

## Hope for the uprooted woman

### Jesus, Take the Wheel by Ann Kelley



I love the certainty and security that comes with being in control. A good day starts with my tidy schedule and all the plans I have for implementing it. There's something very satisfying about checking off everything on the to-do list. At the end of the day, I congratulate myself for being so efficient and enjoy a well-earned evening of watching my favorite TV show.

#### The real world

The reality is that my day rarely unfolds the way I planned. The fact that I live with my husband, have children and grandchildren close by, care for my friends, and am committed to my work and colleagues at Just Moved Ministry means that an unexpected circumstance, need, or opportunity can turn all my plans upside down.

It's one thing when my list of to-dos is interrupted by inconveniences, but quite another when unexpected crisis occurs. Over the years, life has had its share of left turns, U-turns, and dead ends that threatened to undo me. For a long time my automatic response to these hard times had been to grip the *steering wheel of life* more tightly. Letting go felt risky—surely no one else could navigate better than me!

Ever so slowly, I've begun to see that the white-knuckled grip of control I've had on my circumstances and the people in my life has often left me worried, anxious, and angry.

#### This prayer by Henri Nouwen spoke straight to my heart:

*I so much want to be in control.  
I want to be the master of my own destiny.*

*Still I know that you are saying:  
'Let me take you by the hand and lead you.  
Accept my love and trust that where I will bring you,  
the deepest desires of your heart will be fulfilled.'*

*Lord, open my hands to receive your gift of love. Amen*

Taking my hands off the false security of my *steering wheel* has been a slow process of trust. Most days I am faced with decisions: Will I release my grip, trust God's love, and open my hand to receive what He has for me? Will I encourage and support my friends and family in their choices? Each day offers the opportunity for me to choose.

#### Carrie Underwood inspired me with another prayer:

*Jesus, take the wheel. Take it from my hands.  
'Cause I can't do this on my own. I'm letting go.\**

Whether you're a tried-and-true 'control freak' or you think you've got this *control thing* down, this issue of Bloom offers plenty of encouragement and food for thought.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Signs that you might be controlling  
3 steps toward releasing your desire to control
- Relinquishing Control Can Give Space for God to Work  
Offer the greatest gift we have to give: our time and presence.
- The Benefits of Releasing Control
- Trust Means Releasing Control  
Help your heart and mind to rest and trust God fully.



Bloom provides inspiration as you seek to grow and thrive

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\*Carrie Underwood. "Jesus Take the Wheel." 2005.



## What Does Controlling Behavior Have to Say About Us?

Licensed psychotherapist, Sharon Martin, has struggled with the desire to control things for years and offers ideas for the rest of us.

### Signs that you may be controlling:

- You want to know what’s going to happen, how it’s going to happen, and when it’s going to happen.
- You over-plan and get upset when things don’t go according to plan.
- You obsess over even insignificant details.
- You think there’s only one right way to do something.
- You’re critical of others.
- You boss people around or micromanage.
- You have impossibly high standards.
- You want to make the plans and decisions so you can do things your way.
- You dislike change (unless, perhaps, you’re initiating it).
- You don’t like surprises.
- You feel anxious or angry when you don’t know what’s going to happen, things don’t go according to plan, you can’t complete a task the way you want,

Martin goes on to say that our desire to control often stems from anxiety, fear, and a feeling of being out of control. As a result, we want to control our circumstances “in order to feel safe (or happy or content).” More often than not however, our efforts can “create problems in our relationships and make us feel frustrated and stressed out.”

### To be less controlling, Martin has three suggestions

#### First, challenge the fear

Since controlling behaviors are fueled by fear, we need to understand exactly what we’re afraid of and determine if it’s realistic:

- What are you afraid will happen if you can’t control this situation or person?
- Are you catastrophizing or expecting the worst?
- What are the chances that this bad thing will really happen?

#### Second, practice acceptance

We need to accept that we can only control ourselves because doing so frees us from the stress and responsibility of making sure everyone and everything goes perfectly.

#### Third, practice being flexible

Let go of “all-or-nothing thinking.” This is thinking that your way is the best and only way. If others choose a path you would not have chosen, “trust that they can make good decisions; if they can’t, those aren’t our problems to solve. Detaching from other people’s problems isn’t uncaring; allowing people to figure things out for themselves is a loving and trusting act.”

From “How to Stop Being Controlling: Manage your anxiety and put an end to your controlling behavior.” Psychologytoday.com

Detaching from other people’s problems isn’t uncaring; allowing people to figure things out for themselves is a loving

“The courage to be vulnerable is not about winning or losing, it’s about the courage to show up when you can’t predict or control the outcome.” - Brené Brown

### Relinquishing Control Can Give Space for God to Work

Excerpt from *Practicing Availability and Vulnerability* by Nathan Foster

Without fail, when I simply seek to be present with people, it gives spaces for God to guide, bringing wonderfully honest conversations. We show up and simply offer the greatest gift we have to give, our time and presence.

There is great freedom in laying before God our need to be important, noticed, or having something helpful to say. In relinquishing my desire to control, it gives space for God to work in other's lives through our exchanges.

Generous listening can require great patience and effort, but it is a skill worth practicing that forms something deep within us. We are learning to listen and, if I cannot listen to my brother and sister, I certainly cannot listen to God.

We bring who we are, thus the state of our heart. Our character formation then becomes of great importance. So often we can only take people as far as we have been. My listening to God and my own apprenticeship to Jesus is what I have to give.

[renovare.org/articles/practicing-availability-and-vulnerability](http://renovare.org/articles/practicing-availability-and-vulnerability)

### Enjoy These Benefits When You Release Control

- **You will obsess less:** Consider how much your mind is occupied by ruminating and overthinking perceived flaws, worries, or outcomes. All of that mental obsessing won't stop difficult or upsetting events from happening and robs you of your life in the here and now.
- **You will be more present:** Controlling outcomes and running mental gymnastics in your brain makes it harder for you to take in the world around you, the people who love you, and the interests that make you thrive. Come back and be here now... the present is all we have.
- **You will find that your relationships become closer:** As you stop trying to control every aspect of your life, you will find that your brain becomes less judgmental. This is because judging is a way for us to make quick decisions about right and wrong, but these decisions are not always accurate, and inevitably push people away.
- **You will be less afraid:** The more we control, the more afraid we become. We start to think that the only reason bad outcomes haven't occurred or haven't been worse is because we're constantly at the helm ready for disaster. As you let go of control and see that you can handle issues as they come, your decisions will be less fear-driven and more reflective of who you are at the core.
- **People will like you more:** The truth is when we control outcomes, we aren't that fun to be around. Sure, everyone does this here and there, but consider if your controlling self is getting in the way of people just having fun with you.
- **You will have more energy:** It takes immense mental reserves to constantly play out the chess game in one's mind. As this precious energy is freed up, you may find you feel more alive, funny, and spontaneous.
- **You will feel calmer:** All the work that goes into making sure life goes a certain way keeps you on the hook. As you control less, your body and brain relax more.
- **You will depend more on others:** When we over-control, others perceive us as so self-sufficient that we don't need them. The people in your life may not know that you're lonely and wish for deeper relationships. Letting others in and asking for help makes people feel good and will make your relationships more intimate.





## Trust Means Releasing Control by Gayle Rogers

**What can you do in those times when you're in the trenches of financial struggle, relationship anguish, health crisis, joblessness, or any other struggle?**

*"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."* Proverbs 3:5-6

Here's the first step that can help your heart and mind to rest and to trust God fully:

**1. Name the issue right now.** Say it out loud — the concern, the source of confusion, the worrying circumstance, the sandpaper relationship, or even that thing within yourself that you know needs to change.

Whatever it is that concerns your heart and mind today can be given over to God; not only will this allow him to work in the situation, it will bring peace to your heart in the process.

**2. Take it out of your mental backpack and heave the weight of it onto Jesus' lap.** See the love in his eyes as he takes your burden from you. You have been invited to cast your cares on him because he loves you.

*"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."* 1 Peter 5:7

Releasing your worry to God means that you place it entirely with him. You give up your need to control the outcome. And that can be hard.

**3. Leave the outcome with God and believe he will have your very best interest at heart.** Have you ever tried to think for God, and then told him exactly how He should answer your prayer? God says, *"Lean not on your own understanding."*

Taking your hands off the situation and trusting him means you *"acknowledge him in all your ways."*

When two people enter a doorway at the same time and one person steps back, she acknowledges the other. With her body language, she says, "You go first." It's the same when you step back in your own situation. You're acknowledging the Lord by saying, "You go first and forge the path as you see fit."

It doesn't mean you no longer take any action. You still deal with your finances responsibly, manage your relationships with kindness and respect, and perform due diligence with your health matters.

What it does mean is that when your specific worry or fear comes to the surface again, you remind yourself that you are acknowledging God in this situation. You release your concern to him, asking for his peace and his power to be at work on your behalf. This is what trusting God is.

There will always be a fresh concern coming down the road somewhere. That's life. Yet, as we learn to release the outcome to God, who works for our good and his glory, our hearts and minds will find the rest we need, even in the turbulence.

[thelife.com/trust-means-releasing-control](http://thelife.com/trust-means-releasing-control)

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