

Who's in Control: You or Your Flesh?

Feelings are fickle. One day they can be up, one day they can be down, and other days I can't find them at all!

Now, God gave us feelings, and it's not wrong to have them—they are an important part of enjoying life. So, we don't need to deny that we have them, but we do need to prevent them from controlling us.

The apostle Paul talks about this issue in 1 Corinthians 3:3 (AMPC), which says, "For you are still [unspiritual, having the nature] of the flesh [under the control of ordinary impulses]."

What is the "flesh"? The flesh is our desires—what we want, think and feel—that don't line up with God's heart. Paul goes on to say in Romans 8:8 that "those who are in the flesh [living a life that caters to sinful appetites and impulses] cannot please God."

The Bible is saying that our emotions—what we feel like doing—can so often hinder us from doing what God wants us to do. And the Lord wants to help us grow to the point where we are no longer controlled by our emotions so we won't miss out on His good plan for our lives.

You may be thinking, *Joyce, I'm just an emotional person—I really can't help it.*

While it's true that some people are more emotional than others, we can't let this be an excuse to just do whatever we want all the time or wait to feel like doing something to do it.

With God's help, every single one of us can learn how to

manage our emotions and make wise choices. We can get to the point where we obey God and do what His Word says to do—regardless of our feelings.

No Pain, No Gain

I know this is not easy, and I've been challenged many times to do what was right instead of what I felt like doing. For example, there have been situations where I've wanted so badly to tell someone they were wrong, yet I knew God was showing me that it was better to keep my mouth shut.

Or sometimes my husband, Dave, has asked me to do something for him or just suggested I do something a certain way, and I did *not* feel like doing it. But in my heart, I knew it was pleasing to God for me to serve him or follow his direction.

Here's another practical example. Have you ever committed to consuming less sugar, but end up eating the chocolate cake because you've had a long day and it feels good? Or maybe you've committed to study God's Word for a half-hour each day but can't seem to turn off the TV when the time comes.

Our feelings can prevent us from disciplining ourselves, but it's discipline and self-control that will bring us where we really want to be in life!

It helps to remember that anytime we choose to discipline ourselves or do what's right, it's going to make us a little "sore" at first. However, if we'll just stick with it, things will get easier, and we'll eventually enjoy the good results.

The Reward Is Always Greater Than the Struggle

You have probably faced similar challenges in your daily life, or maybe even something more devastating, like forgiving someone who abused you. I've been through both kinds of circumstances, and I can honestly say that each time I've chosen to trust God more than my feelings, to take a step in

the direction He was leading me to go, He has always been faithful to give me the strength to do His will. And it's saved me from a whole lot of pain and regret I would have created for myself and others.

I want you to take a moment and think: Are your feelings preventing you from obeying something God has asked you to do? Does it feel like getting "your way" is the most important thing—that you'll be giving up too much to go along with God's plan? I urge you to remember in these times that when you obey God, He always rewards you beyond your expectations!

The truth is, God loves you more than you can comprehend or imagine, and He wants what is best for you. So, whatever He's showing you to do or not do, it's because it's good for you. And He will never ask you to do something without giving you the ability to do it if you'll trust Him and follow His lead.

Pray and ask the Lord for strength to choose His will over what you think or feel in the moment. You may not always be able to control how you feel, but with God's help, you can control what you do.

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times' bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries, Inc. She has authored more than 100 books, including *Battlefield of the Mind* and her brand-new biblical commentaries of *Ephesians* and *James* (FaithWords). She hosts the "Enjoying Everyday Life" radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. For more information, visit

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