

6 Strategies to Defeat the Joy Thief

We all have been disappointed at one time or another. In fact, it would be surprising if we went through an entire week without encountering some kind of **discouragement**. Many Christians are laying along the roadside of life devastated, because they have not learned how to deal with the problem.

It is not God's will for you to live a disappointed, devastated or oppressed life today—or any day. When you resist the devil at the onset of your discouragement and learn to place your **hope** and confidence in Jesus, you can live in His **joy** and **peace**.

Part of Jesus' earthly ministry was to go about in the anointing of the Holy Spirit and deliver all those who were oppressed by the devil. This same power is available to us today. Through Jesus we can fight the enemy's attempts to weigh us down—if we don't rebuke him, he will try to destroy us.

When the devil makes one move toward us, we should keep ourselves so spiritually tuned in that we discern what he is trying to do and back him down. With the power Jesus made available to us, he has no choice but to run.

Deuteronomy 30:19 teaches us that we have a choice: "I call heaven and earth to witness this day against you that I have set before you life and death, the blessings and the curses; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live" (AMP).

Happiness and joy come from within. Each day we can make the choice to be filled with misery or have the joy of the Lord. Either we choose to listen to the devil and allow him to make us miserable, or we choose to withstand him so we can live in

the fullness of life that God has provided for us. We need to take the kingdom of God—righteousness, peace and joy mentioned in Romans 14:17—by force. As soon as you feel disappointed, stop the devil.

We are to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12) in our daily struggle against the enemy and in our own minds and hearts. I have learned six strategies that we need to defeat Satan:

- **Think aggressively.** Don’t just sit around wishing your troubles would disappear. Plan and calculate, like a general preparing for battle, how to engage and defeat the enemy.
- **Pray fervently.** Hebrews 4:16 instructs us to approach God’s throne confidently and boldly. That means aggressively! Don’t be bashful with God. Step forward with confidence and tell Him what you need.
- **Speak fearlessly.** First Peter 4:11 tells us “whoever speaks [let him do it as one who utters] oracles of God.” As the children of God, you and I are to have a spiritually commanding voice against the forces of evil.
- **Give abundantly.** The way we give is the way we receive (Luke 6:38). No offering is too small and none too great. Give as God gives.
- **Work intently.** Whatever we put our hand to, we need to do it aggressively (see Eccl. 9:10). Don’t approach tasks with dread and a desire to escape. Stir yourself up in the Holy Spirit and get the job done.
- **Love unconditionally.** As children of God, we must love others as God loves us, and that means sacrificially.

You can learn to defend yourself against disappointment by

focusing on God, meditating on His promises, confessing His Word, and submitting yourself and your situation to Him in prayer. No matter what you have lost or how bad you may feel, you still have the ability to direct your thoughts away from the negative and toward the positive. In choosing to be positive, you can replace devastation with hope and expectation.

Take an inventory of what you have left, not just what you've lost. This keeps your mind in the present where God is. Remember, Jesus called Himself, "I am," not "I was" or "I will be." He is here for you. Today you can have **joy!**

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times best-selling author and one of the world's leading practical Bible teachers. She has written more than 70 books, including the popular Beauty for Ashes and Battlefield of the Mind. She is also the founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries Inc. and the host of the Enjoying Everyday Life radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. To read past columns in Charisma by Joyce Meyer, log on at charismamag.com/meyer. This article is from the [September 2006](#) issue of Charisma.

It's More Blessed to Give

by Stephen Strang

One of my earliest memories of Christmas takes me back to 1956, when I got my first bicycle. It was a wonderful Christmas in which my brother and sister and I received many nice gifts. But that year, my parents did something that remains with me years later. They encouraged us to give one of our

newly opened gifts
to a poor family in our church.
I don't remember why the family was poor. Nor do I remember
what I gave. But
I do remember visiting their home and giving those kids
something I probably
wanted to keep.

It was a good reminder to me that the focus at Christmas is on
giving, not
getting, as our materialistic culture would like us to
believe. The Bible says,
“'It is more blessed to give than to receive'” (Acts 20:35,
NKJV).

Today my family “tithes” on what we give—not out of legalistic
necessity but
to remind ourselves that we should give to Jesus at the time
of year we remember
His birth. We add up what we spend and give a special offering
of roughly 10
percent of the total cost of our gifts.

Some years we've taken gifts down to a homeless shelter in our
area. One year
I went there dressed as Santa Claus and, after telling them
the story of the
real meaning of Christmas, I distributed the gifts to some
neighborhood children
as well as to some toothless homeless men.

Other years we've given to a national ministry we felt was
doing a good work.
Operation Holiday Hope, sponsored by Bill Wilson in New York
City, is one
example.

Most years we remember the men at a Teen Challenge training

center nearby who
can't go home for Christmas. We give them some small gifts to
let them know they
are remembered.

In all of this, the point I make to my own two sons and my
staff is that at
Christmas we go out of our way to give to others less
fortunate than ourselves.

As we
join together to help others less fortunate, we minister to
the Lord who said,
“'Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My
brethren, you did it to
Me'” (Matt. 25:40).

This article is from the [December 2002](#) issue of *Charisma*

Answering God's Call

by Bishop Eddie Long

Have you ever wondered what God wants you to do for His
kingdom? If you haven't,
you're in the minority because each day, thousands of
believers fall to their
knees to query Him. “Lord, what do You want from me?” they
ask. Or, “What should
I do with my life?” And sometimes we wonder if He's called us
at all: “Father,
did You really call me to this area of ministry?”
From Noah to David to John the Baptist and the apostle Paul,
men and women
alike have bombarded heaven with these questions. Some of

us—heaven

forbid—have even consulted psychics or tarot cards in a futile attempt to search for purpose in life.

What are we actually looking for? Do we query for easy, pat answers that require nothing of us, or are we really looking for the truth? Are we searching for a heavenly lottery, or are we willing to do what God has called us to do in life?

In our 21st-century technocratic society, we are so distracted that we often miss the really important things in our lives. Computers keep us occupied from dawn till dusk. Our families, DVDs, CDs, hobbies and a myriad of other diversions take up the rest of our time. When do we have time to listen to God, let alone respond to His call?

If Isaiah were alive today, he might have missed God's call. He could have easily let the answering machine pick up, or he could have checked his Caller ID and decided to bypass the conversation entirely.

As Christians, we can be certain of one thing: If we are truly children of God, then we are called to His purposes. He is constantly talking to us. He's gently pulling us—and sometimes even dragging us—from our comfort zones into the “God zone.”

The question is, are we listening? And when we hear His call, are we mistaking it for our own desires? Are we picking up the right line?

God calls every Christian into ministry. Some of us are called to preach, others to teach or prophesy, and some to evangelize. You may be a parent, a receptionist, a chef or a maid. God has called some of you to heal others through medicine, psychology, nursing or dentistry. Your call could be something fascinating or routine. But we are all called in a unique and individual way.

Even the way we are called will differ from person to person. God's call to Isaiah came in the form of a vision or a dream: "'Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.' Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I! Send me'" (Is. 6: 6-8, NKJV).

Your call may come as a gentle prod, a frequent thought or in the form of a person, a job or a project. You might have prayed for your call, or it may have been thrust upon you. And yes, we have all been called to something beyond our own lives.

If we choose to respond, it will require that we give up something. The United States may be considered a free country, but as believers in Jesus

Christ, our commitment comes with a price. There must be an exchange in order to enter into His kingdom. That exchange—the price—will inherently include some sort of sacrifice.

Different callings require different sacrifices. Your sacrifice may not be the same as your spouse's or your close friend's. You may be called to sacrifice your pride, arrogance or ego, while others surrender their time, talent or their finances. But make no mistake—you will have to relinquish something in order to live the life God has promised you.

You must be willing to give up your will for His will, your thoughts for His thoughts and your way of doing things for His righteousness. There is no way around it: Freedom, in Him, has a price.

In these last days, God is looking for people who will rise to the occasion.

Not just ordinary men and women, but extraordinary people who are 100 percent committed to His kingdom and the call of God on their lives.

This article is from the [May 2001](#) issue of *Charisma*.

Be Thankful!

by Joyce Meyer

We all know that we should be grateful for our many blessings. God tells us in His Word to be thankful, and we know from our own experience that once we seriously start praising God, our burdens and troubles seem to weigh less heavily on our shoulders. David said: "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. ... Many evils confront the [consistently] righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all" (Ps. 34:1,19, The Amplified Bible). That's part of the power of being thankful. As we pause to give thanks to God for the blessings we enjoy in our lives, we actually begin to find more blessings—even more to be thankful for!

However, many times the struggle is getting into the habit of being thankful. There are countless ways to practice giving thanks—here are four of them:

When a person does something nice for you, let him know you appreciate

it. One day as I was going into an office building, a man standing nearby opened the door for me. I thanked him and smiled.

"You're the fifth person I've held the door for," he said, "and you're the first one to smile and the second to thank me."

I thanked him a second time, with a smile on my face. Afterward, I thought how much we take others for granted, even in simple things such as opening a door for a stranger.

Instead of accepting that that's the way things are, we can develop an attitude of thankfulness.

Did your bus arrive on time today? If so, did you thank the driver? The last time you ate at a restaurant, did you thank the waiter for filling your coffee cup a second time without being asked? This is the point I want to make: Develop an attitude of gratitude toward the people in your life.

Appreciate your family members, especially your spouse. I appreciate Dave, and even though we've been married a long time, I still tell him that I appreciate him. I thank him for being patient with me and thoughtful. Just those few words of thanks are a great way to develop a thankful mind and heart.

When you express appreciation to those close to you, it's good for them to hear the words, but it's also good for you. Remember, giving thanks releases joy in you. You can enrich your life and theirs just by showing appreciation.

Meditate daily on things for which you can be thankful. I have a friend who absolutely will not get out of bed in the morning until he has

thanked God for at least 10 things. He counts them on his fingers, and they're small things really, such as having a good car to drive, being a member of an exciting Sunday school class, enjoying good health.

He says that he goes to sleep at night by focusing on at least three things that went well that day. He relives those three positive things. For him, it can be as simple as his supervisor telling him what a good job he did on a project or an affirming e-mail from a friend.

Be thankful for the honesty in other people. I once heard someone say, "Only two people will tell you the truth about yourself: someone who is angry at you and someone who loves you very much." God uses both types in our lives, and their honesty makes us better people.

I urge you to be thankful for people who tell you the truth about yourself, even if it's not what you want to hear. When you hear the truth—especially something of which you're not aware—you can change. And after you've changed, you have yet another thing for which you can be thankful. It's a win-win situation.

I encourage you to take time this Thanksgiving to practice being thankful in these four ways. There is so much for us to be grateful for, and we need to focus on it—not just on Thanksgiving Day but every day of the year. Keep in mind

the admonition of the psalmist, "Be thankful and say so to Him, bless and affectionately praise His name" (Ps. 100:4).

This article is from the [November 2005](#) issue of *Charisma*

Live the Simple Life

by Joyce Meyer

Too many things compete for our limited resources of attention, energy and time-especially during this season of the year. Do you experience days when nothing seems to get done except what you've added to your already-lengthy to-do list? Are you tired most of the time? Do you find yourself wishing for a simpler day? I know all about feeling overwhelmed. I wasted many years *hoping* things would calm down. I used to complain to God about my schedule being absolutely insane. I'd cry, "God, how could anyone be expected to do all that I have to do?"

Then it hit me: I was the one who made my schedule and nobody could change it but me! I could no longer spend time wishing things were different because wishing wouldn't change anything.

I prayed for God to change me and my approach to life. I learned that He wanted me to simplify so that, ultimately, He could be glorified.

Jesus said He came so we might have and enjoy our lives in abundance (see John 10:10). His principles are simple. Faith is simple.

Trusting God is simple. A childlike approach to Him is simple, and His plan of salvation is too.

Jesus offers us a "new way of living," and I believe it is a simple, yet powerful way that enables us to enjoy everyday life. Since I began this pursuit for simplicity, I have discovered many ways to simplify my life, and one of them involves doing away with unrealistic expectations of others and myself.

Unrealistic expectations can quickly steal our peace and joy. We usually visualize a perfect day, with perfect people, and ourselves being perfectly happy in our perfect little world, but we all know that isn't reality. What is real is that only God is perfect and the rest of us are under construction.

The devil knows what steals our peace and he sets us up to get upset. Instead of freaking out when things don't go exactly the way you planned, why not plan for some "boo-boos"?

In the last three days, I have broken a dish (that was new), spilled

water out of a humidifier all over the floor, dropped the container of dog food and worked at trying to keep my dog out of it while I picked it up, and had four keys made for a door and none of them worked! I could probably think of more if I thought long enough.

These kinds of things once got me very upset. I would huff and puff and murmur and complain and talk about how nothing ever worked out right. None of that stopped those incidents from happening. As a matter of fact, my frustration caused me to lose my focus and create more accidents and mishaps.

After years of letting the devil steal my peace-and I am quite sure laugh at me-I finally got it. Life is not perfect, and things are going to happen that we did not plan for and would rather not have. My new attitude has become, "Oh well, that's life!" I have discovered that if I don't let those things impress me, then they can't depress me.

Everyone has to deal with inconveniences, but we can deal with them and avoid a bad attitude. In fact, life is all about choices. We can choose to do what needs to be done and systematically do it.

It may be tough at first, especially if you haven't been disciplined in the past, but the rewards of order and restraint are worth

the effort. The Bible says that discipline brings peaceable fruit (see Heb. 12:11).

Practice living one day at a time; give every part of you to the day at hand. You will sense an awareness enabling you to enjoy the current activity instead of going through each day in a blur that leaves you exhausted. You can begin to enjoy the simple life that God has waiting for you, as well as the eternal blessings that come from trusting His will for your life.

Joyce Meyer is a *New York Times* best-selling author and one of the world's leading practical Bible teachers. She has written more than 70 books, including the popular *Beauty for Ashes* and *Battlefield of the Mind*, and her most recent, *100 Ways to Simplify Your Life* (all FaithWords). She is also the founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries Inc. and the host of *Enjoying Everyday Life* radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. To read past columns in *Charisma* by Joyce Meyer, click [here](#).

This article is from the [December 2008](#) issue of *Charisma*.

Quiz: Is Worry Killing You?

by James P. Gills, M.D.

Answer A or B to the following questions and then tally your answers to find the results.

A. I'm usually disorganized.

B. I don't let little things bother me.

A. I can be very irritable.

B. I'm not an indecisive person.

A. I can be critical and judgmental.

B. I feel like my days are pretty productive.

A. I have problems building genuine friendships.

B. I'm in good health.

A. I often get colds or the flu.

B. I have close friends.

A. I have trouble sleeping.

B. I can focus on one task until completion.

A. I'm a workaholic.

B. I'm often singing praise and worship songs.

Mostly A's. Don't worry. There is still hope for you. Remember that the Bible tells us a thankful spirit is the basis for all of life. Paul tells us not to worry but to always be thankful to the Lord. With Paul's counsel, we can reject worry. We can rejoice with thanksgiving.

When we're focused on the person of Jesus Christ in thanksgiving, our anxieties and fears are wiped away. Our hearts overflow with a spirit of peace and joy because He lives in us.

What a relief to know that each of us can turn to God and put our lives in His hands! We can be thankful for His blessings

and let thanksgiving fill our hearts.

We can be filled with peace regardless of our circumstances. We can be faithful to the one who faithfully provides. We must focus on Him with thankful hearts.

Are you weighed down with worry? Are you filled with fear? There's refuge in the loving arms of God.

He will break the bonds of worry. He will banish fear.

We get His real and lasting peace when we turn to Him and say: "Thank You, Father, for always loving me. Thank You for the eternity that You have given me through the person of Jesus Christ, who died and rose again for me." When we turn to Him, we will no longer be consumed by fear and worry.

Jesus told His disciples: "'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me.

'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. ... Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid'" (John 14:1,27).

Certainly none of us can avoid the situations that could create worry and fear. But we can avoid the worry itself by having a spirit of thanksgiving.

We can turn to God and trust in His goodness. We can choose His peace rather than the troubles of this world.

It isn't always easy. Worry can sneak up on us. Satan knows that, given the choice, we'd rather have peace than the turmoil that worry creates. So he uses our weak human will and lures us into a lifestyle of worry.

Worry starts innocently enough as a normal, natural concern about our basic needs. Do we have enough money to buy adequate food, clothes and shelter? Is our health good? Are our friends and family healthy and happy?

It is perfectly natural to have these concerns. But Satan uses them to lure us away from our trust in God.

As we become less God-centered and more self-centered, our concerns become worries. We quit trusting that God will provide for us. We think we have to take care of ourselves, and we begin to worry about circumstances and events that are beyond our control.

The way to avoid Satan's trap is to learn the promises God makes in His Word about how He will take care of us. Search for promises that relate to the specific issues and circumstances you face. Then when one of them weighs you down, turn to read His promises and use these verses in the fight against fear.

The Bible tells us repeatedly to "fear not." Often this command is followed by the words "I am with you" (Is. 41:10). It is because God is with us that we do not need to fear. He will always be with us.

May we learn to trust fully in Him, with thanksgiving for His grace. He will destroy fear and worry and give us His peace.

Mostly B's. Congratulations! You refuse to allow the cares of the world to control your life by infecting your thoughts, attitudes and actions. You understand that worry can destroy you physically, emotionally and worst of all, spiritually because chronic worry drives a wedge between us and God. Continue to cast your cares on God.

James P. Gills, M.D., is the founder and director of St. Luke's Cataract and Laser Institute in Tarpon Springs, Florida. He is also the author of numerous books on spiritual topics, including God's Prescription for Healing (Siloam) and Rx for Worry (Creation House Press), from which this article is adapted.

Clinging to the Past?

✘ The children become adults, their needs change, and they are gone. But the woman who nurtured them must always remember she is more than their last assignment.

God has sustained you in this life because you are needed. Perhaps it is not a need that requires a clean bandage on an old cut. But you are needed.

Be careful that you do not hold those around you captive. You must love enough to let go.

It takes faith to let go of the former things. Many cling to the past because they are convinced that their better days are behind them. This attitude leads to great depression.

How Praise Breaks Yokes

Ephesians 6:12 tells us that our struggles are not with other human beings but with the devil and his demons. Satan, the enemy of our souls, attempts to defeat us with strategy and deceit through well-laid plans and deception.

But the devil is a liar. Jesus called him “the father of lies and of all that is false” (John 8:44, The Amplified Bible). He tells us things about ourselves, people and circumstances that are just not true. He does not, however, tell us the entire lie all at once.

He begins by bombarding our minds with a cleverly devised pattern of little nagging thoughts, suspicions, doubts, wonderings, reasonings and theories. He moves slowly and

cautiously. He has a strategy for his warfare—he has studied us for a long time.

He knows what we like and don't like. He knows our insecurities, weaknesses and fears. He is willing to invest any amount of time it takes to defeat us.

Through careful strategy and cunning deceit, Satan attempts to set up "strongholds" in our minds. A stronghold is an area in which we are held in bondage (in prison) due to a certain way of thinking (see 2 Cor. 10:4-5).

The apostle Paul tells us in these verses we have the weapons we need to overcome Satan's strongholds and that we are engaged in spiritual warfare. Verse 5 shows clearly where the war is waged. The Amplified Bible translation of this verse says that we are to "refute arguments" with these weapons. The devil argues with us, offering theories and reasoning. All this activity goes on in the mind—the true battlefield.

One weapon is God's Word received through preaching, teaching, reading and private Bible study. But we must continue in the Word until it becomes revelation given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Continuing is important.

Jesus said, "The measure [of thought and study] you give [to the truth you hear] will be the measure [of virtue and knowledge] that comes back to you" (Mark 4:24). We must continue using the weapon of the Word.

Praise and prayer are other available spiritual weapons. Praise defeats the devil faster and more efficiently than any other battle plan, but it must be genuine heart-praise, not just lip service or a method being tried to see if it works. Also, praise and prayer involve the Word. We praise God according to His Word and His goodness.

Prayer is relationship with the Godhead. It is asking for help or talking with God about something that bothers us.

To have an effective prayer life, we must develop a good personal relationship with the Father. Know that He loves you, that He is full of mercy, that He will help you. Get to know Jesus. He is your friend. He died for you. Get to know the Holy Spirit. He is with you all the time as your Helper. Let Him help you.

Learn to fill your prayers with the Word of God. Even Jesus used the weapon of the Word in the wilderness to defeat Satan (see Luke 4:1-13). Each time the devil lied to Jesus, He responded with, "It is written," and quoted the Word to him. The truth is always revealed through the Word.

Unfortunately, people don't always accept it. It is a painful process to face our faults and deal with them. Generally speaking, people justify misbehavior. They allow their past and how they were raised to negatively affect the rest of their lives.

Our pasts may explain why we're suffering, but we must not use it as an excuse to stay in bondage. Jesus will walk us across the finish line to victory in any area if we are willing to go all the way through it with Him.

Satan knows well that if he can control our thoughts, he can control our actions. If you have any major strongholds in your life that need to be broken, let me encourage you by saying, "God is on your side."

There is a war going on, and your mind is the battlefield. But the good news is that God is fighting on your side.

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times best-selling author and one of the world's leading practical Bible teachers. She has written more than 70 books, including the popular *Beauty for Ashes* and *Battlefield of the Mind*, and her most recent, *I Dare You* (all FaithWords). She is also the founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries

Inc. and the host of Enjoying Everyday Life radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide.

Do You Know Who You Are?

by Terry Crist

Watch out. If you're not careful, these seven identity killers will keep you from realizing your purpose in life and identity in Christ.

Lack of revelation. It is easy to wander aimlessly through life without giving any consideration to whether or not you are living in the reality of your essential identity. Too many Christians focus on outer image at the expense of inner image. They settle for less than they were created to be. The Word of God is the only influence that has the right to define you. But you will never discover your essential identity unless you have eyes to see and ears to hear.

Generational curses. One of the foremost ways that strongholds of insecurity and rejection are established in people's lives is by the spiritual transfer of the sins of the fathers to the children. A man will deal with his children exactly as he was dealt with unless he makes a conscious choice to do otherwise. This process will continue generation after generation until the curse is realized and broken through repentance and prayer.

Wrong relationships. The most powerful force in the universe, outside of God, is human relationships. Your relationships are the key to your personal success or failure; they will either coach you into destiny or restrict you from your ultimate purpose. Everything we are today, good and bad, is a product of the people we know and the lessons we've learned.

Insecurity. Much of the insecurity we struggle with is not a result of who we are, but rather a result of using a false measuring stick to determine our worth and value. We often fall into the trap of comparing ourselves with those whom we perceive to be "perfect" in those ways in which we desire to excel, and in doing so we block the wisdom of God from revealing our life's purpose. The measuring stick for your destiny is not your husband, wife, brother, sister or classmate; it is the divine pattern established by God.

Rejection. Man's greatest fear is that he will not be received, respected and loved. We search for significance in materialism, sexual gratification, achievement, self-improvement and even religion. But none of it works because this is a spiritual problem that cannot be solved with a natural solution. Some people even use rejection as a means to manipulate others. Rejection and manipulation will distort your essential identity.

Unforgiveness. When we allow unforgiveness in our lives, we set in motion a chain of circumstances that often results in emotional,

spiritual and relational
destruction. But forgiveness is for the sake of the offended
as much as it is
for the offender. Forgiveness is the act of believing the Word
of God and making
the conscious choice to release your offender from your desire
for revenge.

Perfectionism. Perfectionism is the fear of failure expressed
through an
overcompensation to succeed, at the expense of personal
fulfillment. While many
perfectionists appear to be overachievers, their motivation is
usually fueled by
a desire to gain acceptance and to overcome a poor self-image.
How much of your
life have you wasted in a futile attempt to gain the approval
of others? In
order to unveil your essential identity, you must give
yourself the freedom to
grow into who you are.

God Is Still in Control

by Janet Maccaro, PH.D., C.N.C.

At a Glance

- Ask God to forgive you for harming anyone else.
- Forgive anyone who has harmed you.
- Take past hurts to God.
- Reject every fear and take it captive.
- Pray for peace.

For the last few weeks it has been difficult to avoid the numerous reports about the failing American economy. With the recent news of large banks being "rescued," Christians must be on guard against fear.

They must be examples to unbelievers by remaining reliant on God to control their lives.

Wouldn't it be great if everyone knew that a Supreme Being is in control of their lives? "Don't sweat the small stuff" would be the slogan of the day if everyone truly gave up their control issues and relied on God.

>So many people are trying to "fix" various aspects of their lives—from their finances to their children, careers, marriages, co-workers and even their parents. Trying to fix whatever we perceive to be wrong, can be a sure-fire recipe for stress.

Along with this "I have to fix it myself" mentality comes a plethora of physical and emotional troubles, including anxiety, full-blown panic attacks, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorders, insomnia, tense muscles and more. Considering that more than 80 percent of all doctor visits are due to stress-related illness, I think we need to examine our lives and ourselves.

I was forced to do this when stress took a serious toll on my health. Panic attacks, hormonal imbalance, chronic fatigue syndrome and more sidelined me to the point of almost giving up. I had worn myself out trying to

be a human
fix-o-matic.

For the first time in my life, I had to face the reality that I alone could not fix or control anything. But I discovered that someone else could.

During my low period, I delved deeply into the Word of God. I had an incredible revelation: Not only is God in control of our lives, but He carried us even when we were in our mothers' wombs. As little infants, we relaxed because He was in control.

When I realized that someone was in control who could fix my life with much more expertise than I had and who always has my best interests at heart, I was able to let go, step back and live my life from a changed perspective. I now am able to honor the people in my life for who they are and not try to make them into who I think they should be.

To help curb your desire to control you must first understand why you behave this way.

Many times we become controllers when we experience situations in our lives that leave us feeling hurt, vulnerable or rejected.

A childhood that was filled with a lack of praise and approval, the divorce of parents, death, an unstable upbringing, the responsibility of raising other siblings, a strict religious environment, or a family history of alcoholism and low self-esteem can be a contributing factor. Because of such

a background,
people develop controlling personality traits that include
high expectations,
extremely analytical or perfectionist tendencies, obsessive
thinking and
more.

The real root of the problem of control, however, is fear.
Fear paralyzes
your life and your health. Fear plays a part in many diseases
we face in these
times.

The good news is that your healing can begin with the
realization of how
great a part fear has played in turning you into a control
freak. You must face
your fear head-on.

Yes, it took years of hurt and trauma to bring you to this
point, but you
must deal if you are going to heal! God has not given us a
spirit of fear (see 2
Tim. 1:7).

Here are some steps to take to turn your situation around:
Pray and ask God to forgive you for anything you may have done
that has
harmed another individual.
Forgive anyone who has harmed you.
Let God take
past hurt from you. Take it to the altar and leave it there.
Consciously
reject every fear that comes into your mind and tries to take
you captive.
Rebuke it and ask for the peace of God to surround you.
It's worth the effort. Just think of all the anxiety,
depression, heartache
and medical bills that will be avoided as you relax, knowing
"God is in
control."