tend to be rigid and uptight, internally and externally.
- Overly sensitive to criticism. Somewhat fragile here.
- Get defensive when corrected or confronted.
- Hate to be wrong.
- Hard to make them happy. Something always bothering them.
- Can be negative and complaining.
- Tend to be jealous in their relationships.
- You feel somewhat oppressed by them.
- They are prone to depression.
- Anger issues.
- Very tight with their money and time. Two major areas of control in their lives.
- Fearful of looking bad, or failing.
- Try to suppress their emotions but eventually they come out.
- Struggles with obeying God.
- Preoccupied with having their own way.
- Prone to addictions.
- Go to extremes to control life's outcomes.
- Fear losing control. Will do anything to prevent losses and failures.
- Tend to push people away instead of drawing them in.
- Relationship/Intimacy issues.

You may have more of the above listed traits than you would like to admit. Don't despair. You don't have to live your life in bondage to fear and control. There is hope. And He is God. I will cover the specifics of how you can be free through Christ later. Maybe you are one of those sighing with relief saying, "I am not one of those guys." "I have only a few or none of the behaviors described on the list above." Good. But don't relax yet. We all struggle with control in some form or another even though it may not be as extreme as others. The whole Christian life and growth process involves becoming more Christ-like. "He must become greater and I must become less." (John 3:30) Jesus must



increase in us and the self which is prone to the sin nature must decrease. The self wants to have its way. The self in us wants to control life. Even though we know this life is temporary and we live in a fallen world, we want control over what happens to us. We want that reassurance and security. We are all guilty of striving to have our way - to be in control. We must lose our life in order to save it. (Luke 9:24)

### **Problems and Pain**

People with strong needs for control cause problems. These people invariably generate strife as they impose their way on others. They are often insensitive to the rights or needs of others. Control-oriented people can be very difficult to live and work with. They are not typically team players and tend to be dominating in their approach. Problems occur frequently in

their marriage, family, and work. Sadly, sometimes they create trouble in their church. They are immovable, it's either their way or "the highway." People with control issues aren't always mean and aggressive in their approach to life. Many are nice but still very controlling. They try to order their time and life with you in ways that restrict your freedom. They would rather have their own way in directing things than work with others in considering alternatives. Obviously this creates a multitude of potential problems for others as well as themselves. Severe control-oriented people do not function well in intimate relationships because they hurt the ones they love. They try to control others in subtle and blatant ways.

A person with control issues can cause a considerable amount of emotional pain and turmoil. They strain relationships because people feel devalued by them. Your opinions and suggestions are heard but not considered. They are inflexible. This behavior shuts down relationships over time. You can love them, but it is unlikely that they will love you back unconditionally because they are self-absorbed and preoccupied with controlling things they perceive as threatening. For example, a jealous husband consistently checks on his wife by reading her emails, text messages, etc. because he fears losing her when there is no reason for concern. The wife over time feels mistrusted, disrespected, and grieved by these actions and struggles with bearing the pain. She may have to endure his outbursts, false accusations, and control for awhile before she confronts him to make changes. The controlling parent is another example. He creates a lot of emotional stress for his children. His behaviors are not loving. They go way beyond parental concern. The children feel that their parent does not trust or believe in them. They are held back from becoming healthy independent young adults. The controlling parent is so restrictive that the child is not allowed to do anything without extreme supervision. This often generates considerable pain and resentment for children, teenagers and young adults. They accumulate emotional baggage that could have been avoided. Some become quite rebellious when they leave home.

Individuals who are very control-oriented generate pain for themselves too. They feel like they are fighting a losing battle. They know they cannot control everything but they persist in trying to do so. They are prone to anxiety, depression, and anger over feelings of helplessness. They are very edgy and rarely experience peace because something always goes wrong. Control-oriented people are enslaved by their obsession with control and wonder why they have few or no friends. They feel isolated and rejected because people don't like to be around them. Control oriented people are usually unhappy. Underlying issues make them vulnerable to struggling with control. They are stuck and don't want to risk giving up the need to control in order to become more adjusted. It's just too painful.

There have been wars throughout history because one group tried to take control over another. The aggressors want to conquer and control other people. We see this today all over the world. One group tries to impose their ways on others. There is much taking and no giving by those seeking to control. This problem of control will be around as long as we have the sin nature and live in a fallen world.

### **The Impossibility of Controlling Everything**

We cannot control life. This is the reality God created. We make choices, but we cannot and should not control. Control for us is an illusion. Job was grieved over the horrible tragedies that came upon him and tried to defend his own righteousness. He searched high and low for answers but found none. Remember when God began questioning Job? (Job 38:1-42:6) God did not explain anything to Job. God illustrated His Sovereignty by the questions He asked Job. God is in control. Yet we fall into the trap of believing we must order our own steps. The self-made man is an illusion. God lets us succeed. God provides the gifts and talents we have and allows us to apply them in this life. We are supposed to be grateful and thank Him for the things He lets us do here. We cannot control things no more than we can control the wind. Anyone would agree with this statement but still

many stress and worry over trying to anticipate and prevent every potential problem or calamity. We are not supposed to be careless either. We must live in a world we cannot control and trust God to protect us and honor the steps we take in obeying Him. This means we follow His Word and Spirit within us to do His will.

### **Jesus on Control**

Jesus gave up his rights to Himself when He redeemed mankind at the cross. He is the God of the universe. Our Creator showed us the importance of giving up control. The God Who is in charge relinquished control as the God-Man. The very act of our salvation rests on God Who did not save Himself from the cross. God honors and lifts up those who lose their lives for His sake. "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it." (Luke 9:24) Our striving to be first, and trying to take charge of our destinies does not accomplish the things of God. Jesus said, " But many who are first will be last, and the last first." (Matt. 19:30) God wants those who depend on Him, not the self-willed and self-reliant, not those preoccupied with pushing their way to the top. The old saying, "If it's going to be, it's up to me." has no place in the Kingdom of God. Jesus elevates the humble and the least over the prideful, power-grabbing, control-oriented people. Seeking to control one's life or others is sinful. Jesus laid down His life and we are to do the same for our brothers and sisters in the Lord. Jesus' ministry and central theme of the Christian life is about surrender; letting go, giving up the need for control and the sinful cravings of the flesh. Jesus came to save us from ourselves and the coming wrath of God. He wants us to live completely yielded to Him. Jesus also warns us about the dangers of trying to control everything. We become our own god when we rely on ourselves and try to control life. A person extremely driven to control things is a person alienated from God. This person is completely in bondage to self and vulnerable to the devil, the enemy of our souls.



### **God is in Control**

God is absolutely in control, yet sometimes when people hear their friends say this to encourage them, they don't feel reassured. They feel rejected and abandoned by God. They feel that though God is in control, somehow He chooses to let them suffer their calamities. They don't live what they know to be true. They feel that God deserted them and is punishing them for something they might have done. They come to believe their prayers won't get answered because God stopped listening to them. They focus more on their circumstances, feeling helpless and hopeless, and become depressed. God's Truth and Love no longer comforts them. It is important that you bear with your brothers and sisters who have fallen into despair. Be patient with them. Stand with them. Be like Jesus to them. Love them. Pray without ceasing for them. Don't go into long winded deep theological discussions with them while they are going through "dark nights of their souls." They are not ready for this. They simply need your presence, prayers, and reassurance. Don't get mad at their lack of faith in our Almighty God. This can happen to anyone. Elijah was depressed and felt hopeless. (1 Kings 19:4, 10, 14) Jonah, Job, Jeremiah, and David also struggled with depression. So we need to understand that severe conditions challenge the strongest saint's faith and there will be moments and seasons of brokenness, discouragement, and dark nights of the soul in this life. We must cling to God through the troubles in our lives and "trust in Him even though He slay me." (Job 13:15).

We must never forget, no matter how bad things get, who we are in Jesus Christ. He is the God Who is in Control. He is the God of "before Abraham was, I Am." (John 8:58) Our God, the God of the Bible, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph is the Almighty everlasting eternally existent God of all Creation. He is all knowing, all powerful and all purposeful. He is Jesus. We tend to lose sight of God's magnificence when we are struggling.

## Things to remember about our God Who is in control:

1. God always existed.
2. He has no beginning and no end.
3. He created everything.
4. He controls all things.
5. He knows all things before they happen. Nothing surprises Him.
6. He plans all things.
7. He is all powerful. The Bible illustrates His omnipotence over and over.
8. No one can do anything to thwart or change His plans.
9. No evil can stand against Him.
10. Our destinies are wrapped in Him.
11. He loves us no matter what happens in our lives.

### God is in Control - Scriptures:



In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. (Ephes. 1:11-12)

"I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You." (Job 42:2)

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations. The LORD upholds all who fall, and raises up all who are bowed down. (Psalm 145:13-14)

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:38-39)

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. (Jer. 29:11)

But whoever listens to me will dwell safely, and will be secure, without fear of evil." (Prov. 1:33)

The preparations of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD. (Prov. 16:1)

A man's heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps. (Prov. 16:9)

The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD. (Prov. 16:33)

The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes (Prov. 21:1)

Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure,' (Isa. 46:9-10)

All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?" (Dan. 4:35)

"No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father." (John 10:18)

Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin." (John 19:11)

But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. (1Cor. 2:9)

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, (Ephes. 3:20)



## Living the Surrendered Life

Jesus Christ is the only One who can heal and deliver us from control issues. He is the solution for everyone enslaved by fear and dire needs for control. Jesus is the only One Who can empower us to let go and live the surrendered life. Our relationship with Christ is ongoing and progressive. It's a process: the closer we are to Him the more surrendered our lives are to Him. He becomes greater in us as we abide more in Him, and we feel less compelled to direct our own paths. So, what does the surrendered life look like and how do we live it?

The surrendered life is a life of freedom in Christ. We are free from having to give in to the cravings of our sinful nature. The surrendered life is a life of power through the indwelling Holy Spirit. A child of God



surrendered to Jesus Christ is a person full of God's love and peace. They are not so easily rattled by life. They operate in the supernatural. That is, they live by faith not by sight. A person completely dependent on God looks at problems, struggles, hardships, troubles, tribulations, and calamities much differently than those bound by fear. They know and accept that they are not in control. They believe with all their hearts that everything happens for a purpose which God weaves into His Will. They are not stuck on deep theological debates, they simply believe God, therefore they have the peace that goes beyond human understanding. They know God will guard their hearts. They are convinced that nothing can separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:38-9). They are growing in their peace and understanding with God, that He is in charge, and will never forsake them. The believer living the surrendered life knows that whatever He suffers for Christ's sake will be honored and committed to God. "For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. (2 Tim. 1:12)

Born again believers in Christ cannot be defeated by anyone or anything in this life. We may be struck down, but not destroyed. (2 Cor. 4:8-9) We may fail and fall but God raises us up by His mighty hand. That's ultimate consolation, comfort, and freedom! That's a life surrendered to God. There is no striving or stressing over the things of this world. There is no need to control outcomes. Our desires become God's desires for our lives. The surrendered life is not driven by fear of bad news. A person living a surrendered life to God is a humble person. The life surrendered is a life in tune with God. People surrendered to God praise and worship Him without inhibitions. They rejoice always, in all circumstances. Released from struggling to control, they are unhindered in their prayers. They continually seek God. Nothing moves them. You feel encouraged, comforted, and loved by those living surrendered lives. The light and love of Christ pours out of them.

### How? Choose.

God designed us to choose. We choose to accept His gift of salvation. We choose to love and obey Him. We choose to live the surrendered life in Him over fear, control



issues, sin, and death. You don't have to be a slave to fear and control issues. Choose to let Christ free you from this bondage. The first step on the road to living the surrendered life is choosing Christ! Now that you have chosen Him, let Him empower you to depend on Him and give up the need to control. Maybe you have struggled with control issues a long time as a Christian. It is time to live what you know. There is no shame in admitting this. Step out in faith even though it hurts to give up your false security in trying to control everything. It would be a greater tragedy to live in bondage to control issues and fear as a Christian than to put these fears to death in Christ. It will be painful but you need to do it. You won't regret it.

**Commit every thought and feeling to Jesus Christ.** Bring your need to control to the cross. Leave it there. Bring your thoughts and emotions to the mind of Christ Who lives inside you. Believe He is able and will do this thing for you. You will see a wonderful progression (with some ups and downs) toward increasing freedom. You cannot be in control. Give the control to Him, where it belongs. Determine in your heart to live the surrendered life. Live as Jesus prompts you to live through the Holy Spirit within you and God's Written Word. Complete dependence on Him means you seek His guidance in every step you take in this life and trust Him as He reveals His Will for you. Pray, wait, listen, respond. Go through the doors He opens for you. Don't try to make things happen. He is the God of timing. His timing is perfect. You will begin to experience greater peace as you do your part and trust Him to do His. Use the gifts and talents God gave you. Commit everything you do to Him. Yield to Him. Monitor your heart, head, and feelings. Watch out for pride or anything that arises from your sin nature. Be quick to confess your sins to God and repent. Be quick to forgive others. Live a life in tune with God - thinking, breathing, and doing the things of God. A surrendered life is a life lived by a person who loves the Lord with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength. Your thoughts become His thoughts. Live your life in constant communion with God by dwelling on Him 24/7. Let His presence naturally influence everything you do. Have the mind of Christ and dwell on things that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy. (Phil. 4:6) Stay away from anything that pulls you away from God. Don't ignore the promptings of the Holy Spirit to do good and resist evil.

**Do your part.** Our part is to obey God and take responsibility for our actions toward others. We are to live a life of faith in God and step out. Don't sit back and do nothing. A man or woman surrendered to God does their part. We plan, organize, and build. We pursue goals. But we do this in line with God and not out of selfish ambition or at the expense of others. We don't try to control, we just do our part and leave the results to God. We go about the business of God's Kingdom not our personal kingdom on

earth. We experience freedom in our lives submitted to God. That's the surrendered life! Freedom to let God orchestrate our steps as we cooperate with Him. His desires become our desires as we abide in Him. He lets us do the things we want to do when they are lined up with His will. We don't throw caution to the wind and live a haphazard lives. God wants us to plan and do our part. He want us to live orderly lives. He wants us to sow and reap good things. God want us to live balanced lives, letting Him be in control and us doing our part, all that the Bible commands us to do as Christians. The Christian life is not supposed to be passive. It should be vibrant, surrendered to God, always being about His work.

You are not slaves, but sons and daughters of God. He wants us to possess the land of our lives, like the Israelites of old. We should ask God for our journey, purpose and destiny, to posses what He has given us. We are to be active in this process and rely on Him. We cooperate with the God Who is in control. We step out in faith asking and doing, surrendered to Him.

**Let go.** The surrendered Christian life is a life of letting God direct our steps. We deceive ourselves when we think we are in control. The fervent, effective Christian has a healthy fear of God and strong dependence on Him. God accomplishes mighty things in believers' lives when they depend on Him. Loving Jesus and having faith in Him means giving up control and believing Him to direct our steps to accomplish His purposes. We are to bring ultimate Glory to Him. We give up our rights to ourselves as we love and obey Him. He knows our lives would be disastrous without Him. Just look at your life and the lives of those in the Bible when they relied on themselves rather than God. You cannot surrender your life to Jesus unless you completely give your heart to Him. Surrendering is a daily process of spending time with Him in prayer and reading His Word, praising and worshiping Him and fellowshiping with other believers. We develop an increasing hunger for God when our lives are totally surrendered to Him. Every time you sense anxiety, fear, or the need to control, run to God and ask Him to help

you release those things to Him. Let go! Surrender them to Him. God may put people in your life to help you let go. Sometimes people need to resolve underlying issues and go through a healing process before they totally let go of their need to control.

**Humble yourself.** The surrendered life is also a life of humility. This is not the work of the flesh but through the Spirit. Deep abiding in Jesus makes our hearts and minds more like His. We become more like Him. Humility results when our lives are hidden in Christ. The more you walk with the Lord the less prone you are to be prideful. We must still remain on guard against the enemy and our sin nature. Surrendered to Christ, you begin to put others first in all that you do. It comes naturally for the children of God. We serve one another.

### Final Words



The perfect love of Christ fills and compels us. There is no room for fear and control in the surrendered life. The person surrendered to God gives everything He has to God. It belongs to Him anyway. This includes outcomes. This can be hard to do but produces great results. God will take all your yesterdays, today's, and tomorrows if you let

Him. Stop worrying. Stop reflecting and projecting the past into your future. Don't take the worries back once you give them to God. Live in total submission and dependence to Jesus Christ. You are Heaven bound my friend! Nothing surpasses the glory of the things to come. The struggles of this life are nothing compared to what lies ahead.

Purpose yourself to live the surrendered life today and don't turn back once you commit to do so. Let God direct our paths and make your ways straight as you relinquish control to Him. Many have gone before us. A cloud of witnesses cheers us on as we grow and develop through the trials and tribulations of this life. We live in extremely difficult times brothers and sisters. The world is desperate for solutions. We are supposed to be salt and light to a dying world. We have the answers. We have the solutions to life. He lives inside us. Jesus Christ! We don't have to let the world's distractions, threats, instability, and chaos rattle us. We know how things turn out. We know Who is in control. Jesus speaks to us and reassures us. Just as He surrendered to the Father and the Master Plan for our salvation, we surrender to God and His will for our lives. Let the love of God and peace of Christ compel you to live a surrendered life today my friend.



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