

Manipulation

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

An Excerpt from the *BIBLICAL COUNSELING KEYS*

God's Heart on Manipulation

- **The World says** it is okay to drink alcohol, but **God says** if it causes your brother to stumble, don't do it. (1 Corinthians 8:13)
- **The World says** that to slander another is acceptable; however, **God says** to encourage one another and build each other up. (I Thessalonians 5:11)
- **The World says** that to hold a grudge(s) against your brother is the way to get even; however, **God says** to forgive whatever grievances you may have against another. (Colossians 3:13)
- **The World says** there is no God; however, **our Lord says** that He will create in one's being a pure heart and renew a steadfast spirit within. (Psalm 51:10)
- **The World says** make your own plans; however, **God says**, "My plans are to prosper you, not to harm you, and to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11)
- **The World says** to "be the Captain" of your own soul; however, **God says** He will give you His Spirit so that you may follow His decrees and keep His laws. (Ezekiel 36:27–28)
- **The World says** that however a person decides to act is acceptable, **the Bible says**, but "the Lord weighs your heart." (Proverbs 21:2)
- **The World says** it is okay to "save your own skin" or lie to keep yourself out of trouble; however, **God cannot lie**. (Psalm 101:7)
- **The World says** to "shirk your responsibilities"; however, **God says** each of us must account for our own actions. (Romans 14:12)
- **The World says** "get what you can any way you can"; however, **God says** ill-gotten gains will destroy you. (Proverbs 21:6)
- **The World says** that its lifestyle is to be sought after; however, **God says** to present our bodies as living sacrifices by the renewing of our minds. (Romans 12:1–2)

Characteristics of Spiritually Manipulative People

- **Controlling** religious family members
- **Manipulative** church leaders or members (and equivalents in all religions)
- **Covert** occult practitioners
- **Mind-controlling** cultists

Characteristics of Spiritually Manipulative Groups

- **Authoritarian**—Implying that God communicates with His people only through a hierarchy of power
- **Coercive**—Using any tactic available to persuade followers to do what the leaders demand
- **Condemning**—Heaping condemnation on outsiders and anyone who leaves the congregation
- **Discriminatory**—Telling members their needs are less important than are the needs of leaders
- **Image Conscious**—Seeking to present themselves as an image of perfect righteousness
- **Intimidating**—Threatening members routinely with punishment in order to gain compliance
- **Isolating**—Encouraging members to minimize or discontinue contact with family, friends, and the outside world
- **Legalistic**—Expecting members to make extreme sacrifices of money, time, and energy
- **Perfectionistic**—Condemning failure of any type or magnitude
- **Suppressive of Criticism**—Maintaining that those who question anything about the organization are actually challenging God's authority
- **Terrorizing**—Blaming the ministry's problems on the sins of the members
- **Unbalanced**—Flaunting their distinctiveness in order to validate their claim of having a "special" relationship with God

Background of Manipulation

In childhood, you ...

- Had an over-controlling parent
- Experienced some type of abuse
- Grew up in an abusive home environment
- Had “no voice” at home to share honest facts and feelings; never dealt with your true feelings
- Learned about manipulation by watching your parents
- Grew up in a “blaming home” that used guilt to control others
- Accepted blame for everything in childhood
- Blamed everyone else for all of your wrongs, setting yourself up to become a manipulator
- Thought your “normal” was normal, but it was not
- Wanted to please others, but your “pleasing” was never pleasing enough

*“When I was a child, I talked like a child,
I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.
When I became a man, I put the ways
of childhood behind me.”*
(1 Corinthians 13:11)

How to Stop Being Spiritually Manipulated

- **Submit** yourself to God’s authority. (Acts 5:29)
- **Talk** about your concerns with spiritual leaders who are not involved in your manipulative situation. (Ephesians 4:2–3)
- **Consider** how the spiritually manipulative attitude of others is impacting your spiritual life, your relationships with family members and friends, and your sense of personal value. (Proverbs 27:17)
- **Separate** yourself from manipulative situations and seek out people who are encouraging. (Hebrews 3:13)

How to Stop Being a Manipulator

- Face the Facts. (Psalm 51:10)
- Tell the Truth. (Psalm 51:1–3)
- Consider the Causes. (Psalm 51:6)
- Pardon the Past. (Colossians 3:13)
- Focus on Faith. (Romans 8:13–15)
- Grow in Grace. (Ephesians 3:16–17, 20–21)
- Oust the Old. (Colossians 2:9–12)
- Mold Your Mind. (Romans 12:1–2)
- Live to Love. (Ephesians 3:17–19)

*“Above all else, guard your heart,
for everything you do flows from it.”*
(Proverbs 4:23)

Key Verses to Memorize

For the One Manipulated:

*“Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people?
If I were still trying to please people,
I would not be a servant of Christ.”*
(Galatians 1:10)

For the Manipulator:

*“His divine power has given us everything we need
for a godly life through our knowledge of him
who called us by his own glory and goodness.
Through these he has given us his very great and
precious promises, so that through them you may
participate in the divine nature, having escaped
the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”*
(2 Peter 1:3–4)

Key Passage to Read

1 Thessalonians 2:3–8

10 Major Maneuvers to Conquer the Manipulator

- D**ecide not to be dependent on the manipulator. (Philippians 4:19)
- E**xpect exasperation from the manipulator. (Psalm 31:3–4)
- P**repare yourself for pain. (Job 3:26)
- E**xamine the methods of the manipulator. (Proverbs 22:3)
- N**otify the manipulator of the necessity for change. (Hebrews 12:1)
- D**on’t defend yourself. (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7)
- E**xpect experimentation with new strategies. (Proverbs 2:12)
- N**ullify your need to meet all of the manipulator’s needs. (Psalm 37:4–5)
- C**ommit Galatians 1:10 to memory. (Galatians 1:10)
- Y**ield to pleasing the Lord first. (Psalm 56:11)

*“My food,’ said Jesus, ‘is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.’ ...
‘For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.’”
(John 4:34; 6:38)*

To stop being manipulated,
you must sometimes say *no* to people
so you can then say *yes* to God.
—June Hunt

Questions and Answers

“Is a wife still being submissive to her husband when she takes a stand against his manipulation?”

No wife is to submit to a husband’s sinful request. And manipulation is a sin because faith is placed not in the Lord but in the manipulative tactics used. Therefore, if a wife perpetuates the sinful pattern of her husband by engaging in sin with him, she is not helping him but is rather hindering him. She is both endorsing and encouraging his sinful behavior because ...

*“Everything that does not come from faith is sin.”
(Romans 14:23)*

“What is the difference between manipulation and persuasion?”

- Those who **manipulate** use dishonest emotions to achieve their goal.
- Those who **persuade** use honest reason to achieve their goal.

*“Unlike so many ... in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God. ...
Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception ... On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God.”
(2 Corinthians 2:17; 4:2)*

“I know I’m being manipulated. Why don’t I end the relationship?”

Probably because you fear losing the real or perceived benefits you are receiving in the relationship. The belief is often that “any relationship is better than no relationship.” In such cases it is helpful to remember the words of King David ... and then to practice them. ...

*“I sought the LORD, and he answered me;
he delivered me from all my fears.”
(Psalm 34:4)*

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