

Visit Tyndale's exciting Web site at [www.tyndale.com](http://www.tyndale.com)

*The Control Freak*

Copyright © 2000 by Les Parrott III. All rights reserved.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked TLB are taken from *The Living Bible* copyright © 1971. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New International Version®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

Designed by Jackie Noe

Edited by Lynn Vanderzalm

---

#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Parrott, Les.

The control freak / Les Parrott III.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-8423-3792-X (hardcover)—ISBN 0-8423-3793-8 (pbk.)

1. Control (Psychology) I. Title.

BF611 .P37 2000

158.2—dc21

00-022191

---

Printed in the United States of America

06 05 04 03 02 01

8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

## CONTENTS

---

### Acknowledgments

- 1. Confessions of a Control Freak 1

### Part 1—Who's in Control?

- 2. Exposing the Control Freak 9
- 3. The Anatomy of a Control Freak 21
- 4. Is All Control Bad? 37
- 5. Why Control Freaks Act the Way They Do 45

### Part 2—Taming the Control Freaks around You

- 6. The Meddling Manager 55
- 7. The Coercive Colleague 71
- 8. The Supervising Spouse 87
- 9. The Pushy Parent 105
- 10. The Invasive In-Law 121
- 11. The Tenacious Teen 135

### Part 3—Controlling the Control Freak Within

- 12. Diagnosing Your Control Freak Symptoms 153
- 13. Safeguards to Keep You from Spinning out of Control 165
- 14. Rebuilding Your Relationships 173
- 15. How to Take Charge without Being a Control Freak 181

- Notes 189

- About the Author 193

CONFESSIONS OF A CONTROL FREAK

---

If you read this book, take my self-tests, and make sure to follow my advice exactly as I tell you . . .

Let me rephrase that.

I'm the first to admit I have controlling tendencies. I can be prescriptive, opinionated, impatient, and tenacious. I don't have difficulty asserting myself and making my own needs known. In my drive to get the job done, I can be insensitive to other people's feelings. Most of the time I keep these tendencies in check, but if I'm under pressure and overscheduled, my dictatorial side is likely to leak out. But am I a certifiable Control Freak? That's a matter of opinion. Namely, my wife's.

When I first told Leslie I was going to write a book called *The Control Freak*, she quickly quipped: "Oh, you're finally writing your autobiography?" We both laughed. But I'm smart enough to know her tease revealed some truth. And it would be sanctimonious of me to begin this book without owning up to my tendency to take charge. I'm not talking about taking charge of the TV remote—that's a given. What guy can't be accused of being a clickaholic? And I'm not talking about the extreme compulsion to control everyone else's daily diet and behavior. But when it comes to things that matter most to me, I like to run the show. And depending on the time and place, my controlling tendencies can concern anything from choosing a restaurant (not to mention the table) to deciding how to structure a budget. Most of all, I'm supercontrolling of my personal schedule. I don't hyperventilate if I don't get to set my own itinerary, but I do my best to protect how I use my own time.

You probably picked up this book because you are trying to cope with a Control Freak in your life—don't fear, the bulk of this book is devoted to helping you do just that. But, at the outset, I believe it is helpful to own up to any controlling tendencies you might have. Why? To be honest, all of us are a little controlling at times. Don't you sometimes become irritable if things aren't done just the way you want them? Don't you sometimes become a little too rigid or demanding? It's only human. And it's safe to say that almost everyone is a Control Freak some of the time, which leads me to a definition:

*Control Freaks are people who care more than you do about something and won't stop at being pushy to get their way.*

Take sports, as a potentially innocuous example. If someone cares more about watching *Monday Night Football* than you do, chances are he will not only reserve the best TV in the house when the games are broadcast but also schedule his day—or even the family vacation—around it. You know better than to interfere with that person's desire to watch those games. The football fan is in control. Now, this fan may not be a Control Freak all the time in every situation, but on Monday night, watch out! And that may be okay with you as long as it doesn't interfere with your Monday-night plans. But what happens if you wanted to have a book-club meeting, and because of schedules the only night that works coincides with a Monday night when the fan is hogging the TV room and won't budge? "Give me a break," you might say to the fan. "You always get the TV, and just this once I'm asking you to watch your game somewhere else." If the fan refuses—presto—he is suddenly a pushy Control Freak. Am I right?

The point is that Control Freaks are people who care about something—anything—more than you do. It may be the way they like their scrambled eggs prepared, the way they answer their phone at work, the way the car is parked in the garage, or anything else you

can imagine. Not only do they care about something more than you do, they become downright pushy to make sure the thing they care about is done the way they want it done. That's why everybody is a Control Freak some of the time.

By the way, calling someone a Control Freak is not necessarily disparaging. Sure, Control Freaks can be pushy, self-centered cranks who always have to have their own way. They can be the proverbial bull in a china shop. They can be the power-hungry boss who tells you what your opinion is supposed to be. Or the manipulative mother who bombards you with criticisms and prophecies of doom until you do what she wants. These are major-league Control Freaks, and there's no ambivalence about the trouble they cause.

But a Control Freak can also be anyone who cares more about how to clean the kitchen than you do or how to schedule a meeting or what color the couch in the living room should be. You see, the term *Control Freak* is not so much derogatory as it is descriptive. So, relax. And maybe admit—along with me—that you can be a Control Freak. As we will see, recognizing the Control Freak in yourself will help you more successfully manage the Control Freaks around you.

## **GETTING THE MOST FROM THIS BOOK**

I have two goals in writing this book: to help you cope with the Control Freaks in your life and to help you control the Control Freak inside you. Part 1—"Who's in Control?"—discusses the positive and negative aspects of several major control issues. Chapter 2 gives you tools for recognizing Control Freaks and a self-test for determining how controlling the Control Freaks in your life really are. Chapter 3 examines the anatomy of a Control Freak, revealing the top ten qualities Control Freaks have in common. Chapter 4 asks an important question: Is all control bad? Though people's overcontrolling tendencies can drive us crazy, we can't afford to throw the Control Freak out with the

proverbial bathwater. I close part 1 of the book with a discussion about why some people have such a compulsion to control. This is a crucial question for anyone wanting to find peace with a controlling boss, parent, spouse, or whomever.

Part 2 explores ways of coping with the Control Freaks around us. Here, we take a serious look at the Control Freaks we sometimes work for and work with as well as the Control Freaks closer to home, those who may have raised us or whom we may be raising. Of course, we will also explore the Control Freaks you are related to by marriage, whether they are your spouse or your in-laws. Regardless of where you seem to encounter your most troublesome controller, you will find a toolbox of trade secrets for making that relationship better. I'll help you pinpoint the trouble spots with a specific person in your life, show you why he or she is so overly controlling and, most important, what you can do right now to make your relationship with that person better or at least come to a place in which you can find peace and joy in spite of the controlling ways. It's a tall order, but I've worked with enough people in predicaments that are probably pretty similar to yours to know you can do a good job of coping with the Control Freaks around you.

Part 3 just may be the most helpful for some of you. Here the focus is on controlling the Control Freak within. I will help you diagnose your own Control Freak symptoms and reveal their primary causes. I'll also pose some questions that may uncover more about your compulsion to control than you wanted to know. But your honest answers will provide the prescription for becoming the person you long to be. In this section of the book I'll also help you rebuild and repair the relationships that may have suffered as a result of your compulsion for control. I'll show you how to set up safeguards to keep your controlling tendencies in check. Another chapter gives a three-point plan that has proved successful with countless other people in your shoes. The final chapter will show you how to maintain your influence without

being obnoxious. This is also where you will find the “transforming truth” that every recovering Control Freak needs to learn.

I hope and pray that your journey through these pages is time well spent. If you’re like me, you can’t afford to spend time reading a book that doesn’t deliver what it claims. I’ve done my best to insure that doesn’t happen. Ultimately, you will be the one who knows for sure. And ultimately, you—with God’s grace—will be the one who deals effectively with the Control Freaks around you and who controls the Control Freak in yourself. I wish you every success in doing so.