

control girl

by: Shannon Popkin

Surrendering to God frees us from the burden of control.

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Control is a burden.

No woman wants to think of herself as "controlling". But when only a slight disruption to plans causes her to erupt in anger, or when only a small out-of-control detail dislodges an avalanche of worry, she's got to consider that control might be more of an issue than she realized. Control is a burden that weighs a woman down and tears at her relationships. Control causes her to become the worst version of herself, as she tries to manage all of life's contingencies—lunging for one loose thread after another.

Thankfully, there's another way.

Author and speaker, Shannon Popkin invites fellow Control Girls to lay down their burden of trying to control it all and find the peace, security, and joy that come—not from gripping onto control, but from surrendering to God. With humor and vulnerability, Shannon shares about her own struggles with control in **Control Girl: Lessons on Surrendering Your Burden of Control From Seven Women in the Bible**. As she mines the stories of seven Control Girls of the Bible for control-related warnings, lessons, and insights about God, Shannon invites women to lay down their burden and find rest in surrendering to the One who truly is in control.

Themes Include:

- **Signs of Control:** Control is a problem that women can see in each other, but not themselves. However a woman's anger, anxiety, worry, fear, or perfectionism is often tied to a deeper, core issue that she has with control. She might be spewing anger or melting in worry, but really what her heart craves is control.
- **The Happy Ending Logic:** Women tend to have a happy ending, all worked out in their heads. They know how it's all supposed to turn out, and they feel the burden to make things turn out right. "I have to take control," a woman thinks, in the heat of the moment. "If I don't, what will happen?" She not only craves control; she becomes convinced that she should take control—that stepping in and gripping tighter is the good and right thing to do. But the more controlling a woman gets, the more miserable everyone becomes (including her).
- **Who's in Control?** Christian women often say that God's in control, but live like they are. The woman who clamps down, digs her heels in, and insists on her own way, will find it helpful to ask herself, "Do I really believe God is in control? Or do I secretly believe I am?" Surrender involves skipping all the way to the happy ending of the story that God has already written, then flipping back to today's page, and trusting that God is working all things together for good.

- **Control Consequence:** Eve's story gives us insight into what's going on with our control-craving hearts. God designed the tree in the garden as an invitation to surrender control to Him on a daily basis. But Eve reached out, took the fruit, and became the first Control Girl. As a result, God spoke a consequence over Eve and all of her daughters. For many women, understanding this consequence is like receiving a helpful diagnosis of a condition passed on from generations past. Rather than resigning ourselves to our "Control Girl condition", we can choose to reverse the curse through surrender.
- **The HOLD and FOLD Response:** There's one thing we're supposed to control: Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. So we should hold responsibility for ourselves and with everything else, we should fold our hands in surrender. Here's the irony: Control Girls do just the opposite. We tend to try and control other people and the circumstances in life, and we tend to lack self-control. Both HOLDing and FOLDing are essential components of surrendering fully to God.
- **Gritty Surrender:** We often think of surrender as sweetly serene and passive, yet it is anything, but! Surrender is the most demanding, uphill work of our Christian lives—especially as women, who long for control. In a beautiful reversal of the Garden of Eden, Jesus demonstrated the most beautiful surrender in the Garden of Gethsemane, when—in a gritty battle on his knees, he cried out, "Not my will, but yours be done." This surrender of caving in to God instead of ourselves, is what changes us little by little—turning us from Control Girls to Jesus Girls.



About the Author:



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Shannon Popkin is a writer, speaker, and Bible teacher who loves to blend her gifts for storytelling and humor with her passion for Jesus. Shannon regularly speaks at Christian women's events and retreats, inviting women to live like God's Word is true.

Shannon is the author of *Control Girl: Lessons on Surrendering Your Burden of Control from Seven Women in the Bible*, *Comparison Girl: Lessons from Jesus on Me-Free Living in a Measure-Up World*, and co-author of *Influence (Building a Platform That Elevates Jesus (Not Me))*. She's been featured on *FamilyLife Today*, *Revive Our Hearts*, and *Proverbs 31*.

Popkin and her husband Ken have been married for twenty-five years and live in West Michigan. They have three young adult children, and two shih tzus, who (unlike the kids) have no plans of moving out.



Features:

Control Girl goes directly to the Bible for help and perspective on control. Each lesson opens with a Bible reading, in which a woman of the Bible is either trying to take control, or dealing with something that is out of her control. Each lesson closes with several application questions, often about cross-referenced Bible verses. The meditation at the end of each lesson offers an encapsulated truth, theme verse, and prayer.

Control Girl invites real life application. The lessons are peppered with funny, vulnerable, and inspiring stories from Shannon's own life, or shared with permission from others. Both the stories and heart-probing application questions will challenge the woman of every age and stage to consider her own desire for control, and find practical ways to surrender her life to God.

Control Girl opens with a chapter setting up the problem with control, and closes with a chapter for today's Control Girls, who have the help of the Spirit in surrendering to God. The remaining seven chapters examine the Old Testament stories of Eve, Sarah, Hagar, Rebekah, Leah, Rachel, and Miriam, looking for warnings, lessons, and new insights about God. Each chapter is divided into lessons which allow the woman on a time budget to engage a complete train of thought, and consider how God is inviting her to respond.

Women will find more information along with free bonus resources, at ControlGirl.com.

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Praise for *Control Girl*:

Shannon has a wonderful ability to translate truths of God's Word into interactive Bible studies that speak to relevant issues women face today. *Control Girl* is a penetrating look at how selfishness and self-protectiveness wreck lives -- and why surrender and trust are God's life-giving pathways to true freedom and joy.

~ **Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth**, Author, Revive Our Hearts teacher and host

Psst. . . You there. . . the one with the control issues. I know you have a craving to control. We all do. We have since the Garden of Eden, but there's hope! In this funny, tender, and truth-telling book, Shannon Popkin peels back the layers of our control problem. If that sounds a bit like root canal, wait until you crack the cover. In a tone that feels like coffee with a close friend, Shannon bravely goes first, letting us see the reality of her own need to control while simultaneously pointing us to hope found in God's Word. You will find your heart warming, your lips smiling, and your fists unclenching as Shannon leads you away from control and toward sweet surrender. A must read for every woman east of the Garden.

- **Erin Davis**, author, speaker, recovering Control Girl

No one wants to be enslaved to anger, anxiety or fear. Yet many battle those emotions without making headway in their struggle to fix themselves and others. In *Control Girl*, my long time friend, Shannon Popkin offers an alternative strategy. She shows how biblical thinking helps readers understand the conditions of their hearts so that they can find freedom in true spiritual growth through the wisdom of the Word and the power of the Holy spirit. I highly recommend it.

- **Dr. Chris Brauns** is the pastor of the Red Brick Church and the author of *Unpacking Forgiveness*, *When the Word Leads Your Pastoral Search*, and *Bound Together*.

In the style of Liz Curtis Higgs, *Control Girl* is an easy and entertaining read, yet Shannon Pipkin packs a punch where we so need it if we are to be set free from the stressful habit that robs our joy and ruins our relationships!

- **Dee Brestin**, author of *Idol Lies: Facing the Truth about Our Deepest Desires*

More Endorsements at ControlGirl.com

Control-related Interview Topics:

Control & the Christian Woman

- What 2020 Taught Us About Control
- The Tempting Logic of Control
- 5 Signs That You Might be More Controlling Than You Thought
- The Happy Ending Façade
- God's Response to Control Girls
- Diagnosing a Daughter of Eve
- Hold & Fold: The 2 Essentials for Surrendering Control
- Why Surrender and Passivity Aren't the Same
- The Story of 2 Gardens: Control & Surrender
- What About that "Other" Control Girl?
- When God Seems Distant
- When "What do they think?" Is Controlling You
- 5 Small Arrow Ways to Choose a New Path

Leadership/Women's Ministry & Control

- What About that "Other" Control Girl?
- Seeing God on My Side (Not Hers)
- "My" Ministry: Taking Control & Credit
- How to Respond to the Turf-Oriented Leader
- Lessons from Miriam on Control in Leadership
- 5 Ways to Cultivate a Culture of Surrender
- How Control is Robbing Your Effectiveness

Parenting & Control

- 3 Dangers to Badgering & Pressuring
- Shouldn't Moms Be In Control?
- The Hold & Fold Principal: Why Both Are Needed
- 3 Outcomes of Controlling Your Kids
- Trying To Get Your Kid to the Narrow Path
- A Lesson from Rachel on Control & Family Planning
- The Danger of Producing an Ishmael
- When Distance Has Crept In What God Wants, When My Child is in Trouble
- 3 Ways to Surrender Control of Little Ones
- 3 Reminders for Moms of Teens
- Why Surrender and Passivity Aren't the Same

Marriage & Comparison

- Controlling Wife, Miserable Life
- 5 Signs You're a more Controlling Wife Than You Realize
- Why Your Husband Calls it Disrespect
- 3 Dangers to Badgering & Pressuring
- What To Do If Your Husband is Passive
- Why Control Will Push Him Away
- The 2 Best Words To Communicate Surrender
- Why Surrender and Passivity Aren't the Same
- Why Controlling Moms Create More Stressful Homes





Notable Quotes from *Comparison Girl*:

Surrender to God is what guards us against lives of white-knuckled misery. God is in control; not me. He invites me to live like I believe this.

My anger and anxiety often indicate a deeper heart-level struggle with control.

God never intended for us to carry around the burden of trying to control everything. He designed us to live in sweet surrender to him, trusting him with all that seems to threaten our future happiness.

For those who love God, there awaits an ultimate Happy Ending. And if the end of the story is secure, we can flip back to any unsettling circumstance of the present and forfeit the burden of having to take control.

As we try to control things we can't control, we tend to lose control of the one thing we can—ourselves. God invites us to reverse the process.

When I choose control rather than surrender, I hijack the story God's still writing, ignore his greater purposes, and make the story all about me.

Surrender isn't passive or inactive. Giving God control often involves straining against myself.

Faith is trusting that God is for us, even when he keeps things from us.

If I continually take control at home, my husband probably won't fight me for the reins.

God gets the most glory, not when he rips control from our hands, but when we invite him, open-palmed, to have his way with us. Rather than lunging after control, Jesus invites us to say as he did, "Not my will, but yours, be done" (Luke 22:42).

The only way any Control Girl of the Bible ever found the security, peace, and joy she was longing for was when she did the opposite of taking control—when she surrendered to God and made her story all about him.

Every contingency in my life is attached to an ending held firmly in God's grasp. If the ending were in my hands, I'd be in constant hysterics, trying to manage loose threads and snags. But knowing that the last page of my story is settled gives me peace, security, and hope for the journey.

Jesus invites us to follow him on a path of surrender to a place where God is in control and we are free. The Happy Ending in my head is an illusion. It's impossible, because in order to pull it off, I would have to live a life of white-knuckled misery, trying to control everything and keep it all on track. This would make for quite an Unhappy Ending, not to mention all of the unhappy moments in between.

Rather than letting me continue in my illusion of control, God kindly exposes my lack of control and invites me to trust him instead.

What an ugly, diminished version of myself I become when I try to take control into my own hands.

Surrender is counterintuitive to a Control Girl... In order to reverse our natural bent, we have to cultivate a new demeanor toward God: surrender.

If I'm suspicious of God's motives, or I question whether he cares, I won't surrender to him. I'll trust in myself instead, and resort to Control Girl tactics. But when I remind myself that God is both enthroned above the universe and cares about me, I ready my heart to say, "Not my will, but yours, be done."

When I put God in charge of my Happy Ending, I concede what is true. He's in control, and I am not. God doesn't want us making his promises come true. He wants us waiting on him.

If God is barricading off one of your dreams, you can either circumvent God's hand or you can fling yourself into his hands, knowing he cares for you.

I need to stop talking, badgering, and pressuring with my agenda long enough for my husband to hear God's agenda.

God's plan for my child is more detailed, elaborate, and long-term than mine. He has thought deeper, and his perspective spans wider. He created my child for his purposes, which are far greater than mine and will continue after I'm gone.

My child's salvation is in God's wise, capable hands, not my faltering, grabby ones. How terrifying it would be if I were in control.

Every single time God withholds the thing I am begging for or stomping my foot over, he is doing something good. He is intertwining scenes with more complexity than I could fathom and fashioning the whole story for his purposes. And the Happy Ending God is writing for my family is richer, bigger, and far more satisfying than anything I could ever write for myself.

Notable Quotes from *Comparison Girl* (cont.):

The pain of watching from a distance as your child suffers on the brink of disaster is almost intolerable. But even when we are far from our beloved children, God is not.

From the time you can cup your baby in your hands till the day she drives off into the sunset, she is safely tucked into God's good hands. She's been there since before she was born.

God stands by, ready to open eyes, unlatch gates, and release resources. He's just waiting for me to despair of my own solutions, and cry out—in faith—to him.

God is in control. His fingers are strong enough for the intricate detail work. He is near, involved, and powerful. He will have his way.

Disguising, sneaking, and hiding are great ways to get control. However, deception and relational intimacy are mutually exclusive. You can't have both.

The more convinced you are that God is on your side of the argument, the greater the temptation to take control.

A wife should try to win her husband to God's ways. But she must do so winsomely, respectfully, and with pure motives. This, her husband will respond to. If she tries to control him and corral him for God, he'll just stubbornly resist.

Don't spend your life trying to get people to see you correctly. Let God be the Daddy who sees and determines your worth. Trust what he says about you rather than what hurtful people say. This is one significant way of giving him control.

I am not free to fully surrender to God until I stop letting the opinions of others control me.

God's hands are too big and too wise to be influenced by the tugging of my scrawny Control Girl hands. God gives and takes away, not based on my perspective of good, but his.

Surrender isn't passive or inactive. Giving God control often involves straining against myself.

Today, we are becoming the women we will someday be. On a moment- by- moment basis, we either gratify our craving for control or we surrender control to God.

When I see that God's plot underlines every part of my story, I have less to worry about and less to control. Even if my adult child stops going to church, or I find a lump under my skin, or I face an unexpected financial crisis, I know that the end is still being written. God's pen is still poised above the details of my life.

Suggested Interview Questions for *Control Girl*:

1. Is control something you've wrestled with, personally? When did you first realize you had a control issue?
2. Do you think Control Girls readily recognize their problem with control?
3. What drove you to explore other "Control Girls" in the Bible?
4. Even though the motivation may come from a place of good intentions, how does trying to manipulate every detail often lead to more misery rather than contentment?
5. What about parenting? Doesn't good parenting require us to be in control of our kids?
6. Tell us the story of your son and a broken video game remote. How does that example relate to our own illusions of control?
7. Tell about the epiphany moment you had several years ago, related to this problem with control.
8. How can a woman avoid becoming a Control Girl?
9. What practical advice do you have for the woman who wants to stop being a Control Girl?
10. Which of your seven Control Girls of the Bible surprised you most?
11. How can we relinquish control in times when God seems distant and quiet?
12. Control Girl has a very intentional structure. How is this book designed to be used?
13. You end each lesson with a meditation. What does the Bible teach us about meditation, and why is it an important aspect of giving up control?
14. How do you recommend dealing with a controlling family member while still maintaining a healthy respect and harmony in the relationship?
15. What other resources are available to help Control Girls hand the reigns back to God?