

Joyce Meyer: How to Make Self-Control Your True Friend

Most of the time when people hear the words “discipline” and “self-control,” they groan. It makes us think of depriving ourselves or being denied the things we desire and enjoy. But I’ve discovered that self-control is actually my friend, because it’s the key to having the things I truly want in life.

Self-control gives me an amazing freedom to say yes to what I truly want and no to what I really don’t want.

In John 8:31-32 (ESV), Jesus says, “...If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” It’s important to understand that it’s not just hearing the truth that makes us free; it’s applying the truth to our lives that makes us free. And doing this requires some discipline and self-control.

People often have the mistaken idea that freedom means we can do whatever we want, whenever we want to do it, and have no negative consequences. But that’s just not possible. The Bible teaches us that we will reap what we sow.

Galatians 6:7-8 says, “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.”

When the Bible talks about the flesh, it’s referring to the desires and cravings of our body and soul apart from the Holy Spirit. Many times our flesh wants something that the Holy Spirit says is not good for us; however, as we learn to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, we become truly free to do what we really want to do.

The question is what do you truly want?

I say truly because sometimes we want two things at the same time—the flesh wants instant gratification and the spirit wants what is best for long-term results.

I'll use a personal example about self-control and eating. Dave and I ate at a restaurant that has really good lobster bisque. It's so good—smooth, creamy and has just the right amount of flavor—but it's also very fattening.

Now, I know what I can eat and still maintain the weight that is best for me, and I can't eat everything I'd like to have all the time and do that. So I ordered a salad, but I asked Dave to order the soup so I could have a taste of it.

This morning, I was thinking, "Maybe I'll get a bowl of that soup for myself today." My flesh wanted the soup, but my spirit was saying no. I had to stop and think about what I really wanted, because what I wanted in the moment was not what I would be happy with later on.

The amazing thing about the fruit of self-control (Galatians 5:22-23) is that it gives me the freedom to do what I really want to do—not to let my flesh control me and dictate what I do. I'm free to overcome the temptation to do the things that will give me bad results and put me in a place I don't want to be.

This is why self-control is freedom, not bondage. It's Spirit-led management of your life!

I've also discovered that self-control is about controlling myself, not others, and that I'm responsible for my choices. So I don't need to have opinions about what everybody else is doing or get into their business.

There have been times when I've wanted to change my husband, Dave, or my kids or anyone else around me who wasn't doing

what I thought they should do. But we can't really make others do what's right. Only God can change people, and my responsibility is to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and let Him help me do what's right.

I want to encourage you today to ask God to help you do what's right—what's best for you and not just what your flesh wants you to do in the moment. Stop and think: If I do this now, what will it mean for me later on?

Remember that every choice you make is a seed you sow, and every seed comes with some kind of harvest, or consequence, in our lives. I've seen so many people make poor choices that led to devastating results, destroying their lives. But with the Holy Spirit living in us as born-again believers in Christ, we can have godly wisdom in every decision we make.

In John 15:5, Jesus says, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." Spend time with God every day—in prayer, reading and studying the Bible. Abide in Him, and He'll show you how to live so you can have the life you really want!