



MANIPULATION

Cutting the Strings of Control

June Hunt



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JUNE HUNT



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Manipulation: Cutting the Strings of Control
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Dear friend,

When I was in grade school, all the students were asked to sell raffle tickets door-to-door in order to raise money for our school. Now, *that* was the point—to raise money *for the school*. However, I didn't think that cause sounded nearly as compelling as it could be.

So I went door-to-door telling homeowners how they could be the *lucky winner* of a brand new color television set (which was true)—but then I gave a “bleeding heart” story of where this money was going: “*to help poor, sick children in the hospital*”—which was in no way true!

By the way, the boy and girl who sold the most tickets would be awarded a prize—a watch! I wanted to win that pink, plastic watch so much I could taste it! Well, I hate to admit it—but I won. (In truth, I won only because my brother, a year older, gave me some of his tickets—he was far ahead of all the other students.)

Ultimately, I won the girl's watch by dishonest, manipulative means, whereas Ray won the boy's watch by honest, persuasive means.

Why didn't I tell the truth? Because I was determined to win that pink watch, I thought I needed to control the outcome. And that's precisely the point of manipulation: *control*.

Now consider this: Apart from the obvious deception, what is the deeper problem with manipulation? Choosing to manipulate people is

the opposite of choosing to trust God—trusting Him with everything in our lives.

What a change I experienced when I finally gave Christ control of my life! The comforting promise of Proverbs 3:5–6 became my inspiration: “*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.*” (NKJV)

Even though I had experienced a true change through Christ in most areas of my life, periodically I kept finding myself in an insidious pit, and I didn’t know how to climb out of it. Oddly enough, rather than growing up as the “master manipulator,” I kept letting others manipulate me. At times I knew I was “caving in” to manipulation—however, I honestly thought I had no choice. However, I *did* have a choice. Nevertheless, I lived as a “peace-at-any-price” person: afraid of the anger of others, afraid to set a “boundary,” and afraid of disapproval.

At times I would violate my own conscience: I would say *yes* to people when I wanted to say *no*. Again, I thought I had no choice.

Does this situation sound too familiar? Do you say *yes* to people when you know you should say *no*? Do you even know when you’re being manipulated, yet feel powerless to stop it? If so, I understand!

A major turning point in my life came when I was confronted face-to-face with the Word of

God—one single verse that challenged me to say *no* to manipulative people: “*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*” (Galatians 1:10).

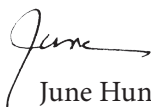
What a revelation! What relief! What reassurance! I finally realized that I had the right to say *no* to people so I could say *yes* to God!

And that is true for you. Realize that manipulation is the number one guilt game. This means manipulative people will try to make you feel guilty of insensitivity, of disloyalty, of whatever, in order to pressure you into giving your time, your money, yourself even though you are not being led by the Lord to do so.

This book on manipulation is produced so that you will learn what tactics are used in manipulation, why you have been manipulated, and how to stop being manipulated; in other words, to enable you to say *no* to people so you can say *yes* to God.

Don't forget—Jesus said, “*If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed*” (John 8:36). My prayer is that through the truths within these pages, you will find hope for your heart to live in His freedom.

Yours in the Lord's hope,


June Hunt

MANIPULATION

Cutting the Strings of Control

It is handed down from one generation to the next ... to the next ... and to the next. But this family trait has no genetic history of big ears or blue eyes—no DNA of fair skin or brown freckles. This is something behavioral, something willful, something bad, called *manipulation*.

This behavior—found in men and women alike—can also be called a character flaw. In fact, this pattern of conniving and cover-up periodically appears throughout the entire human family, even in the least likely family line: the patriarchs of the Bible—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as well as in Jacob's sons and their descendants. Each of these men, and their wives, manipulated people and circumstances in an attempt to dictate their own destinies or to circumvent some assumed negative consequences.

It's clear—sometimes the faith of the patriarchs faltered and gave way to fear. And too many times the results were grave: dishonor to their name and disgrace to their God. And all because of maniacal *manipulation*!

Truly ...

**“There is a way that seems right to a man,
but in the end it leads to death.”
(Proverbs 14:12)**



DEFINITIONS

Abraham's wife, Sarah, has long been considered to be submissive—however, she can also be seen as subversive.

In the Bible, she is praised as a woman of inner beauty, *“who obeyed Abraham and called him her master”* (1 Peter 3:6). But she tarnished that inner beauty by manipulating circumstances to force God's promise to Abraham to be fulfilled—in her timing. God had assured Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the sands of the sea. But now the couple is aged; they are still barren. Since Sarah is now well past childbearing years, she proposes a plan to be sure God's promise is on her calendar!

“Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her” (Genesis 16:2).

Abraham agrees and sleeps with Hagar, who, in turn, births a son named Ishmael, a son through whom the covenant promises were never intended and would never be fulfilled.

Abraham and Sarah have not yet learned that ...

**“The plans of the LORD stand firm forever,
the purposes of his heart
through all generations.”
(Psalm 33:11)**

WHAT IS Manipulation?

She is 65 years old—and *stunning*.

Since the life span of the patriarchs was twice that of people today, Sarai is doubtless in her prime, and that poses a serious threat to her husband, Abram (later called Sarah and Abraham, respectively).

The couple sets off for Egypt to escape a famine, but before setting foot into the foreign land, Abram decides to “fabricate” a tale, twisting the truth. This first patriarch of the faith fears for his life because if the Egyptians discover he is married to beautiful Sarai, they might kill him in order to take her into Pharaoh’s harem.

So he twists the truth: “*I know what a beautiful woman you are. ... Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you*” (Genesis 12:11–13).

Bottom line: Abram manipulates the facts. Indeed, she is his half sister, but also fully his wife. Thus, rather than trusting God, the cycle of manipulation begins.

- ▶ **Manipulation** is the art of controlling people or circumstances by indirect, unfair, or deceptive means—especially to one’s own advantage.¹
- ▶ **Manipulation** happens to those who allow others to have excessive control over them—the control that God alone should have.

The Bible is clear about not giving others too much control, too much power, and too much authority. We must not allow another person to take the place only God should have. Instead we should apply the first of the Ten Commandments:

**“You shall have no other gods before me.”
(Exodus 20:3)**

WHAT IS Persuasion?

Although Sarai is indeed Abram’s half sister, this plan is all about a cover-up, and Sarai complies.

Once in Egypt, Sarai catches the eye of more than one court official, and soon she is whisked away to Pharaoh’s palace. Abram, of course, gets the royal treatment as well, “*for her sake,*” acquiring “*sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, menservants and maidservants, and camels*” (Genesis 12:16).

But while Abram is pampered, Pharaoh is pummeled. God inflicts grave diseases on Pharaoh and his household because he has taken Abram’s wife, not merely his half sister.

Sternly, Pharaoh confronts Abram. “*What have you done to me?*” he said. “*Why didn’t you tell me she was your wife? Why did you say, “She is my sister,” so that I took her to be my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!*” (Genesis 12:18–19).

How much better it would have been had Abram stuck with the truth, trusted God, and appealed to

Pharaoh's mind rather than trying to manipulate his emotions.

**“I have chosen the way of truth;
I have set my heart on your laws.”**

(Psalm 119:30)

- ▶ **Persuasion** is the act of convincing others by urging, reasoning, and appealing to their minds.²
- ▶ **Persuasion** is the process of winning over others by logical arguments and sound reasoning.

No other missionary for Christ is more well-known or more well-thought-of than the apostle Paul. He set the standard for how the gospel of Christ is to be shared with all people everywhere. And it is not through manipulation, but through persuasion.

“Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks. ... ‘This man,’ they charged, ‘is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law.’”

(Acts 18:4, 13)

Manipulation or Persuasion

QUESTION: “What is the difference between manipulation and persuasion?”

ANSWER:

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

The Bible speaks plainly about our need to appeal to others by using accurate reasoning.

“Unlike so many ... In Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God. ... We have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception ... By setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”
(2 Corinthians 2:17; 4:2)

WHAT IS Spiritual Manipulation?

Now Sarah is 90 years old—and apparently still a knockout.

This time the king of Gerar will be the recipient of the couple's conniving. After Abraham again identifies Sarah as "his sister"—out of fear for his own life—King Abimelech takes Sarah for his harem.

God intervenes this time not with serious diseases as with Pharaoh, but with the most stern, most horrifying warning: *"You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman"* (Genesis 20:3).

Abimelech—perplexed, petrified, and perturbed—pleads his case before God, *"LORD, will you destroy an innocent nation? Did he not say to me, 'She is my sister,' and didn't she also say, 'He is my brother'? I have done this with a clear conscience and clean hands"* (Genesis 20:4–5).

In a dream the Lord acknowledges the king's innocence, and unveils His sovereign protection that had kept Abimelech from touching Sarah. Then the Lord gives this instruction: *"Now return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return her, you may be sure that you and all yours will die"* (Genesis 20:7).

Some lessons are hard to learn! It's been 25 years since Sarah and Abraham's first lesson,