



*Serve, Support, Strengthen*

## When Christians hurt part 5: When church-goers manipulate people

- Welcome everyone – 1 minute
- Open with prayer - 1 minute
- Suggest feedback on answered prayer – 5 - 10min
- Time of Bible study – 40 minutes
- Closing prayer – 1 minute
- Questions – 10 minutes

### **Other related Bible studies in this series:**

- When Christians hurt each other
- When people from church manipulate you
- Praying for your frenemy
- Reasons people hurt people

### **Introduction**

It's important to help others while maintaining healthy boundaries, to avoid being manipulated or abused in the process. Here are five things to look out for, along with how to respond in a biblical way.

#### **1. Those that manipulate**

Emotional manipulation, guilt trips, or exaggerated needs to take advantage of your kindness. You might come out of an interaction and think "what was that!" and possibly not put your finger on it.

##### *How to Respond:*

Prepare your mind with prepared general answers which can redirect or deflect questions. E.g. "I'm not sure, let me take you to the elder and you can check with them."

Set clear boundaries. It's okay to say "no" when someone tries to guilt you into doing more than you can or should. Manipulators have practiced their whole life, and are generally very good at what they do.

I had a lady walk up to me being friendly at the coffee station one day, and asked me which hairdresser I go to, and please could I ask her to phone this lady, and do her hair for her, and she did not have an income so would need the treatment for free. Oh, and please could the hairdresser, (who happened to be a friend) please come to her house....etc etc. I didn't give her a number, I just redirected. When she persisted, I was non-committal.



## Serve, Support, Strengthen

Read: Matthew 5:37 “Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.”

Be careful what you say ‘yes’ to!

Jesus teaches us to be clear and direct in our communication, avoiding manipulation by sticking to honest, straightforward answers.

### 2. Watch for dependence or entitlement

These people depend on your help instead of learning to take responsibility for their own life, or if they act entitled to your help. Their illness/problem/issue has become their identity. This generally relates into a toxic environment. This also means that the headship of the church needs to get involved. If you aren’t sure if you are using your problems as an identity, ask someone you know will answer truthfully, and consider who you are in Christ, outside of the problem. If you are unsure as to whether there is someone abusing you in this regard, ask your family or close friends. They will quickly let you know that you need to re-prioritise.

*Response:* Empower the person to take responsibility for their own actions. Helping someone doesn’t mean enabling dependency.

Discuss this in the group, and situations which could happen – 5 mins

Read: Galatians 6:5 “For each will have to bear his own load.”

Scripture encourages personal responsibility, showing that everyone should carry their own weight in life. We are called to help each other, but we cannot take responsibility for their actions. One of the points Mighty Wings talks about in their helping of addicts, is taking responsibility for your own recovery and actions.

### 3. Be aware of unreciprocated relationships - dependencies

This person only takes from you without ever giving back, either emotionally, spiritually, or materially, indicating a one-sided relationship.

*Ask the group:* How do you identify a dependent relationship?

Words that could come out are: smothered, needy, continuous, avoidance

*Response:* Establish balance in relationships. You are called to serve, but relationships should be mutual and healthy. If you are the dependant one, re-evaluate WHY, and WHAT you are looking for. How has it hurt you or the other person. If it is the other person, it might mean that an honest and gentle conversation is needed, spoken in love

Read: Luke 6:31 “Do to others as you would have them do to you.”



## *Serve, Support, Strengthen*

This verse sets a standard for reciprocity, showing that healthy relationships involve mutual care and consideration.

### **4. Repeated broken promises or lies**

This person continuously breaks promises, lie, or deceive in order to keep getting help or resources from you.

- Why do you think people can be manipulated in this way, especially in a church scenario?
- How does this behaviour make others feel around them?
- How does deception affect witness for Christ?

Response: Confront the dishonesty with love but be firm in setting boundaries if the behaviour continues. Trust is important in helping relationships.

Read: Proverbs 12:22

“The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy.”

Honesty and integrity are core values, and we should require them from those we help.

### **5. Lack of respect / rude**

These people being helped shows no gratitude, treats you disrespectfully, or expects you to continue helping as though it is your duty. We do not serve for honour, we aim for Gods approval, however sometimes there are people who clearly don't appreciate, bull doze through you, or repeatedly push you out the way for their own good.

Response: Re-evaluate the relationship. You are not obligated to continue helping someone who is disrespectful or rude.

Read: Colossians 3:23-24 “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters...”

While we are called to serve, we do so for the Lord. How should we react when people in these circumstances when they are being rude / disrespectful.

Be careful not to make excuses – these can be seen as an opportunity to work you into a corner

Be aware of procedures in the church, I had a gentleman ask me for money and work. He had walked in off the street, and I didn't want to be rude. It is tricky when you don't want to harm the name of Christ. Especially when I was a visitor at this particular church. I took the gentleman to the 'Welcome station', and let them deal with the situation.

**Conclusion:**



## *Serve, Support, Strengthen*

Helping others is a biblical command, but wisdom and discernment are also key in ensuring that we help in ways that truly benefit them, without allowing ourselves to be taken advantage of. Maintaining healthy boundaries protects both the giver and the receiver.