

The Freedom of 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 number of other things.

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

Many people think being free means you should be able to do what you want, when you want, and never have to suffer any of the consequences. But that's not biblical. God's Word tells us we reap what we sow (Gal. 6:7).

Sure, we can choose to do what we want. However, 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.

This involves self-control, which 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!

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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.

However, 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 (AMPC) says, "For the desires of the flesh are opposed to the [Holy] Spirit, and the [desires of the] Spirit are opposed to the flesh."

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)."

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.

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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 (Eph. 2:10). Good decisions produce good results.

For instance, if you choose to get to work on time and do your job with excellence and go the extra mile, you set yourself up for promotion. Or if you choose to save some of your money, you'll have something extra when you really need it.

We make choices every day. We can choose how we think, what

we're going to say and what attitude we take. We can choose to forgive someone 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 even when you don't feel like it, that is when you will see amazing results.

You too can enjoy the freedom of self-control. Wherever you are in life right now, God has a great plan for your future. And He not only wants to lead, guide 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 incredible freedom of self-control.

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