

Control Freaks, Manipulators, Busybodies, and Gossips

A Bible Study for Steps 6 and 7

Step 6 - "Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character."

Step 7 - "Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings."

The dictionary definition of defect is "an imperfection that impairs worth or utility; a shortcoming; a lack of something necessary for completeness; a blemish." The dictionary definition of shortcoming is "a deficiency (lacking something), a defect." Our shortcomings means those areas where we COME SHORT of God's perfect standard. Romans 3:23 says, "For ALL have sinned and **fall short** of the glory of God," so there's no person on the face of this earth who is entirely without SOME defects and shortcomings, no matter HOW GOOD a person they may seem to be. Also, when we say "character" we are speaking of moral and ethical traits or **behavior patterns and qualities that you have LEARNED**. We are NOT referring to YOU as a person, or your personality. God has given each one of us talents and qualities that make us special individuals, and each one of us is precious in His sight. What God wants us to do is to **get rid of behavior patterns we have learned that are not godly**, and all things which are hindering us from being the creation He meant us to be. We must work on those areas where we have been bent and warped out of shape, so that God can conform us to the image of Jesus Christ. Also, God can't use us to the fullest extent that He would like to use us when we are full of our character defects and shortcomings. That's what the dictionary definition of defect means when it says "an imperfection that impairs worth or utility." In God's eyes, our WORTH and VALUE is never impaired (made less), because He will always love us. However, our UTILITY (usefulness) is definitely impaired and lessened, and **God is not able to use us** the way He wants to (see II Timothy 2:19-21).

- **II Timothy 2:21** "Therefore, if a man cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, **USEFUL to the Master**, prepared for every good work."

Control freaks, manipulators, busybodies and gossips are not exactly the same, but **they have some underlying "attitude sins" in common**. Unlike more overt sins such as adultery and fornication, drunkenness, stealing, or murder, the **attitude sins** such as pride, fear of man, unbelief towards God, a critical spirit, bitterness, and selfishness are harder to detect, but we see the destructive results or "fruit" in those who have these character defects and sins operating in their lives. Obsessive controlling of others, manipulating others (which many times includes lying, or at least "twisting the truth"), being a busybody (meddling), and gossiping are serious matters in God's eyes, and carry consequences such as God not being able to answer your prayers here and now, and eternal consequences, such as loss of rewards.

Obsessive controlling of others, manipulating others, being a busybody, and gossiping are all manifestations of **the sin of PRIDE**, and are **evidences that a person is under the control of their flesh, and not the Holy Spirit**. If you are a "control freak" you are operating in pride, because you think you can manage things better than whoever is in charge, or better than the supposed "weaker brother" who won't stand up to your controlling behavior. If you are a manipulator, you are operating in pride, but also in fear. Fear that the job will not get done if you don't manipulate others, whether through guilt or nagging, or even lying to get your way. Underlying this pride, however, is usually a person of low self-esteem. That is a reason, not an excuse, as pride is a sin either way. All of these things: controlling others, controlling or meddling in situations and circumstances, getting other people in trouble by backbiting and spreading rumors, or just by twisting the truth or revealing a truth that should have been kept secret, make the person with low self-esteem feel better about himself or

herself in a perverted sort of way. They feel they are better than the ones they are putting down. God does not want us to get our self-esteem or self-worth from putting others down, but by knowing who we are in Jesus Christ according to God's word.

- **Ephesians 4:25** "Therefore, **putting away LYING**, [*/et*] each one **speak truth** with his neighbor, for we are members of one another."
- **Colossians 3:9** "Do not LIE to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds."

If you are a Christian, **you are not trusting in God when you manipulate others**, but you are doing as Sarah did when God did not answer Abraham's prayers for a child according to her schedule, and she took things into her own hands and manipulated in the situation with her maid, Hagar (Genesis 16). Jacob and his mother Rebekah also were manipulators, and did not trust God to fulfill His promise that the younger brother would serve the elder (Genesis 25:23), and they lied and deceived Isaac in order to see God's promise fulfilled according to their time frame (Genesis 27:1-38.) Abraham lied and manipulated out of fear that someone might kill him over Sarah, his wife. When he lied and said, "She is my sister," it was actually a half-truth, because she was his half-sister (it was okay to marry a close relative back then). However, the sin of lying and manipulating was carried down to their son Isaac, who lied and manipulated in the same manner, saying, "She is my sister" about his wife Rebekah. Then, Rebekah manipulated and lied with her son Jacob, and it later passed on down to Jacob's sons, as they lied to their father about their other brother Joseph. It started with Abraham just twisting the truth a little (telling "a little white lie", or half-truth), and got worse and worse with each generation, until Joseph's brothers actually tried to kill him. Don't think that your children will not be affected by your manipulative behavior! They will be affected, and the "curse" will be passed down from generation to generation.

- **Genesis 20:9-13** "Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, 'What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? **You have done to me things you ought not to have done.**'.....And Abraham said, 'Because I thought surely there is no fear of God in this place; and they will kill me because of my wife. Besides, she actually is my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife; and it came about, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said to her, "This is the kindness which you will show to me: everywhere we go, say of me, 'He is my brother.'"

A busybody is perhaps not much different than a control freak, but is merely the Bible word for it. The Bible talks about those who have too much spare time on their hands, and exhorts them to get to work doing something productive, and not be **busybodies** (meddlers) in other peoples' affairs. This is perhaps a milder form of the control freak, and it is caused by idleness and too much time spent looking at other's lives instead of working on your own issues and growing and maturing in Christ. The pride comes in believing that you can help or organize someone else's life better than they are doing themselves. Focusing on someone else's life also means you don't have to focus on your own character defects and shortcomings.

- **I Timothy 5:13-15** "And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also **gossips and busybodies**, saying things which they ought not. For some have already turned aside after Satan."
- **I Peter 4:15** "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or **as a BUSYBODY in other people's matters.**"
- **II Thessalonians 3:6-12** "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from (avoid) **every brother who leads an unruly (undisciplined, irresponsible) life** and not according to the tradition which you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example; because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working

night and day so that we might not be a burden to any of you; not because we do not have the right to this (to be supported by them), but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, that you might follow our example. For even when we were with you, we used to give you **this order: If anyone will not work, neither let him eat.** For we hear that some among you are **leading an undisciplined life**, doing no work at all, but **acting like BUSYBODIES**. Now such persons **we command** and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread."

Gossiping is taking it to the next level, as you tell others how badly this or that person is behaving, and how you would do it much better, and so on. **Gossiping, or "evil speaking" as the Bible calls it**, carries with it your prideful judgment of the person you are gossiping about, when only God can judge their mind, heart or motives. Jesus said we must not judge according to outward appearance, but to JUDGE with RIGHTEOUS judgment. This is the only kind of "judging" we are allowed to do. **If we see something that is WRONG and a SIN** according to God's word, **we are CERTAINLY allowed to JUDGE** that thing as being SINFUL and WRONG. If we see a "brother" (fellow Christian) committing a sin, we are to go PRIVATELY that brother and try to restore him to a godly lifestyle (I John 5:16; Galatians 6:1-2; Matthew 18:15; I Corinthians 5:1-13). According to James 4:11-12, the kind of "judging" we are NOT to do is the kind that involves **"speaking evil" of another person, which is GOSSIP**. If you do not have all the facts, or if you are attributing certain MOTIVES to what a person does, you are NOT judging righteously, but are GOSSIPING. **Only God can know the MOTIVES of a person's heart**, and most of the time, we DO NOT have all the facts.

- **I Samuel 16:7** "But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look at **his appearance** or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but **the Lord looks at the heart.**"
- **Romans 14:1 & 4** "Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of **passing judgment** on his opinions." **"Who are you to judge the servant of another?** To his own Master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand."
- **Ephesians 4:29-31** "Let no **CORRUPT communication** proceed out of your MOUTH, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not **GRIEVE the Holy Spirit** of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all **BITTERNESS, wrath, ANGER, clamor, and all EVIL SPEAKING** be **put away from you**, with all malice."
- **Colossians 4:6** "Let your SPEECH always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one."
- **Psalms 39:1** "I said, 'I will guard my ways, lest I SIN with my TONGUE; I will restrain my MOUTH with a muzzle, while the wicked are before me.'"
- **Psalms 34:13** "Keep your TONGUE from EVIL, and your LIPS from speaking guile (dishonesty, deceit)."

There is a mistaken idea among some Christians that we are NEVER allowed to "judge" one another, and the scripture verse they use is Matthew 7:1, "Judge not, lest you be judged." However, most people stop reading at that verse, instead of reading it in context. If you read **all of what Jesus was saying**, you see that He is only talking about the kind of "judging" that involves going around **trying to "fix" everybody else's life**, when your own life is still messed up! (Matthew 7:4-5) That would be the control freak or busybody. Notice, Jesus says FIRST remove the plank or log from your own eye, and **THEN you will see clearly** to remove the speck from your brother's eye. Obviously, that means there IS a time and place for one to "see clearly" and judge someone else's life. If you see someone actually committing a sin, or someone sins against you, the Bible tells you what to do in Matthew 18:15-17. **Jesus says in Matthew 18:15 to go DIRECTLY to the ONE who has OFFENDED you**, and try to resolve the issue with that person, especially if it is a "brother" in the church. **Gossip happens when you DO NOT OBEY the words of Jesus**, but you go around behind the person's back, and **gossip and tell everyone else** how that brother or sister has offended you! That is wrong, and it brings DISCORD, strife, division and confusion

to the church of Christ! God hates when people jump to conclusions, make judgments without knowing the facts, and then spread rumors based on their unfounded conclusions!

- **Proverbs 6:16-19** "These six things **the Lord hates**, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: a PROUD look, a LYING tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who SPEAKS LIES, and one who sows discord among brethren."
- **John 7:24** "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with **righteous judgment.**"
- **James 4:11-12** "Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law [*of God*]."
- **Galatians 6:1** "Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass (sin), you who are spiritual (spiritually mature), **restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness**, looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted."
- **Matthew 7:4-5** "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye (get rid of your own character defects); and **then you will see clearly enough** to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

IN SUMMARY

Obsessive controlling of others, manipulating others, being a busybody, and gossiping are all manifestations of **the sin of PRIDE**, and are **evidences that a person is under the control of their FLESH, and not the Holy Spirit**. They are the **"bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts"** that the word of God calls "earthly, sensual (of the "flesh"), and demonic" (James 3:14-17). **To be filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit**, you may need to ask God if there are any of these character defects or areas in your life that are **blocking the producing of the fruit of His Spirit in your life**. Get honest with yourself and with God! Once you clear up these obstacles and blockages in your life, whether through self examination and prayer, good biblical counseling, or working a recovery program, the Holy Spirit can FLOW through you freely to produce His FRUIT.

- **Galatians 5:22-23** "But the FRUIT of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering (patience), kindness, goodness (meekness, humility), faithfulness, gentleness, self-control....."
- **James 3:14-17** "But if you have **bitter envy and self-seeking** in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above (it's not from God), but is **earthly, sensual (of the "flesh"), demonic**. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing will be there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield (humble, submissive), **FULL of mercy and good FRUITS**, without partiality and without hypocrisy."
- **I Corinthians 13:1-8** "Love is patient and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up (with pride); does not behave rudely, does not seek its own (is not selfish), is not provoked (not easily irritated), thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails."