

**Definition of Manipulation:** To seek to control, coerce or constrain someone through evil means or intentions in order that the person may move or not move in the particular course of action that one desires.

**I. *Biblical Examples of Addressing Manipulation:***

- A. Luke 10:38-42 – Jesus addressed the root issue of her heart and her responsibility to submit to God’s will. He did this without taking the bait of reacting defensively or acquiescing to her demands.
- B. Luke 6:1-5 – Jesus addressed the accusations by using the Scripture to correct those accusations.
- C. Luke 20:19-26 – Jesus provided an alternative to a “yes” or “no” question that was used to manipulate.

**II. *Acknowledge Why You Can Be Manipulated:*** Because we have desires we have made ungodly (James 1:13-14), we are easily manipulated by people. A person can manipulate us because we have made this individual the source of our satisfaction or the solution to our problems, leading us to fear the person as we should only fear God (Proverbs 29:25). Consider some of the reasons you are manipulated:

- A. Overly dependent on a person to satisfy various desires or to meet particular needs in your life. The fear of losing or not gaining these desires or needs from the person leads you to be manipulated.
- B. Overly dependent on a person’s approval of you. The fear of losing or not gaining the person’s approval leads you to be manipulated.
- C. Overly dependent on a person’s companionship, attention or affection towards you. The fear of losing or not gaining the companionship, attention or affection towards you leads you to be manipulated.
- D. Overly dependent on a person finding you significant, valuable or important. The fear of losing or not gaining significance, value or importance from the person leads you to be manipulated.

- E. The control, coercion or constraining through evil means works on you, not because of the power of the manipulator, but because of the power of your desires or true needs that you believe can be gained or taken away by the manipulator, since you have put them in the place of God in your life.

**III. *Acknowledge the Awful Ways You Address Manipulation:*** We are told not to answer a fool according to his/her foolishness. That means we are not to act foolishly in response to a person acting foolish with us. Therefore, you need to make sure when you are being manipulated that you do not (Proverbs 26:4):

- A. Defend yourself.
- B. Justify your words, actions or decisions.
- C. Blame-shift.
- D. Answer the “why” questions at a time when they should not be addressed or make the answer more about yourself and less about God’s will in the matter.
- E. Yell at the person.
- F. Dismiss the person.
- G. Treat the person the way they are treating you.
- H. Retaliate in ways that are physically or verbally harmful.

**IV. *Ascertain The Nature of the Matter:*** If we are being wise in a matter, we will think before we speak. We will listen to understand the nature of the issue before we respond. We will listen to discern the issue behind the manipulation. Therefore, when someone is trying to manipulate you, seek to discern the issue behind the manipulation by getting answers to these questions before you begin to speak (Proverbs 15:28, 18:13,15):

- A. Is this a matter of preference?
- B. Is this a matter of conscience?
- C. Is this a matter of morality?
- D. Is this a matter of wisdom?
- E. Is this person wanting something from you that they are not getting?

- F. Is this person losing something from you that they do not want to lose?
  - G. Is this person receiving something from you that they do not want to receive?
  - H. What is the expectation/belief system with which they are addressing you?
  - I. What is the disappointment/belief system with which they are addressing you?
- V. ***Approach the Person in a Considerate, Compassionate, and Controlled Manner:*** What you say matters but how you say it is just as important. When dealing with a manipulator, make sure your tone reflects the grace of God. Therefore, when you speak (Proverbs 15:1,4):
- A. Speak in a gentle way to the person.
  - B. Speak using self-control when talking the person.
  - C. Speak words that minister grace and not disgrace.
  - D. Do not interrupt the person unless there is a proper reason to do so.
  - E. Clarify your words and intentions when prudent to do so.
  - F. Do not speak too much, knowing sin is inevitable.
- VI. ***Address the Matter using Discernment and the Wisdom of God:*** So that the foolish person does not think that he or she is wise in his or her own estimation of the manipulation, you should address them in God-honoring wisdom (Proverbs 26:5):
- A. Speak to the matter without attacking the person about the matter.
  - B. Address the matter according to your role within the matter (leader, subordinate, coequal).
  - C. Address the belief system of the person that is driving the matter.
  - D. Address the goal of the person that is driving the matter.
  - E. Address the desire(s) of the person that is driving the matter.
  - F. Distinguish between the person's opinion about the matter and the genuine facts of the matter.

- G. Distinguish between your obligations to the person within the matter and the person's expectations of you within the matter.
  - H. Distinguish between promises you may be breaking within the matter and the person's expectations of you that are not being realized within the matter.
  - I. Distinguish between past hurts and the present issue or how it could be a continuation of the past hurt within the present issue.
- VII. *Appeal to God's Specific Word about the Matter:*** Identify clear principles of God's Word that can speak to the manipulation. Make sure you (Ephesians 4:15, 25; Proverbs 16:20):
- A. Address the matter according to the biblical standards on the issue.
  - B. Address the matter according to what the Bible says each person is to do in the issue.
  - C. Use logic within the conversation, without being sarcastic or condescending.
  - D. Focus on what is right instead of who is right.
  - E. Speak the truth in love.
  - F. Address sin accordingly.
  - G. Do not take responsibility for other people's thoughts, emotions, desires, words and actions. You do not have control over those things, so you are not responsible for them.
  - H. Do not accept other people's standards as the standard of measurement for what is right or wrong about what you are doing or not doing. Appeal to God's Word in regard to what is right or wrong about what you are doing or not doing.
  - I. Do not comply with the proposed course of action if doing so would support the person's agenda of manipulation. You will only find yourself complying over and over again.
  - J. Seek to do what would bring the greatest glory to God and the biggest God-honoring benefit to the other person.

[ For further insight into this subject, see  
*Manipulation: Knowing How To Respond* by Lou Priolo ]