

WEEK 5: RELEASING THE NEED TO CONTROL

Detailed Facilitator Guide with Notes and Questions

OVERVIEW FOR FACILITATORS

Week 5 Goal: Help participants recognize and release their compulsive need to control—outcomes, others' perceptions, relationships, circumstances—and learn to live in surrender and trust.

The Core Issue: Narcissism is fundamentally a control strategy. When you believe your worth depends on being special, you must control how others see you. When you're terrified of vulnerability, you must control outcomes. When you can't trust anyone (including God), you must control everything.

The Progression:

- Weeks 1-2: Saw patterns and harm
- Week 3: Let false self die
- Week 4: Faced the emptiness underneath
- **Week 5:** Release the grip—let go of control as the primary coping mechanism

Why This Week Is Critical: Until participants release control, they'll just create new, more sophisticated forms of narcissism. They'll become "the humble one" (controlling through spiritual performance) or "the recovered one" (controlling through self-awareness performance). True freedom requires surrendering the need to control.

THE ANATOMY OF NARCISSISTIC CONTROL

Understanding What Needs to Be Released

Forms of Narcissistic Control:

1. Image Management: Controlling how others perceive you

- Curating social media presence
- Strategic storytelling (always the hero or victim)
- Impression management in every interaction
- Hiding anything that doesn't fit the image

2. Outcome Control: Micromanaging results to avoid vulnerability

- Perfectionism
- Inability to delegate
- Correcting others constantly
- Needing to be right
- Anxiety when things don't go as planned

3. Emotional Control: Managing others' emotions to protect yourself

- Preventing others from being angry at you
- Ensuring others always see you positively
- Manipulating through charm, guilt, or victimhood
- Avoiding situations where you might be criticized

4. Relationship Control: Positioning yourself as central/indispensable

- Creating dependence
- Triangulation (controlling information flow)
- Dominating decisions
- Punishing independence in others

5. Information Control: Managing what others know

- Selective honesty

- Omitting facts that make you look bad
- Rewriting history
- Gaslighting

6. **Spiritual Control:** Using God/spirituality to maintain control

- "God told me..." (to get your way)
- Spiritual superiority
- Using prayer/Bible as weapons
- Controlling through religious authority

The Underlying Anxiety: All control is an attempt to manage terror—of being exposed, rejected, ordinary, powerless, or out of control.

WHAT MAKES THIS WEEK DANGEROUS

Resistance Patterns to Expect

"But Some Control Is Necessary":

- True, but participants will use this to avoid releasing ANY control
- The question isn't "Should I ever have preferences?" but "Am I controlling compulsively?"

Creating New Control Systems:

- "I'm surrendering to God" becomes performance of surrender
- "I'm letting go" becomes a way to control how others see them as spiritual
- They might try to control the PROCESS of releasing control

Anxiety Spikes:

- Control is their primary anxiety management tool

- Letting go feels like free-falling
- May experience panic attacks, insomnia, obsessive thoughts

Rage:

- When they can't control, narcissists often rage
- This week might trigger anger at God, facilitator, the program, life
- "This is stupid—some things SHOULD be controlled!"

Spiritual Crisis:

- "If I surrender to God, He'll make my life miserable"
- "God can't be trusted"
- "Surrender is just religious talk for being a doormat"

OPENING SESSION (Day 1)

Transition from Week 4 (15 minutes)

Facilitator Script:

"Last week, you sat with emptiness. You faced the void underneath your narcissistic defenses. That was brutal, and some of you are still processing it.

This week, we're addressing what you've been using to manage that terror: control.

Control is the narcissist's drug of choice. You can't control whether you're actually special, so you control how people perceive you. You can't control whether you're lovable, so you control relationships to prevent rejection. You can't control God, so you control your spiritual image.

The illusion: If I can just control enough variables, I'll be safe. I'll be secure. I'll finally be okay.

The reality: Control is exhausting, it damages relationships, and it doesn't work. You're never secure, never at rest, never truly safe—because you can't control everything.

This week, you're learning to let go. Not because control is morally wrong, but because it's killing you and everyone around you.

What we're NOT saying:

- You should have no preferences
- You should be passive
- You should never make decisions
- You should let people abuse you

What we ARE saying:

- You can't control outcomes, only your choices
- You can't control how others see you
- You can't control whether you're safe—only God can provide security
- Trying to control what you can't control is making you sick

Jesus said, 'Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.' (Matthew 11:28)

You're weary because control is exhausting. This week, you're learning to rest."

Opening Check-In (Go Around Circle)

Question: *"Where in your life do you feel most compelled to control? What happens when you can't?"*

Facilitator Note: Listen for:

- **Specific control behaviors:** Image management, micromanaging, impression control

- **Anxiety response:** "I panic/rage/collapse when I can't control"
- **Denial:** "I don't really try to control things"
- **Justification:** "But I NEED to control this because..."
- **Self-awareness:** "I control everything and I'm exhausted"

Watch for participants who intellectualize about control without admitting their own patterns.

SCRIPTURE FOUNDATION EXPLORATION (35 minutes)

Zechariah 4:6 - "Not by Might nor Power, but by My Spirit"

Read aloud: Zechariah 4:1-10 (context: rebuilding the temple—an impossible task)

Focus on verse 6: "'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts."

Facilitator Teaching (12 minutes):

"Zechariah is speaking to Zerubbabel, who's trying to rebuild the temple. The task is overwhelming. The obstacles are massive. Humanly speaking, it's impossible.

God's message: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit.'

Three key words:

'Might' (*chayil* in Hebrew): Military strength, force, human effort, pushing through

'Power' (*koach*): Personal capacity, ability, resources, competence

'Spirit' (*ruach*): God's breath, wind, presence, power—not human effort

God is saying: This won't get done through your striving, your competence, your control. It will get done by My Spirit.

For the narcissist: Your whole life has been 'by might and power'—by effort, achievement, image management, control. You've been the one making things happen, holding it together, ensuring outcomes.

God says: That's not the way.

The invitation: Stop striving. Stop controlling. Let My Spirit work.

This is terrifying for the control-addicted person because:

- 'If I stop controlling, nothing will happen'
- 'If I don't make it happen, it won't happen'
- 'I can't trust God to do what needs to be done'

But God's way is surrender, not control. Trust, not management. Spirit, not might."

Discussion Questions:

1. "**Where in your life are you operating by 'might and power'—by effort, striving, control—instead of trusting God's Spirit?**"
2. "**What are you afraid will happen if you stop trying to control outcomes?**"
 - Common fears: Failure, exposure, rejection, chaos, loss
3. "**Can you think of a time when God did something AFTER you stopped trying to control it?**"
4. "**What would 'by My Spirit' look like in your actual life? What would change?**"
5. "**Is the exhaustion of control worth the illusion of safety it provides?**"

Proverbs 3:5 - "Trust in the LORD... Do Not Lean on Your Own Understanding"

Read aloud: Proverbs 3:5-8

Focus on verse 5: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding."

Facilitator Teaching (12 minutes):

"This is one of the most-quoted verses in Scripture—and one of the hardest to actually live.

'Trust in the LORD with all your heart':

- Not partial trust, not contingency planning, not 'I'll trust but also hedge my bets'
- With ALL your heart—complete, unreserved trust

'Do not lean on your own understanding':

- Stop trying to figure everything out
- Stop needing to know how it will all work
- Stop requiring certainty before you release control

Verse 6: 'In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.'

- When you acknowledge Him (instead of relying on yourself), HE directs your path
- You don't have to figure it out or control it

For the narcissist: 'Leaning on your own understanding' is your default mode. You trust YOUR intelligence, YOUR insight, YOUR ability to manage outcomes. Trusting God feels like jumping off a cliff.

Why is this hard?

1. **Control gives illusion of security:** 'If I understand and manage everything, I'm safe.'
2. **Trust requires vulnerability:** 'If I trust God, I might get hurt.'

3. **Pride says 'I know better':** 'My understanding is pretty good, actually.'
4. **Fear of disappointment:** 'What if God doesn't come through?'

But the promise: When you stop leaning on yourself and trust Him, He makes your paths straight. Not by you controlling, but by you surrendering.

The paradox: The way to security is through releasing control. The way to safety is through trust."

Discussion Questions:

1. **"Rate yourself honestly: How much do you actually trust God vs. how much do you trust your own understanding/control?"**
2. **"What makes it hard to trust God? What are you afraid He'll do (or won't do)?"**
3. **"Where are you 'leaning on your own understanding' right now—trying to figure out and control an outcome?"**
4. **"What would it look like to stop leaning on your understanding in that situation?"**
5. **"Proverbs says God will 'make your paths straight.' Can you trust that? Why or why not?"**

Matthew 11:28 - "Come to Me... I Will Give You Rest"

Read aloud: Matthew 11:28-30

Focus on verse 28: "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

Facilitator Teaching (10 minutes):

"Jesus is speaking to people who are exhausted—and He offers rest.

Who are the 'weary and heavy-laden'?

- In context: People burdened by religious law and performance
- For us: People exhausted from trying to control everything

'Come to Me':

- Not 'try harder'
- Not 'figure it out'
- Not 'manage better'
- Just: Come.

'I will give you rest':

- Not: 'You'll earn rest by surrendering well'
- But: 'I WILL GIVE you rest'
- It's a gift, not an achievement

Verse 29: 'Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.'

- The yoke is partnership with Jesus—He carries the load
- He is GENTLE (not harsh) and HUMBLE (not demanding perfection)
- Rest for your souls—deep, inner peace

Verse 30: 'For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.'

- His way is easier than what you're doing now
- Control is a heavy burden—surrender is light

For the narcissist: You are EXHAUSTED. Managing your image, controlling outcomes, ensuring everyone sees you right, preventing criticism—it's killing you.

Jesus says: Stop. Come to Me. Let Me carry it. Rest.

The resistance: 'If I rest, if I stop controlling, everything will fall apart.'

Jesus's promise: 'My yoke is easy. My burden is light. Trust Me.'"

Discussion Questions:

1. **"Are you weary? Be honest—how exhausted are you from trying to control everything?"**
2. **"What would 'coming to Jesus for rest' actually look like in your daily life?"**
3. **"Jesus says His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Does your life feel easy and light? If not, what burden are you carrying that He's not asking you to carry?"**
 - Usually: The burden of control, image management, ensuring outcomes
4. **"What makes it hard to rest? What makes it hard to stop controlling?"**
5. **"If you let Jesus carry what you've been carrying, what would you have to trust Him with?"**

DAILY PRACTICES INSTRUCTION

Morning Meditation: "Your Will, Not Mine" (Days 1-7)

Detailed Instructions for Participants:

"Each morning, after your silence practice, spend 10-15 minutes praying/meditating on this phrase: 'Your will, not mine.'

This echoes Jesus in Gethsemane (Luke 22:42): 'Not My will, but Yours be done.'

The Practice:

1. **Sit quietly** (5 minutes) and let your mind settle

2. Name what you're trying to control:

- Today, what outcomes are you worried about?
- What are you trying to manage or manipulate?
- Whose perception of you are you trying to control?
- What are you white-knuckling?

3. Speak it: 'God, I'm trying to control [specific thing]. Your will, not mine.'

4. Sit with the fear: What are you afraid will happen if you don't control this?

5. Release it: Imagine opening your hands, letting it go into God's hands

6. Pray: 'Your will, not mine. I trust You with this. I release my need to control the outcome.'

7. Sit in surrender (5 minutes): Just be in the posture of release

What you'll feel:

- Anxiety: 'If I let go, it will all fall apart'
- Resistance: 'But I NEED to control this'
- Relief (if you can actually release): A moment of lightness
- Fear: 'What if God's will isn't what I want?'

What you're learning:

- To identify what you're controlling
- To practice surrender (even if you don't feel it)
- To sit with the anxiety of not controlling
- That surrender is a daily practice, not a one-time event

Key: This isn't about manufacturing feelings of surrender. It's about practicing the posture even when you don't feel it. Say the words. Make the gesture of release. Trust will follow."

Throughout the Day: Notice Perception Management (Days 1-7)

Instructions:

"All day, notice every time you try to manage how others perceive you. This is subtle, constant, and exhausting.

What to watch for:

In Conversation:

- Do you steer stories to make yourself look good?
- Do you downplay failures or exaggerate successes?
- Do you name-drop to seem important?
- Do you carefully craft your words to ensure you're seen right?

On Social Media:

- Are you curating an image?
- Do you post to get validation?
- Do you delete things that got less response than you wanted?
- Are you managing your brand/image?

At Work:

- Do you ensure credit for your contributions?
- Do you position yourself strategically?
- Do you manage your boss's perception?
- Do you minimize mistakes to protect your image?

In Relationships:

- Do you explain yourself excessively to ensure you're understood 'correctly'?
- Do you tell your side first to control the narrative?
- Do you withhold information that might make you look bad?

Each time you notice it:

1. **Pause** (even mid-sentence if necessary)
2. **Name it** (internally): 'There it is—I'm managing perceptions'
3. **Ask**: 'What am I afraid will happen if I don't control this?'
4. **Choose differently if possible**: Tell the truth, don't spin, let the moment be what it is

The goal: Awareness. You've been doing this unconsciously for years. Now you're making it conscious. Change follows awareness.

Keep a tally: At the end of each day, count how many times you caught yourself. (It will be a lot. That's the point.)"

Evening Practice: Surrender What You Tried to Control (Days 1-7)

Instructions:

"Each evening, review your day and list 3 things you tried to control. Then surrender each one in prayer/meditation.

Examples of what you might list:

- 'I tried to control how my boss sees me by emphasizing my achievements'
- 'I tried to control the outcome of a meeting by dominating the conversation'

- 'I tried to control my spouse's mood by being extra helpful'
- 'I tried to control whether my post got likes by checking obsessively'
- 'I tried to control a situation by withholding information'

The Surrender Practice (5 minutes per item):

1. **Write it:** 'Today I tried to control ____.'
2. **Name the fear:** 'I was afraid that if I didn't control this, ____.'
3. **Admit the cost:** 'Trying to control this cost me ____.' (Energy? Peace? Authenticity? Connection?)
4. **Surrender it:** 'God, I release _____. I trust You with the outcome. I let go of my need to control this.'
5. **Physical gesture** (optional but powerful):
 - Open your hands, palms up
 - Imagine the thing you're releasing sitting in your hands
 - Lift your hands up as if giving it to God
 - Turn your hands over, letting it go

After surrendering all 3:

- Sit quietly (5 minutes)
- Notice: Does anything feel different?
- Journal: 'What was hardest to release? Why?'

The truth: You'll probably try to control the same things tomorrow. That's okay. Surrender is a daily practice. You're building a muscle."

THE CONTROL AUDIT (Days 2-4)

Detailed Instructions for Participants

Facilitator Introduction (Day 2):

"This week's major work is your Control Audit. You're going to map every area of your life where you micromanage, manipulate, or manage impressions.

This will be uncomfortable. You'll see how much energy you spend controlling. But awareness is the first step to freedom."

Part 1: Where Do I Micromanage?

Instructions:

"Micromanaging is trying to control the details of outcomes to avoid vulnerability or failure.

Questions to explore:

At Work:

- Do you delegate, or do you need to do everything yourself?
- Do you trust others' competence, or do you redo their work?
- Do you give detailed instructions to ensure it's done 'right' (your way)?
- Do you check and re-check obsessively?

At Home:

- Do you control how household tasks are done?
- Do you criticize others' methods?
- Do you have rigid systems that everyone must follow?
- Can others make decisions, or must everything go through you?

In Parenting (if applicable):

- Do you overcontrol your children's choices?
- Do you live through their achievements?

- Can they fail, or must they succeed to protect your image?
- Do you micromanage homework, activities, social life?

In Ministry/Volunteering:

- Do you trust others to lead, or must you be involved in everything?
- Do you need recognition for contributions?
- Can things be done differently than your way?

Write: 'I micromanage in these areas: _____. I do this because I'm afraid _____. The cost is _____. '

Part 2: Where Do I Manipulate?

Instructions:

"Manipulation is trying to control others' choices, emotions, or perceptions through indirect means.

Forms of manipulation:

Guilt:

- 'After all I've done for you...'
- Making others feel bad for saying no
- Martyrdom

Charm:

- Being excessively nice to get what you want
- Flattery to influence
- Performing likability strategically

Victimhood:

- Making yourself the victim to avoid accountability

- Generating sympathy to control how others treat you
- 'You hurt me' as a weapon

Information Control:

- Selective honesty
- Omitting facts that would change perception
- Telling your version first to control the narrative
- Gaslighting

Emotional Manipulation:

- Withholding affection as punishment
- Creating anxiety in others to maintain control
- Using anger to dominate
- Using sadness to get attention

Triangulation:

- Talking about people instead of to them
- Creating alliances
- Controlling information flow between people

Spiritual Manipulation:

- 'God told me...' (to get your way)
- Using Bible verses as weapons
- Claiming spiritual authority to control

Write: 'I manipulate through _____. Specific examples: _____. The people I manipulate most: _____. I do this because _____!'

Part 3: Where Do I Manage Impressions?

Instructions:

"Impression management is trying to control how others perceive you—curating your image instead of being authentic.

Questions:

What image am I projecting?

- The Competent One?
- The Spiritual One?
- The Wounded One?
- The Successful One?
- The Humble One? (This can be performance too)
- The Authentic One? (Even 'authenticity' can be performed)

How do I maintain this image?

- What do I highlight about myself?
- What do I hide?
- What stories do I tell (repeatedly)?
- How do I present myself on social media vs. reality?
- What do I omit from conversations?

What threatens my image?

- Failure
- Criticism
- Being ordinary
- Others succeeding

- Being caught in a lie or exaggeration
- Not being needed/admired/recognized

How do I protect my image?

- Explaining excessively
- Defending against criticism
- Spinning stories
- Lying (small or large)
- Avoiding situations where I might look bad

What does impression management cost me?

- Energy (constant monitoring)
- Authenticity (can't be real)
- Intimacy (no one knows the real me)
- Peace (always anxious about being 'found out')

Write: 'The image I'm trying to project is _____. I maintain it by _____. If people saw the real me, they would see _____. I'm afraid if they saw that, they would _____.!'

Part 4: What Can't I Control That I'm Trying to Control Anyway?

Instructions:

"This is the key question. What are you trying to control that is actually outside your control?

You CANNOT control:

- How others perceive you (ultimately)
- Whether others like you

- Whether you're criticized
- Outcomes that depend on multiple variables
- Other people's choices
- Whether you're successful (fully—many factors beyond you)
- Whether you're safe
- The future
- Other people's emotions
- Whether you matter to others

You CAN control:

- Your choices
- Your words
- Your actions
- Your character development
- How you respond to circumstances
- Whether you're honest
- Your effort (not the outcome of effort)

The serenity prayer applies: 'God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot control, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.'

Write: 'Things I'm trying to control that I can't actually control: _____. The anxiety this creates: _____. What I could control instead: _____.'

Group Processing (Day 5 Session)

Opening Question: "What did you discover in your Control Audit? Where do you control most?"

Discussion Questions (75 minutes):

1. **"Where do you micromanage? What are you afraid will happen if you don't?"**
2. **"What forms of manipulation do you use? Be specific."**
 - This will be hard to admit. Normalize it: "We all manipulate. The question is: are you willing to see it?"
3. **"What image are you trying to project? How much energy does it take to maintain?"**
4. **"What would happen if you stopped managing impressions? What's the fear?"**
5. **"Read one section of your Control Audit that was hard to write."**
(Voluntary)
6. **"What are you trying to control that you actually CAN'T control?"**
7. **"What's the difference between healthy influence and controlling manipulation?"**
 - Facilitator: Healthy influence respects others' autonomy; control violates it.
8. **"If you released control in one area this week, what would that look like?"**

THE SURRENDER EXERCISE: LETTING SOMEONE ELSE LEAD (Days 3-6)

Instructions for Participants

Facilitator Introduction:

"This week, you're going to deliberately let someone else lead or decide in situations where you normally dominate or control.

This is behavioral practice of surrender—not just mental, but actual.

Choose 3-5 situations this week where you:

- Let someone else decide (meal, activity, approach)
- Don't correct or improve their method
- Don't insert your opinion unless asked
- Don't micromanage the outcome
- Don't take over if they struggle

Examples:

- Let your spouse plan the weekend—don't offer suggestions
- Let a colleague lead a meeting—don't dominate or redirect
- Let your child solve their own problem—don't rescue
- Let someone else choose the restaurant—don't veto or suggest alternatives
- In conversation, let others set the topic—don't steer it to yourself

The Practice:

1. **Choose the situation:** Where will you let someone else lead?
2. **Notice your urge to control:** When it arises (and it will), just notice it
3. **Choose to surrender:** Let them lead, even if you'd do it differently
4. **Observe what happens:** Does disaster occur? Or does it work out fine?
5. **Journal afterward:** What was hard? What did you learn?

What you'll feel:

- Anxiety: 'They're not doing it right'

- Irritation: 'I could do this better/faster'
- Powerlessness: 'I'm not in control and it's uncomfortable'
- Judgment: 'Their way is inferior'

What you're learning:

- Other people are competent
- Different doesn't mean wrong
- You don't have to control everything for things to work out
- Surrender doesn't equal disaster
- Others might actually do it better than you

After each instance: Journal—

- What did I let go of control over?
- What did I want to do instead?
- What happened when I let go?
- Was my fear justified?
- What did I learn?"

Group Processing (Day 6)

1. **"Where did you let someone else lead this week? What happened?"**
2. **"What was hardest about not controlling?"**
3. **"Did your fear come true? Did disaster occur?"**
4. **"What did you discover about your need to control? About others' competence?"**
5. **"Could you do this more often? What would change?"**

CENTERING PRAYER PRACTICE (Daily, 20 Minutes)

Introduction for Participants

Facilitator Teaching (Day 1 or 2):

"Centering Prayer is a contemplative practice where you surrender control even of your prayer. You don't direct it, control it, or make it productive. You just rest in God's presence.

This is perfect for control addicts because it requires releasing control even in your spiritual practice.

How to Practice Centering Prayer:

1. **Choose a sacred word** (1-2 syllables): Jesus, peace, love, trust, surrender, Abba
 - This is not a mantra to repeat constantly—just a gentle anchor
2. **Sit comfortably** (20 minutes) with eyes closed
3. **Silently introduce your sacred word** as a symbol of consent to God's presence
4. **When thoughts come** (and they will constantly):
 - Don't fight them
 - Don't engage them
 - Gently return to your sacred word
 - Release control of your mind
5. **Don't try to achieve anything:**
 - No insights required
 - No spiritual experiences needed
 - No productivity

- Just presence

6. **End with silence** (1-2 minutes) after the timer

What you'll experience:

- Endless thoughts (that's normal)
- Urge to make this 'work' or be productive
- Feeling like you're 'doing it wrong'
- Occasional moments of quiet

What you're learning:

- To release control even of prayer
- That God doesn't require performance
- That just being present is enough
- That you can't control spiritual experiences

Key: This isn't about achieving a spiritual state. It's about consenting to God's presence and releasing control. That's the whole practice."

THEOLOGICAL AND CLINICAL DEEPENING

Carl Rogers Quote Discussion

"The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change." — Carl Rogers

Facilitator Teaching (15 minutes):

"Rogers was a psychologist who noticed something paradoxical: Change happens when we stop trying to change.

The narcissist's approach to change:

- 'I must control myself into becoming better'

- 'I must manage my image while I'm changing'
- 'I must be perfect, or I'm worthless'
- White-knuckling through transformation

It doesn't work. The more you try to control change, the more stuck you become.

Rogers says: When you ACCEPT yourself as you are—flawed, limited, in-process—THEN you can change.

Why? Because:

1. Acceptance removes the shame that keeps you stuck
2. You stop defending and can see clearly
3. You stop performing and can be real
4. Change becomes organic, not forced

For control addicts: You're trying to control even your recovery. You're managing how you appear in this program. You're performing surrender.

Rogers says: Stop. Accept where you actually are. THEN change becomes possible.

This applies to control:

- Stop trying to control yourself into being a non-controlling person
- Accept: 'I am a controlling person. That's where I am.'
- From that honest place, change can happen

The paradox: Surrender control of change, and change happens. Try to control change, and you stay stuck."

Discussion Questions:

1. **"Are you trying to control even your recovery? How?"**

2. "What would it look like to accept yourself as you are right now—including that you're controlling?"
3. "Rogers says acceptance leads to change. Does that match your experience? Or do you believe change requires force?"
4. "Where are you white-knuckling transformation? What would letting go look like?"

James K.A. Smith Quote Discussion

"We are not the ultimate source of our lives. We don't generate ourselves. We discover ourselves." — James K.A. Smith

Facilitator Teaching (15 minutes):

"Smith is making a profound statement about identity and control.

The narcissist believes: I generate myself. I create my identity through achievement, image, performance. I'm self-made.

Smith says: You're not the source. You don't generate yourself. You DISCOVER yourself.

What's the difference?

Generate (narcissist's model):

- I create who I am through effort
- My identity is my accomplishment
- I'm self-made
- I'm in control of who I become

Discover (reality):

- God made me; I discover His design
- My identity is given, not achieved

- I'm created, not self-made
- I receive who I am; I don't control it

For control addicts: You've been trying to generate yourself—to create an identity through control, achievement, image. It's exhausting because you're working against reality.

Smith invites discovery: Who did God make you to be? What if you stopped trying to generate yourself and started discovering yourself?

This requires surrender: You have to let go of control to discover what's actually there.

The fear: 'If I don't generate myself, I might not like what I discover.'

The promise: What you discover will be more real, more sustainable, and more aligned with truth than what you're frantically trying to create."

Discussion Questions:

1. **"Have you been trying to 'generate' yourself? How?"**
2. **"What would it mean to 'discover' yourself instead—to let God show you who He made you to be?"**
3. **"What are you afraid you'll discover if you stop controlling and just look?"**
4. **"Smith says we're not the ultimate source of our lives. How does that sit with you? Relief? Threat? Both?"**
5. **"What's one thing you could discover about yourself this week if you stopped trying to control who you are?"**

BROTHER LAWRENCE: THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Reading Assignment Processing (Mid-week or Day 6)

If participants read Brother Lawrence:

Discussion Questions:

1. "What stood out to you in Brother Lawrence's approach to God?"
2. "Brother Lawrence practiced God's presence while doing ordinary tasks—dishes, sweeping. How is that different from trying to control spiritual experiences?"
3. "He didn't try to generate spiritual feelings; he just stayed present to God. What makes that hard for you?"
4. "Brother Lawrence talks about 'holy abandonment'—surrendering to God's will in all things. What would that look like in your life?"
5. "Where are you trying to control even your spiritual life? Your prayer? Your growth? Your relationship with God?"

MANAGING RESISTANCE

"But Some Control Is Necessary"

Facilitator Response:

"Absolutely. You're not being asked to be passive or to have no preferences."

The question is: Are you controlling compulsively, or are you exercising healthy agency?

Healthy agency:

- Making wise choices within your control
- Setting boundaries
- Leading when appropriate
- Having preferences and expressing them

Compulsive control:

- Trying to control what you can't (outcomes, others' perceptions, the future)
- Micromanaging others
- Manipulating to get your way
- Anxiety-driven management
- Image control

The test: If you can't let go without severe anxiety, it's compulsive control. If you can state a preference and release the outcome, it's healthy agency.

We're addressing the compulsive kind."

"If I Surrender, God Will Make My Life Miserable"

Facilitator Response:

"That's a common fear—and it reveals your image of God.

The fear assumes: God is sadistic, punishing, or doesn't have your best interest at heart. If you surrender, He'll take away everything you love.

But that's not the God Jesus reveals. Jesus says:

- 'I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly' (John 10:10)
- 'My yoke is easy and My burden is light' (Matthew 11:30)
- God is 'gentle and humble in heart' (Matthew 11:29)

God's will isn't misery. It's fullness of life.

That said: Surrender might mean things change. You might lose what you're clinging to. But what you're clinging to is killing you.

The question: Do you trust that God is good? If not, that's the real work—not surrender, but learning who God actually is.

Can we explore: Where did you learn that God is punishing or untrustworthy?"

"I'm Trying to Surrender, But I Can't Stop Controlling"

Facilitator Response:

"Of course you can't—not immediately. You're trying to control your way into not controlling. That doesn't work.

Surrender is a practice, not an achievement. You'll do it imperfectly, fail often, and gradually build capacity.

Today's assignment: Notice when you're controlling. That's it. Just notice. You don't have to stop yet. Awareness precedes change.

Tomorrow: Notice, and maybe once or twice, choose differently.

Over time: The muscle strengthens. You'll catch yourself sooner, release sooner, trust more.

Be patient with yourself. This is unlearning decades of control. It won't happen in a week.

And give yourself credit: You're HERE. You're aware. You're trying. That's huge."

"This Feels Like You're Asking Me to Be a Doormat"

Facilitator Response:

"I hear that concern. Let me be clear:

Surrender ≠ Doormat

Doormat: No boundaries, letting people abuse you, making yourself nothing

Surrender: Releasing control of what you can't control, trusting God, letting go of outcomes

Jesus surrendered to the Father's will. He was NOT a doormat. He:

- Set boundaries ('Get behind Me, Satan!')
- Confronted evil
- Said no when necessary
- Stood up to religious authorities

Surrender is about releasing anxious control, not about having no agency.

You can:

- Have boundaries
- Say no
- Lead when appropriate
- Make decisions
- Protect yourself

What you're releasing:

- Control of outcomes
- Image management
- Manipulation
- Compulsive micromanaging
- Trying to control others

That's not being a doormat. That's being free."

SHAME AND ANXIETY MANAGEMENT THIS WEEK

When Anxiety Spikes from Loss of Control

Facilitator Intervention:

"Anxiety is normal this week. Control has been your primary anxiety-management tool. Of course you're anxious when you release it.

Healthy anxiety response:

1. **Name it:** 'I'm anxious because I'm not controlling X.'
2. **Feel it:** Let the anxiety be there—don't medicate it immediately
3. **Ground yourself:** 5 senses exercise, breathe, move
4. **Remind yourself:** 'Anxiety is uncomfortable but not dangerous. I can tolerate this.'
5. **Release again:** 'God, I'm anxious. I release control of X again.'

If anxiety becomes panic:

- Breathe (4 counts in, 6 counts out)
- Get present (name 5 things you see)
- Call someone
- Use grounding techniques

If anxiety is constant/severe:

- You may need to slow down
- Talk to therapist about anxiety management
- Consider medication if appropriate
- Don't white-knuckle—get support"

FACILITATOR SELF-CARE

This week touches your own control issues.

Watch for:

- Trying to control participants' progress

- Needing them to 'get it'
- Anxiety when they resist
- Feeling responsible for their breakthrough

Remember:

- You can't control their journey
- Your job is to facilitate, not fix
- Their resistance is their process
- You're not responsible for outcomes

Self-care:

- Surrender your need to be the perfect facilitator
- Let go of outcomes
- Trust God with these people
- Process your own control stuff in supervision

CLOSING THE WEEK (Day 7)

Final Reflection Questions

1. **"Complete this sentence: This week, I learned that I try to control..."**
2. **"What was hardest about releasing control? What surprised you?"**
3. **"Where did you practice surrender this week? What happened?"**
4. **"What's one area where you're committing to release control going forward?"**

Facilitator Closing Words

"You've done vulnerable work this week. You've looked at your control addiction—and maybe for the first time, you're seeing how much energy you've been spending trying to manage outcomes, people, and perceptions.

What you've learned:

- Control is exhausting
- You can't actually control most of what you're trying to control
- Surrender is terrifying—and possible
- God can be trusted (maybe, starting to believe)

The truth: You'll control again tomorrow. And the day after. This is a lifelong practice, not a one-week fix.

But you've started. You've named it. You've practiced letting go. That's huge.

Next week: We're learning to listen. After weeks of making everything about you, you're going to learn to genuinely hear others. To be quiet. To attend. It's going to challenge you in new ways.

But you've proven you can do hard things.

Let's close:

'God, we're exhausted from controlling. We're weary from managing outcomes and images and people. You said "Come to Me and I will give you rest." We're coming. We're releasing—even though it's scary—what we've been white-knuckling. Teach us to trust You. Teach us that surrender is safety. Give us rest for our souls. We can't do this alone. Thank You that we don't have to. Amen.'"

END WEEK 5