

Dealing With Manipulators

by Gayle Erwin

The sermon explores how Jesus exemplified servanthood while effectively dealing with manipulation through confrontation and retreat.

Duration: 47:29

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 14:13-21, Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45, Luke 20:21, Luke 22:26, Philippians 2:7

Topics: "Manipulators"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the story of the little boy who offered his lunch to Jesus, which miraculously fed thousands of people. The speaker imagines the boy's reaction to being thanked and given baskets of leftovers. The sermon emphasizes that miracles can happen on ordinary days and are not limited to high-pressure emotional moments. The speaker then discusses the nature of Jesus, highlighting qualities such as servant, leader by example, humble, and childlike. The sermon also references Philippians chapter two, adding more characteristics of Jesus, including his lack of force, blind ambition, and his choice to empty himself and become human.

Transcript

We have been looking together at the nature of Jesus. In fact, as we've looked at it, you've memorized some things, haven't you? Ah, surely you have. Let's test and see.

As you look at the nature of Jesus, I heard someone shout out the first one, which was servant, yes, or slave. And the second one was not lorded over others. You're doing great.

And the third was leadership by example. Exactly. And number four was humble.

Excellent. And number five was as a child. Number six was as the younger.

And number seven was last. Number eight as the least. I hear you calling it out.

That's great. These were in the gospels. We move to Philippians chapter two and added six more.

The first of those was no force. He did not use force on us. And then no blind ambition.

And then he made himself of no reputation. Yes. Or no image or he emptied himself and made himself nothing.

And then next in our list was human. He was fully God, fully man. And the next one was obedient, even unto death.

And that's number 14, completes the list. Death tends to, doesn't it? Now, when we look at this, though, I must say to you, and you probably have already detected this, there are some problems that go with this. There are.

And I need to be honest with you and tell you what they are. One of them is when you really try to be a servant-hearted, other-centered person, people can take advantage of you. They can say, oh, you're a slave.

Well, I've always wanted one. Well, is that what I'm talking about? No, it isn't. Let me draw you a little chart here in a way.

There is a distinct difference between servanthood, and I know I'm sort of playing with words here, but it works, stick with me, is not equal to, do you understand that old mathematical symbol, is not equal to, not the same as servitude. Servitude is when you have been forced. Servanthood is when you choose.

There is a distinct difference. In fact, Jesus said, no man takes my life from me. You see, that would be force.

He says, I lay it down of myself, or of my choice, or my accord. Let's write my choice here. No one takes it from me.

I lay it down of my choice. Paul tells us, he says, I am free of all men, or I am a slave to no man, or I have been enslaved by no one. So let's write the word enslaved over here.

So he says, since I am free of all men, or I've been enslaved by no one, he says, I make myself a slave to all men, that I might win some. So do you see the difference? This is force. This is choice.

Misery is over on the force or servitude side. Joy is on the choice or servanthood side. Now, what I've discovered is that if you live over on this side, the forced or servitude side, one week of that, and you're ready for a nine or ten year sabbatical, you get into an area known as burnout.

Have you ever heard of that before? It was a hot subject just a few years ago. It's a very real topic, though. Anytime you're living on this side, the forced or servitude or takes or enslaved side, you're a candidate for burnout very, very rapidly.

Living over here, though, you can go through anything, and it doesn't wear you out. Oh, you get tired. I have had people ask me, do you really believe you can work too hard for the Lord? I think the answer is no, you can't.

If you really love what you're doing, then you get tired and you rest, but then you can't wait to get back at it. But if you live over on the servitude side, you get weary and heavy laden, burdened down, and you think, look, I've done my time. Let someone else do it now for a change.

But when you are making choices for the Lord, then it is exciting. You can't wait to get to the next item to work for him. How in the world did Paul do all the things that he did? Have you ever thought about that? It's incredible.

Everywhere he went, he says, you know, everywhere I go, I know they're going to whip me. They're going to stone me. They're going to throw me in jail.

But he says, that doesn't move me. My glory in it. And I think, what is he, a pervert? No, he's just living on the servitude side.

He has chosen this and he makes these awesome statements about the future. He says, the sufferings of this life aren't even worthy to be compared with what he has waiting on us. This is the beautiful thing about living on the servitude side.

How in the world could Jesus have done the things that he did? The things he did, there was not enough paper and ink to write them all down. Only because for the joy set before him, this was no big thing. Big deal.

I can put up with this. He had chosen. If you live on the other side, it's misery.

I have a number of friends who are surfers. I have never met a burnt out surfer. I have never met a surfer who said, I hope I never see another wave as long as I live.

They can be on their death bed and someone yells, surf's up. I'm coming. I'm coming.

That's the difference. And that's the joy of living on the choosing side. Now, how did Jesus face manipulation? Being the perfect servant, you know that there would have been a temporary made to manipulate Jesus.

And that's true. There were, and there are a couple of basic ways that he dealt with those who would attempt to manipulate those who would attempt to take advantage of him. One of them we find in the third chapter of John, right at the very beginning, a man named Nicodemus comes to him by night.

Now that's a significant thing that he came by night that in itself is patronistic. It's saying, well, I know you're a good man, but you're not safe to be seen with during the day. So I'll just sneak in here because I don't want you to hurt my reputation.

That's really what he's saying. So Nicodemus comes by night and he says to Jesus, we know that you're a man come from God. I love this teacher come from God for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.

Awesome. Now, if you were to say that to me, Gail, we know you're a teacher come from God because no man can teach these things except God be with him. If you were to say that to me, you'd have me.

I'd say, yeah, I guess you're right. What else have you noticed about me? But now Jesus was not fooled by this and I am so amazed. I'm convinced that Jesus had what I call some flags on trip hammers in his mind.

When certain things happened, these flags would fly up and a flag would fly up and say, watch this man real close. This is probably manipulation. And so here comes Nicodemus and he's laying a very flattering statement on him.

Oh, teacher, we know you're come from God because no man can do these things unless God is with him. Flattery is a form of manipulation, isn't it? If someone comes and says, oh, you're just the sweetest thing

I've ever seen. I know I only met you five minutes ago, but I don't think there's anybody in the whole world sweeter than you.

Oh, you're just so wonderful. Immediately you should have a flag that goes. So he's actually flattering Jesus and Jesus, an interesting thing here, Jesus did not need to have Nicodemus tell him this.

Now that's very important because I've discovered that if there's any area that I need to have someone tell me, it becomes an area that I can be gotten into bondage where I can become bound. Jesus did not need Nicodemus to tell him, we know you're a teacher come from God. He already knew that.

He did not need him to tell him, no man can do these things except God be with him. He already knew that. So when you need someone to tell you something, you're in deep trouble.

Somehow you can go into bondage over it. So Nicodemus tells him this. Now, what was Jesus response? It was not the same kind of response that I would get.

It's amazing to me when you stop and think what a strange conversation this was. We know you're a man come from God. No man can do these things except God be with him.

And Jesus says, I surely tell you, you've got to be born again. That's quite a conversation. It's not your average conversation.

Now, the reason I believe Nicodemus was being manipulative was because Nicodemus didn't even believe his own words. If he had believed his own words, he would have said, tell me how. But instead he wants to argue with Jesus.

Wait a minute here. Expect me to go back in my mother's room. And Jesus gets on his case and he says, you're a teacher of Israel and you don't know these things.

So here Jesus met this manipulateness of Nicodemus with confrontation. That wasn't the only time where Jesus confronted a manipulator. In the 20th chapter of Luke, well, it's actually in three of the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

I'll just read this to you. And they asked him, say, teacher. Now, by the way, they had sent spies or had sent someone, the Pharisees especially, had sent spies.

The Herodians were involved in this too, because he had silenced the Sadducees actually. And they asked him, say, teacher. This is verse 21 of Luke 20.

We know that you say and teach rightly and you do not show personal favoritism, but teach the way of God truly. Isn't that beautiful? We know you're a brave man. We know that you're not afraid of anyone.

You teach only the truth. Now, folks, if you were to say that to me, you'd have me. I'd say, Gail, you're a brave teacher.

You only teach the truth. You're not afraid of anybody. I'd say, yeah, I'm pretty tough.

That's right. You'd have me. But Jesus, I believe, had something had hit the trip hammer and the flag flew up and he's saying to himself, what's this man? Very closely.

The Bible says he knew the intent of their heart. And then they said, can we ask you a question? Now, if you were to say these words to me and then say to me, can I ask you a question? Look, I'm going to answer it whether I know the answer or not. You will have tapped my messianic complex.

And I'll think, oh yes, since I'm such a good teacher, I'll certainly have an answer for this. You can count on it. And then they asked him the question, should we pay taxes to Caesar or not? Uh-oh.

Tough question. Now, if you were to ask me that question after having tapped my messianic complex, Gail, should we pay taxes to Caesar or not? Oh, I would begin to sweat. I would know this is a difficult one.

Oh, my ministry is on the line. But I know how to handle questions like that. I do.

It's called muddy the water. And I would tend to answer it something like this. Well, let me see.

When you go back to some of the ancient times, the very beginning of history, when mankind really didn't have what might be called a governmental form of system and so forth, and therefore taxation wasn't really the ultimate thing at that particular point. You could have this sort of thing go on and you could have it. Then you would come later on when you have sort of a monarchical system.

You see, in the monarchical system, in order to protect the people, they have to levy some sort of fee and so forth. And then when you get to the time in which mankind considers himself to be the king and those who govern govern by the will of the people and so forth, then you can do this and you can do that. And people would say, brilliant, what did he say? But Jesus was never fooled by that.

And he knew they were trying to trap him. And he said, why are you trying to trap me? Bring me a penny or a denarius. They brought him a coin.

He said, all right, whose image is on it? And they said, Caesar's. All right, then you give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and give to God what belongs to God. Wow.

Well, what belongs to God? Well, whose image is on you? Ah, you belong to God. Give yourselves to God. Let Caesar have his stuff.

It's going to burn anyway. But there's another place. So here you see, Jesus met this manipulation with confrontation.

He came head on against it. And once again, he did not need to have these men tell him that you're true, that you only speak the truth. He didn't need to have them tell him that.

He knew it already. He didn't need for them to say, you only speak true. You're not afraid.

You show respect to no one. He knew that already. Now, if we need to have someone tell us that, it becomes an area where we can get into bondage.

That's why we need to have these flags develop with trip hammers on them. When manipulative things come across them. And we'll look at some other of those trip hammers in the course of the evening.

But there's another place where an attempt was made to manipulate Jesus. And it comes in an interesting spot. Several thousand people have been listening to him for a couple of days.

The apostles come up. I love these guys. I've already talked to you a little bit about them.

They were a little slow. It took them two days to realize that people were hungry. And then one of the funniest things happens in scripture.

Jesus says to them, this is hilarious. When you read the Bible right, it's filled with funny things. Jesus says, you feed them.

You can hear him saying, I didn't hear that. He didn't say that. And then one of them gets financial.

One of them says, well master, nine months wages couldn't feed these people. Now I can hear in his mind these thoughts. Indeed, if we had a salary.

See, I don't know what the apostolic salary was back then, but it probably wasn't a lot. But into the scene comes a little lad. Jesus says, well, what do you have? Well, we got five loaves and two fishes.

It's attached to a little boy over here. Have you ever thought about this, folks? This is another funny one. What was this chap doing there? He obviously was new.

Otherwise he wouldn't have had a lunch. So he must have just arrived. How do you suppose he got there? I play with this in my mind and have fun with it.

I can see him saying to his mother, mama, there's a big crowd of people just over the hill. Can I go see what's going on? She says, okay, but take your lunch. Folks, as she packed that lunch, she had no idea what she was packing.

Now I've discovered that miracles happen on ordinary days. Miracles do not come as the result of some high pressure emotional moment where we're finally getting ourselves to the point where we can have a miracle. No, no.

Miracles happen on ordinary days, folks. Maybe you got up late and you're late for work and you're trying to get peanut butter on your sandwich and you buttered your hand. Oh, man.

And you think it's a bad start. Everything's going to be bad today. No, folks.

Miracles happen on ordinary days. This lady didn't know what she was packing that day. It says five loaves.

Now we would have called those buns. Those buns, that's what we'd have called them. Those buns had no idea as they were being packed what they were about to do.

You ever thought of that? This little lad heads off over the hill. He didn't know what he was carrying. He thought it was just five loaves and two fishes.

It wasn't. Now, go with him. Get in his shoes.

You're over the hill. That has other meanings too, doesn't it? You're there where the crowd is. When you're 32 like me, you begin to think that you are.

But here he is among these people and he's looking around and suddenly he realizes there are 5,000 hungry people there. I've got a lunch. When I get to heaven, I hope they have an instant replay machine.

I want to see this scene. I want to see how they got the lunch away from him. You ever thought of that? It does say that they brought the boy and the lunch.

And Jesus took those buns and those fish and he blessed them. I like that. He blessed them.

Do you realize we can't define the word bless without using the word blessed to define it? We just know we want one, don't we? We want a blessing. And sometimes when we come to church, and I'm not talking about you. I'm talking about other people that I've seen.

Sometimes when I come to church, oh, it's been a tough week, man. Satan's tanned my hide. I really need a blessing.

And so I come and I say, oh, man, I'm going to have to sit in the back. You got here late. Oh, brother, well, I need a blessing.

I really need a blessing. And we find a seat. Where's the seat? Oh, I don't want to sit with those people.

I don't like those people. So we find a seat. Next to some people we like.

And then we sit down and say, all right, now bless me. You got 30 minutes to bless me. If you don't bless me in 30 minutes, there's another church just down the street.

You know that. That happens in some places. Not here, but at any rate.

We tend to know we need a blessing. We want a blessing. Jesus took these bonds and he blessed them.

Now, if I were one of those bonds, I'd go on the road. I'd be on the 100, 200, 300, and 400 clock. I'd say, ladies and gentlemen, you're looking at blessed bonds.

So I'm just going to loaf here for a while. This is bad, isn't it? But that is not what happened next. I don't know why I'm spending so much time on this.

He took these bonds and he blessed them. And then what did he do? He broke them. He broke them.

Oh, that's what happens when he blesses. Yes, it is. I hate to tell you this, but that's what happens.

He broke them and he broke them and he broke them and he broke them. This will take a while. There were 5,000 people and he broke them and he broke them.

I guess I'm telling you all of this just to let you know that he really does want to bless you. But when he does, the next thing is he breaks you. But it isn't so he can say, did I break them? No, no, no.

That's never his reason. It's only so he can give you away, so he can pass you out. You see, that fits his nature, his other centeredness, his generosity.

He gives you away and he gives you away and he gives you away. And when it's all over, there's more of you left over than when you began. You can't believe what happened.

You don't look the same, but oh, what you've done. Amazing. Well, I can't leave this little chap alone that supplied it all.

I can see him standing there going, wow, looking at his empty sack and looking at that. And I have an idea. This is just my fun playing with the scene.

They probably said to the little fellow, hey, thanks, kid. We really appreciate your help. Tell you what, let us do you a favor.

We got some basketfuls left over here. Why don't you take a couple of these home? Okay. Okay.

Now, can you see him going home with that and trying to explain that to his mother? Where have you been, boy? Mama, you're not going to believe this. Now, though, we come to what I really was starting to tell you about Jesus. Now he had fed these people.

And you would think that after two days of intense teaching from the master teacher, this that they had received in their head would now drop to their hearts. But no, their hearts were Teflon covered and it slipped and went to their belly. And Jesus knew, see, here was the boy.

Jesus knew that they were going to try to come and take him by force and make him king. How did he deal with that manipulation? He got out of there as fast as he could, even walked on water to get out of there. There are some, there are some forms of manipulation that are so overwhelming, so strong, you don't have the tools to deal with it.

The best thing you can do is get out of there as fast as you can, even if you have to walk on water. So we see two specific ways that Jesus dealt with different forms of manipulation. One of them was by confrontation, another one was by running away from it.

That wasn't a bad thing for him to do. There are a lot of ways in which people will attempt to manipulate us today, to take advantage of our servanthood, different emotions that they may try to use on us. In fact, in order to really illustrate this, let me do a role play for you right here.

And I need a volunteer. Thank you, Debbie. You're just positioned perfectly right here.

Debbie Jensen, come up here. Thanks for volunteering so quickly. I really appreciate that.

That was very nice of you, by the way. Now, what this is, this is a rather simple role play, actually. I'll do most of the acting up here.

Good. Now, what the scene is, is this is two years ago when you and I were in high school together, okay? It's my story. I'll do what I want with it, okay? Now, you're a new person in our school.

You have just arrived, and I am, what can I say, big man on campus, okay? Hi, my name's Gail. What's yours? Hi, I'm Debbie. Debbie.

Oh, good name. Welcome to our campus. We're glad to have you here.

In fact, it's a good thing that I met you first, you know? Because what can I say? I'm just sort of a big man here on campus. I kind of know my way around. Let's move back over here.

In fact, you're very, very lucky because you see, I know all of the right people here. To be seen with me is to be with the right people. This is your great day.

Let's move back over here, Nancy. In fact, I guess I really need to tell you that if you're not seen with me, you're nothing on this campus. Just keep that in mind, okay? Let's move back over here.

So you see, this really is your fortunate day. Now, let's move back over here. By the way, what are you doing tonight? Nothing.

Good, I see. Well, I have some clothes that need washing. You wouldn't mind, would you? Now, what's going on here? This is an aggressive form of manipulation.

I have her in an iron grip. What she has to do is figure out where is the grip and get loose from that so that she can be a genuine person in the situation, making genuine choices. Now, could you hear the emotion I was trying to evoke in her? Fear.

See, if you're not seen with me, you're nobody. So an aggressive form of manipulation may tend to want you to be afraid. But now, here's another method, different kind entirely.

Hi. My name's Gail. What's yours? I'm Debbie.

Debbie. Oh, good to meet you. You're new here, aren't you? Welcome to our school.

We're glad to have you. In fact, I'm really glad I met you first because, well, I know these students here, and you have to watch out for them, you know. They'll tell you they're your friends, but when you test that, uh-uh.

In fact, you have no idea how much I have suffered at their hands. Thank you, thank you. But when I saw you, I just knew that you were different.

You're not like them at all, and you'll be my friend, won't you? Sure. You said that awfully rapidly, you know. Really sincere people don't say that that rapidly.

Well, you're just like them. I thought you were different. Well, go away.

Leave me alone. Well, why don't you? You're just trying to make me miserable. Now, what's going on here? She'd love to get away, but I've got her hand in an iron grip, see.

Now, what she has to do is discover where is the grip and get free from that so she can be a genuine person making a genuine decision. Now, could you hear the emotion that I was trying to evoke in this moment? Guilt. I thought you were different.

See, when you say something like that, you're evoking guilt in someone. Thank you, Debbie. You did a good job.

People will often use fear to try to manipulate you. Now, the Bible says perfect love does what to fear? Cast it out. If you love me, you're going to want to cast my fears out and make me fear less.

But if you are wanting to take advantage of me, then you're going to want to increase my fears. But I have learned through some difficult, difficult times to have that as one of my trip hammers with a flag on it. And when fear hits it, that flag flies up and says, what do they want? See, when I was growing up, no, no, I never grew up.

I told you that. When I was young, I had three very real religious fears. They were pushed on me, especially as an adolescent.

I contracted a terminal case of puberty. And some things were pushed on me, and I can recall it. For one thing, I was afraid that I would miss the rapture.

Because everyone would say to me, do you want to be doing that when Jesus comes, Gail? No, no. Do you want to be acting like that when Jesus comes? No, no. But folks, there are some legitimate things I would not want to be doing when the rapture takes place, you know.

Please, not while I'm in the toilet. Hadn't thought of that, had you? I was also afraid that I probably had committed the unpardonable sin. It's easy for people to, if they aren't loving of you, to make you think that.

They can say something like, remember when you got saved? Yeah. Remember how you felt? Yeah. Feel the same now? No.

Uh-huh. Who moved? That would be like someone saying to me, you see, my wife and I have been married 35 years. This year, if they were to say to me, remember when you got married? Yeah.

Remember how you felt? Yeah. Feel the same now? No. Uh-huh.

You don't love her then? No, that's not true. I love my wife more than I ever have. But as you know, feelings change.

They come and they go, don't they? And they mature. So it's easy for people to make you think, oh, there must be something wrong. My feelings aren't the same.

I was also afraid. I was made to be afraid. That's probably demon possessed.

I remember it well. My teenage years were during what I call the tent revival years back in the 1950s. And I remember with my parents attending one of those big tent.

It was the world's largest tent. In fact, there were several that were the world's largest tents. And I won't tell you who this particular person was or when his TV program is on, but I'll never forget that night.

We were seated there and people were going across the front being prayed for. And he stopped one and he says, aha, we have a demon to cast out here. Boy, he had my attention.

And then he said, now this demon's going to have to go somewhere. I knew where it was going. And he said, I don't know what your spiritual situation is, but perhaps out of respect, you should bow your heads.

And later on, I thought, wait a minute, out of respect for what? Greater is he that is in me than he that is in the world. Why would he want me to be afraid unless there was something he wanted from me? Now, the Bible informs us that God has not given us a spirit of fear, has he? We know that if it's a spirit of fear, it did not come from God. We also know that fear, God didn't do this just because fear has torment.

See, that has to do with judgment. And that's not what God is saying to we who follow him. So when someone tries to make me afraid rather than fearless, that flag goes up and says, what does he want? And guilt, Romans 8 tells us there is therefore now no condemnation to them that, you know it, don't you? To them that are in Christ Jesus.

Oh, I love that. And I love my relationship with the Lord. And when anyone tries to come between me and him and lay guilt on me, that flag flies up and says, ask him what he wants, because it can be used to manipulate.

Another way we tend to try to manipulate that was used on Jesus is to reduce people's choices, reduce their ability to choose. For instance, when they asked him, should we pay taxes to Caesar or not? What have you got? Two choices there, right? People will tend to try to do that to you rather than come up and ask, would you mind explaining to us how we should approach taxes? They say, here are the two choices, pay taxes to Caesar or not. It'd be like my wife saying to me when I came home, maybe she says, we're eating out tonight, which restaurant do you want to eat in? Now that reduced my choices a whole lot.

But when I love you, I am wanting to free you rather than to manipulate you and reduce you to lesser choices. Jesus, I think, had a pretty good set of flags that would fly up to keep people from taking advantage of him. Now let's talk about manipulation in a modern sense for us here tonight.

When someone wants to take advantage of you because you have chosen to be a good servant, one of the most difficult things we have to learn is that there are times when we have to say no. How can you do it and still fit within the nature of Jesus that we have written here on our board? It can be done. Let me give you a good way to say no.

This can save you 10 years off your life. You can say to someone, I'm uncomfortable because I don't believe I can make a loving choice here. I'm going to have to say no.

Now what's happened is you have made a very firm statement and a very firm choice, but you've not attacked anyone. You haven't said, you manipulator, you, no. No.

You have taken the responsibility on yourself to make the choice. I don't believe that I am capable of making a loving choice here, so I'm going to have to say no. You haven't put anyone down.

This comes out of humility. You have owned the reality of who you are, been honest about yourself, and yet said no. Well, there are a number of ways that people will try.

Maybe someone has come. I once served a church that was in a rather lower socioeconomic area, and we would, we're on a main street, and we would often have people coming in, usually wanting money, and we had learned after some very difficult experiences that that was seldom the right thing to do. But we determined that we would always feed, clothe, or house anybody that came in, but we wouldn't necessarily give them money, and yet that tended to be what they wanted.

And they all tended to have the same story, too. That fascinated us. We wondered, did they subscribe to the same magazine or something? Mocher's Monthly or something like so.

But when we would say no to them, then here's what would tend to happen next, and a good manipulator will do this. They will create a scene. What? I thought you were a Christian.

Don't Christians do things like this? You say, well, yeah. And you're not going to do this? No. Well, then don't call yourself a Christian.

I'm going to go tell everybody that you're not a Christian because you're not going to do this for me. And then you get all embarrassed. You say, okay, okay, how much you need? A hundred thousand? Got it

right here in my pocket.

They would do that at church. We'd say, no, wait a minute. Isn't this a church? They would say, yeah, well, yes.

And don't churches help people? No, yes, they do. And you're not going to help me here? Well, not that way. No.

Well, then don't call yourself. Take that sign down. I'm going to go out and tell everybody you're not a church right here.

And I'd hear words that I hadn't heard in years. And I'd get embarrassed and I'd say, I would want to say, no, no, don't do that. Look, we'll give it to you how much you want.

But if you'll remember what I've just told you and remember what I said about creating a scene. When you see people create a scene, just sort of step back and say, well, look at that. That's a scene.

Gail said they would do. Have any of you ever seen a whole three or four year old throw a temper tantrum? They know when to do it. They catch mama at the grocery store.

They want candy. And she says no. And they throw themselves on the floor and beat their heads on the floor.

And others come by and say, I wonder whose kid that is. Mama gets embarrassed. Look, I'll give you 10 tons of candy, but don't embarrass me like this.

If you do that, you've just set a dangerous precedent. If you leave them alone, though, about the fourth time their head hits the floor, they'll think this hurts, doesn't it? It is not accomplishing what I had in mind, is it? When you see a scene like that, another thing that a good manipulator will try to do is to make you explain your decision. You say no.

And they say, why? Now, the moment you start trying to explain you lost because they will one by one destroy your explanations. You'll give them an explanation. They'll destroy that.

You'll come up with another one and they'll argue and show you why that one's not true. And finally, 30 explanations down the road, they've destroyed your last one. And they say, see, you can do it.

You forgot what it was they wanted. All you know is that you hate yourself for letting them do this to you. Oh, that's another good flag.

When you find yourself hating yourself for letting them do this to you, a flag, check it out. It might be manipulation. Or if you find yourself wanting to avoid someone or disliking someone, check it out.

Maybe manipulation is involved here. So this subject of being a true servant where we are choosing to do what is right and best for others can turn life into a joy. Not to do it and let people take advantage of you makes it miserable.

Now, let me say this manipulation, I think is a sin, but let's just sort of call it a sickness for the operational definition here. And someone attempts to manipulate you. They're expressing their sickness, shall we say, just for the subject's sake here.

If you let them do it, you have fed them another spoonful of germs. That is not the most loving thing you can do for them. That is not the right and best thing.

But to begin to be a real person demanding reality from others, that's the nature of Jesus. He was so true. We know you are true.

That was where his opponents were very accurate. Yes, we know you're true. We know that you favor no one.

We know that you're a man come from God, because Jesus walked in the ways of the Lord. He chose to do the loving and right and best thing exactly as he had seen and heard in his Father. Well, there are other ways that people will attempt, sometimes when they will just drain all of your physical and emotional and sometimes even financial resources and never improve.

Does that ever happen to you? It's like, hey, this hasn't changed. That can be a form of manipulation. It's very hard for people to get healed who don't want to get healed.

It's very hard for people to come to the Lord who just don't want to. There has to be a draw, a desire, the move of God in their hearts. And if you try to force them to want to, it never works.

If you have to decide, well, I'm going to rescue them because I know how to rescue people, then it'll be like trying to get a wet noodle to stand up. It just won't happen. But God has designed us for joy.

He has designed us to choose to do what is right and best for others and not to be caught up in the world taking advantage of us. Now, the Holy Spirit will need to guide you in terms of what kinds of manipulation you will confront. Because if you confronted every manipulation you ever saw, that's all you'd ever do.

But you'll learn to confront those where you can be redemptive, where you can truly be a change agent in someone's life. And then stick with them. Don't, if you decide to confront it, hit and run.

But stick it out and explain exactly how you're feeling and what's going on so you can remain a true and choosing person. God wants you to be free. A true and choosing person.

Doing what is right and best for others in the name of the Lord. And then you grin a lot when you're that way. Because you're truly free.

Truly free. And Paul says, I am free. Therefore, I make myself a slave.

You get to choose to fulfill the call of God in your life. That's when it's joyous. Father, you're good to us.

I'm so glad that living and working for you doesn't mean just being a doormat that people can walk all over. But it means choosing to do what is right and best. And sometimes at great expense.

But we'll gladly do it for you, Lord. Because, oh, the more we know you, the more you love us, the more your love lives in us, the more we want to love other people. And we want to do it in a way that's right and healthy for them and for us, too.

And it benefits your kingdom. So keep us moving toward you and keep us strong in you. I pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. So God bless you as you walk with Him the rest of this week and discover the joy of choosing to do what is right and best for others.

Amen. God bless you. Post Office Box 219, Cathedral City, CA 92235 Or, you may call Servant Quarters toll free at 888-321-0077 You may also visit our website at www.servant.org

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