

The Freedom of Living With Self-Control

We all have hopes and dreams for our lives—whether it's to buy a house, get in shape physically, have success at our job, grow spiritually or any other goal that's in our heart.

However, if we want to make progress in life, it's going to require self-control. I realize this isn't a very popular topic, but self-control is one of the best friends we can ever have because it brings us freedom.

What does it really mean to be free? Many people think it means you should be able to do *what* you want, *when* you want and never have to suffer any of the consequences. But God's Word tells us that we reap what we sow (see Gal. 6:7).

Sure, we can choose to do what we want, but every choice we make is a seed that will produce a harvest in our lives—either for good or bad.

Real freedom is not simply the liberty to do whatever we want. True freedom is having the ability and discipline *not* to do something if it means we will be happier with the results in the long run.

Self-control is one of the best gifts God has given us. It helps us say yes to what we truly want to say yes to, and it helps us say *no* to what we want to say no to.

For instance, my husband, Dave, and I recently ate at a restaurant that makes some of the best lobster bisque soup I have ever tasted; it's so smooth and creamy, and it has just the right amount of flavor. I instantly began thinking about going back the next day!

The truth is, I could choose to eat that soup every night, but

I know my body and what I need to do to maintain my weight. Yes, I want the soup, but I want to stay in shape and remain healthy even more.

Galatians 5:17 says, “For the desires of the flesh are opposed to the [Holy] Spirit, and the [desires of the] Spirit are opposed to the flesh (godless human nature); for these are antagonistic to each other” (AMPC).

The “flesh” represents 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 direction of the Holy Spirit, that is when we become truly free.

Galatians 5:16 says if you “walk and live [habitually] in the [Holy] Spirit [responsive to and controlled and guided by the Spirit]; then you will certainly not gratify the cravings and desires of the flesh (of human nature without God)” (AMPC).

The Lord wants to help us make wise choices. I often say that wisdom is doing *now* what you will be happy with *later*. Even if a good decision isn’t comfortable for our flesh in the moment, it will produce good results later on.

God has already provided everything we need to have a great life, but it’s up to us to walk it out—and we do that by making good choices (2 Peter 1:3). *Good decisions produce good results.*

We make choices every day: how we think, what we’re going to say, what attitude we take. We can choose to forgive people when they don’t treat us the way they should. Or we can choose to say something kind to someone when everything in us wants to say something mean.

Always remember, when you choose to do what is right—especially when you don’t *feel* like it—that is when you will see amazing results!

I love 1 Corinthians 6:12. It says, "Everything is permissible (allowable and lawful) for me; but not all things are helpful (good for me to do, expedient and profitable when considered with other things). Everything is lawful for me, but I will not become the slave of anything or be brought under its power" (AMPC).

This Scripture is saying we can choose to do whatever we want, but not everything is good for us. So when we feel tempted by something that isn't good for us, we need to stop and think, *If I do this now, how will it affect me later on?*

I am so glad I'm no longer controlled by a cookie or an overwhelming desire to *have* to buy every new outfit I see at the shopping mall.

Operating in self-control and choosing to do what I really want is *true* freedom.

Wherever you are in life right now, God has a great plan for your future. And He not only wants to lead you and show you what to do, but He also wants to give you the grace to do it!

Ask the Holy Spirit for the guidance and strength to make good choices, then begin making decisions *today* that you will be happy with *tomorrow*. As you do, you'll be amazed at the results, and you will experience the wonderful freedom of self-control.{eo}