

What Control Costs Us

Randy Hageman

Part of Control

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C O N T R O L

1. BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS - Trying to Control Other People

Whenever we try to control something in order to fix it, we will end up breaking it even more.

—Sharon Hodde Miller

While we have *some* power over what's going on inside ourselves and can exert some control, we have virtually no power nor control over what's going on inside of another person.

Trying to control another person can damage relationships because it often communicates deception and a lack of trust.

Then [King Herod] told [the wise men], "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!"

—Matthew 2:8 (NLT)

The hard part in facing control in our relationships is that our desire to control isn't always the result of arrogance or power, but sometimes it may well be love.

2. BURNOUT - Trying to Control Our Circumstances

There's a mindset in our country today that the secret to success is just doing more, and it's all just exhausting!

God wants us to be ourselves, satisfied that being human means we have limits, and yet, we *can* trust God, creating a relationship.

... What did [Abraham] discover about being made right with God? If his good deeds had made him acceptable to God, he would have had something to boast about. But that was not God's way. For the Scriptures tell us, "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith." When people work, their wages are not a gift, but something they have earned. But people are counted as righteous, not because of their work, but because of their faith in God who forgives sinners.

—Romans 4:1-5 (NLT)

Taking a Sabbath break one day a week reminds me I *wasn't* created to do everything and control everything.

"You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but on the seventh day you must stop working, even during the seasons of plowing and harvest."

—Exodus 34:21 (NLT)

3. BODY SHAME - Trying to Control our Bodies

... our bodies are ground zero for a lifelong tug-of-war with control, one that we have a hard time even being

honest about. Our youth and health contribute to the illusion of control over our bodies, but at the first sign of aging, our culture's beauty industry is ready at the post. The moment our bodies stop submitting to us, there is a plethora of products we can enlist to fight back. (p. 134)

—Sharon Hodde Miller

Sometimes it's hard to distinguish when we're taking good care of our bodies and when we're indulging in some form of control.

At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

—Genesis 3:7 (NLT)

The first issue that came up after Adam and Eve sinned was a problem with their bodies.

God tells us that our bodies are good simply because He created them, and they bear His image.

Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.

—1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NLT)

The difference between control and care – am I trying to make my body good, or am I simply caring for what God has *already* declared to be good?

Healing is always a sign of the kingdom of God, and healing in all its forms comes from God the Father, our Great Physician, as a foretaste of what eternity will be like, where our bodies will be fully healed and restored.

The Good News is that when we entrust our bodies to God, we don't have to try to control the outcomes for our bodies, for we are affirming that God can see us through whatever we're facing.

4. ANXIETY - Trying to Control our Reputations

Good character and integrity have a way of eventually shining through.

When we try to control our reputations, it means we're trying to control what other people think of us, guessing what they're thinking, and often assuming the worst.

*Controlling what people think of us is about so much more than people-pleasing. When it is not enough to **be** good, and we want people to also **think** we are good, then we are likely to protect our reputations in destructive ways.*

—Sharon Hodde Miller

A good name is more desirable than great riches....

—Proverbs 22:1 (NIV)

The problem comes in when we try to protect our reputation, at all costs, because that turns our reputation into an idol, and the thing idols can't stomach is accountability.

The cost of controlling our reputations is high—for our mental health and our integrity. When we refuse to swallow the pill that, sometimes, people will not like us or think well of us, or when we cannot accept the fact that it is actually better to tell the truth than a lie, the consequences are much, much worse. This hypocrisy produces anxiety, inauthenticity, cover-ups, and ultimately, spiritual death, because we are cultivating a false exterior while our souls wither beneath it.

—Sharon Hodde Miller

We can either worry about what others think of us and constantly try to control the narrative, which is exhausting, or we can put our reputation in God's hands and trust Him to know the truth and make the right judgments in the end.

Clearly, you are a letter from Christ showing the result of our ministry among you. This 'letter' is written not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. It is

carved not on tablets of stone, but on human hearts.

—2 Corinthians 3:3 (NLT)

5. EXHAUSTION - Trying to Control our Identities

Having lots of choices for our identity can be overwhelming as we carry the burden of creating our own identities, which often produces anxiety and stress.

For Christians, the standard for our identity is stable and clear because it is Jesus Christ, and it is by him that we perceive how authentic we are.

The more we get what we now call “ourselves” out of the way and let Him take us over, the more truly ourselves we become. There is so much of Him that millions and millions of “little Christs,” all different, will still be too few to express Him fully. He made them all. He invented—as an author invents characters in a novel—all the different men that you and I were intended to be. In that sense our real selves are all waiting for us in Him.

—C.S. Lewis

Our culture tries to eliminate all boundaries, and in the process, creates more confusion and anxiety, while Christ offers us our true selves, just as we were created to be, in all its infinite variety.

[O LORD,] You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother’s womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed. How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered!

—Psalms 139:13-17 (NLT)

God loves infinite diversity, and that's exactly what *we* see on the outside, and what *God* sees and knows on the inside of each one of us.

Our identity isn't based on our jobs or education or finances or age or anything else - it's based on who God says you are!

No matter what's happening in our lives, our identity *in Christ* remains the same!

Next Week: Control Series - *The REAL Power God Promises*

The Cost of Control by Sharon Hodde Miller

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