

BAD GOALS FOR YOUR LIFE
USE POWER TO GET YOUR WAY

It's a scary thing for parents to place their child in a car seat for a trip out in the real world. But the Mom or Dad knows what's best. They buckle their little on in. The parent then climbs into the driver's seat and decides WHERE the car is going, how fast, down what roads, what temperature the air will be inside the car, and even what music will be played on the radio. The parent is in control.

Sixteen years later, now you are handing over the keys. Your son or daughter is moving from the passenger's seat to the driver's seat. Now they are in control!

God controls the universe. God is in the drivers' seat. At first it looks to me like bad news because I would like to run the world. I would like to gratify my desires. I would like to have my own way. But once we think about it, God being in control is VERY GOOD NEWS! Someone far wiser and more competent is running this show. Its His job to be God. It's His job to be in the driver's seat. It's my job to learn to let Him be who He is. It's my job to be in the passenger's seat.

IS GOD IN THE DRIVER OR PASSENGER SEAT?

But when it comes to my life, I would much prefer to have Jesus in the passenger's seat. It's pretty handy to have Him here when I want Him. I then tell God what to do, like a servant I give orders to.

Jesus, I have a health problem. Heal it.

Something hard is going on at work. Change it.

I'm feeling anxious, and I want you to give me peace of mind.

I'm feeling sad, and I'd like a little hope.

I'm facing death. Let me in to heaven.

RELINQUISHING THE DRIVER'S SEAT IS HARD FOR US.

I like keeping God in my life in a way that I'm in control, and He does what I tell Him to do. Because if Jesus is

behind the wheel, then I'm not in charge of my wallet anymore. I can't simply say, "I'll give when I feel I have enough extra to afford it." Now it's Jesus' money.

When Jesus is behind the wheel, then I am no longer in charge of my mouth. I don't get to choose to gossip, flatter others to win them to like me and grant me favors. When Jesus is in control of my life I don't get to condemn, lie, rage, manipulate, or exaggerate. When He's in control, it's not my mouth – it's His mouth.

Have I invited God along for the ride? Or is He driving? The truth is, we are each one like a small child, who, in a temper tantrum, decides he's going to run away from home. Who needs parents?! So he sneaks the keys to the family car out of his mother's purse, manages to start it up, puts it in gear, and crashes the car a few houses down the street. We want to sit in the driver's seat of our own lives.

Adam and Eve, the first people, did the same. They GRABBED power from God, instead of submit to Him. The Evil one came to them and lied.. Satan coaxed them to eat from the tree God had told them not to eat from. The devil said, "**God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened. You'll be like God**" *Genesis 3:5* That's an attractive promise! Being like God, ruling the world, getting your own way, sounds like a dream job to us.

Ever since that time, we each have an inner nature that is pulled towards power. We faun over people with political power. We admire actors, athletes, and performers who use their stage for exerting influence on society and shaping peoples' opinions.

From a very early age we learned to use power to solve problems. If one kid takes my toy away from me, I hit him over the head. If one kid says something mean to my face, I say something worse behind her back and to more people. It's gang up, beat up. That's the way of the world.

I gossip to get my way. I sue to get my way. I tear others down so I get my way. I shout louder, and I use 4-letter words in an attempt to get my way.

Adam and Eve chose their way over obedience to God's way. How did it turn out for Adam and Eve to usurp God's rightful authority? Not good at all! Instead of ending up like majestic rulers, they ended up like guilty children. Here's how they acted after they tried to take over God's place in their lives:

⁷ Then their eyes were opened, and they both realized that they were naked. They sewed fig leaves together and made clothes for themselves.

⁸ In the cool of the evening, the man and his wife heard the Lord God walking around in the garden. So they hid from the Lord God among the trees in the garden. ⁹ The Lord God called to the man and asked him, "Where are you?"

¹⁰ He answered, "I heard you in the garden. I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid."

Genesis 3: 7-10

They were hiding, ashamed, afraid.

Each one of us have given in to that same old temptation. See – when I rule the world, when I become my own god of my own life – I end up with just the opposite. I end up weak, and alone, and afraid. When I – or you – go for the temptation to GRAB power, it has disastrous consequences.

The Christian life is following Jesus. This means GOD drives. He is in His rightful place in your life. You ride along.

The devil came along to Jesus and tempted Jesus to grab the wheel away from God the Father and push Him right out the door. But Jesus replied: ***"Scripture says, 'Worship the Lord your God and serve only him.'"*** Luke 4:8

Jesus is right. The real issue in our hearts is about who is God. Grabbing power is about idolatry, it's about Lordship, it's a First Commandment issue. The First Commandment, you remember, is "You shall have no other Gods before Me." "We are to fear (respect), love, and trust in God above all things," Martin Luther said.

There is a God. It is not you. It sounds easy. But it's not easy for us.

So, if God is God in my life, if He's behind the wheel, I must surrender to Him. But we don't like to surrender to God's Will because it sounds like we become doormats. I said it SOUNDS like we become doormats – but that's not the reality.

SURRENDERING TO GOD IS NOT PASSIVITY.

Friends, Surrendering to God is not passivity. Surrendering the driver's seat of my life to Jesus doesn't mean you stop using your mind, stop asking questions, stop thinking critically, or stop your creativity. Surrender is not a crutch for weak people who cannot handle life.

Instead, surrendering my life into the hands of the ONLY God to drive my life is the glad and freely made acknowledgment that there IS a God and it is not me.

His purposes are wiser than mine.

His desires for me are better than my desires for me.

Jesus does not come to rearrange the outside of our life the way we tell Him to. Jesus comes to rearrange the inside of our life the way God wants and knows is best.

Now, just as an aside, this does not mean that wielding any power at all is bad or wrong. I am not saying that it is a sin to use power when appropriate.

WHEN IS POWER GOOD?

When is power good? When it is given to you from above, not grabbed or seized on your own. Power is good to use when God or those above you grant you power, confer it upon you. And power is good when it is used selflessly, for the welfare of other people. This is called authority. Authority is power legitimately given to you for the benefit of others.

WHEN WE HAVE AUTHORITY OVER THINGS, WHILE ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD.

At the beginning of time, God gave people authority over His world, to care for the world on God's behalf. ***“Then God said, ‘Let us make humans in our image, in our likeness. Let them rule the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the domestic animals all over the earth, and all the animals that crawl on the earth.’”*** *Genesis 1:26* This power God gave

to you and me. But you are still accountable to God. One day God will ask you to give an accounting of how you cared for all He has entrusted to you.

At work, we've got to cooperate to get things done. But cooperating isn't our natural inclination. So, God's given people authority. Your boss says, "Stop surfing the web, and get your work done."

WHEN WE REPRESENT GOD TO MAKE ORDER OUT OF THE CHAOS CAUSED BY SIN.

Power is a good when it used by people in authority UNDER God, ACCOUNTABLE to God, and for GOD'S ways and purposes for this world. Then, our boss, and mayor, and parents and grandparents are just God's hands, God's feet and God's mouths. They represent God, speak and act for God to rule our lives. And we lovingly submit to Him.

God is especially concerned about the home. He has given parents – and grandparents – authority in the family. God wants the next generation raised so that they know Jesus and trust in Him. God doesn't take this lightly. God expects parents to use the power He has given in the home. God wants order, and peace, so that the stories of what God has done are really, actually taught at home. Parents can't wimp out on this responsibility and too many do.

So there is a time when it is right and good for you to use power. It's not powering up to get your own way.

God wants you to follow Him. That means giving up on getting your own ways, and surrendering yourself to God.

Because of God's great, awesome, sure love for me, ... I let go of my life. I yield to Him. I do what He says. I am not driving anymore.

When I surrender control to God, ...

I receive freedom. This is a funny thing that FREEDOM comes through surrendering. 12 Steps Programs help people with addictions. At the core of the 12 Steps is surrender. They do not say, "Now, try really hard not to drink." It does not say, "Decide not to drink." It's not a matter of your will. Try to overcome addiction by

your will, and it will beat you. Surrender your will, and sobriety, and victory becomes possible. This is true with alcohol, with drugs, with habits, brokenness, and all kinds of sin. It IS possible to become the person you want to be. To do so, hand over the keys to God.

When I surrender control to God, ... I receive peace.

This is another gift of surrender. If I live in the illusion that I am god, I will drive myself and everybody else crazy with my need for control. What a relief it is to believe there is someone more competent than me behind the wheel, so I don't have to control the outcomes of my life. I don't have to – and shouldn't - worry about my children's future, the economy, illness, and what other people think and do. There is a god. It is not me.

When I surrender control to God, ... I receive forgiveness.

The greatest surrender is giving up my need to somehow be involved in getting myself to heaven. Most people believe they get right with God, gain His favor, and get to heaven based on how good they are, or the bad things they avoid doing. Some people say prayers over and over and over again. Others do church rituals. Many people think they are good enough because they are no worse than everybody else they know. A few believe they get to heaven by shooting and blowing up innocent people in the name of God.

God isn't impressed with anything you do FOR Him. God asks for 100% sinless perfection. I'm not perfect, and NEWS FLASH – you're not either. None of us loves God with our whole heart. None of us puts Him first in our lives all the time. None of us loves other people as we should.

So, will you get to the point where you give up on your own efforts? Will you admit your best isn't enough? Will you admit, *“God, I need Jesus. Instead of trusting in what I do, I trust what Jesus did for me when He gave His life as the payment for all my wrongs. God, I surrender my efforts, and I receive from You forgiveness, a new start, and heaven as Your free gifts to me.”*

Jesus forgives all the times you've tried to rule, taken God's place in your own life. He forgives!

If you haven't surrendered to Jesus like this before – or it's been a long time since you have – I hope you will today. This is the **GREATEST** surrender – receiving forgiveness!

When my kids were little, we often took them to a local park. They loved going down the slides. At first, they loved going down the small slides. It wasn't because they only wanted to go down the short run. It wasn't that they were afraid of being high off the ground. They loved the low slides because we could stand right next to the slide and hold their hand as they slid all the way down.

Soon, however, they learned to love climbing the steps all the way up to the top of the big tall slides. We would stand at the bottom and call to them, "Come on down. I'll catch you. You'll be fine. Besides, the other kids behind you want to slide down and you're blocking their way. Come on down!" Often they wouldn't. Little children become paralyzed with fear. "I can't," they would call. "I can't do it without you." And when they asked for help, we would climb all the way up the steps. Lift our child onto our lap. And then slide down together.

When I surrender control to God, ... I receive joy of living with God, not for God. When you say to Him, "Dad, God, I can't do it without You." Then He comes near, lifts you up, puts you on His lap, and you go down the slide of life together. See folks, life is NOT about what you can do on your own FOR God. It's about living life WITH God.

When I surrender control to God, ... the joy of God working through me. Then, through you, God will work to do things you could never do on your own. He will work to do things THROUGH YOU that could only be done by HIS power and by HIS Spirit. And when you see what God's done, you will shout, "*GOD did that! GOD carried me! Gave me the words to say! Gave me the power!*" and you end up praising Him.

And so, you see, friends, the most powerful posture, the image of the strongest you can be is NOT flexing your muscles like Popeye

after eating a can of spinach. It's NOT pumping iron at the gym, or the picture of you behind a desk in a big, lavish office, as a CEO, the most powerful position in a company.

Those are signs of power in our world. God, however, flips our world's values upside down.

The Most Powerful Posture you can adopt is **On my** (your) **knees**. People who truly change the world are people of prayer. God invites you / wants you to call on Him. Let your Father bring His grace and almighty strength to bear. He can open hearts, change closed minds, heal families, cure addictions. Do you want peace in our land? To stop senseless violence and murder? Then get down on your knees. Praying is relinquishing the driver's seat. It's saying, "God, have Your way, not my way. And use me in any way you want to make it happen."

So won't you **Admit your weakness**? Say, "*I can't do it on my own.*" Give up having to have everything under your control. Surrender the driver's seat and slide into the passenger's seat.

Give voice to the 4 hardest words to say: **GOD, I NEED YOU!** Like a child say, "Dad, will you come down the slide WITH me?" Cry out to Him for help. Turn to God – to your good, loving Father.

And **Trust God's power and love**. He's got the power to be pull it off. His strength is unlimited. He can do more with His pinky finger in an instant, than the whole world can do in a lifetime. He IS ABLE to handle whatever your need. And, He LOVES you. So trust Him. Amen.