

# Self-Control

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# Why is Self-Control Important?

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*“Like a city, whose walls are broken through, is a person who lacks self-control.”*  
*Proverbs 25:28 (NIV)*

The lack of self-control can be found in every part of life. No matter what circumstance in which it exists, the shortage of self-discipline always leads to undesirable outcomes. Over spending leads to debt, overeating leads to obesity, lack of exercise leads to poor health, and the list could go on to include the use of drugs, alcohol, sex outside of marriage, deceitfulness and so much more. *All of these are done because a person lacks willpower in that particular area.*

Sometimes the lack of self-control can be a symptom of a deeper issue such as poor self-esteem, lack of self love, or even abuse as a child; but other times the absence happens because we just simply refuse to deny ourselves. I want it. I want to do it. I want to eat it. I have got to have it. The desire starts to eat away at us, and then we begin to negotiate with ourselves mentally. We say, or think things like, “Oh it’s just this one time, one drink, one affair” ...you get the picture.

To put it bluntly, giving into ourselves in this way is a sin. It’s a behavior that we need to repent for and a desire we need to ask God to remove from our hearts. *When we use self-control, we are in essence keeping a lid on those yearnings that will eventually take over our lives and leave us with distressing consequences.* So, what can we do to get over ourselves and kick this particular sin to the curb?

## How to Get Over a Lack of Self-Control

Think of self-control, or willpower, as a manager of sorts. It helps to manage what you allow in your body, mind and spirit. It protects you from the tricks of the enemy that would have you living just to satisfy your worldly desires. When you deny yourself something you know is against the word of God, and the plan of God for your life, you gain strength against the enemy.

With prayer you can begin to build a wall of protection against those things that you desire but are not in your best interest. So, start by simply asking God for help through prayer. The more you pray the higher and stronger your wall becomes until finally it's so big those desires will stop even trying to climb it or knock it down.

The Word says, in Mark 14:38 that we should watch and pray so that we will not fall into temptation. The spirit is always willing, but the flesh is weak. We cannot have self-control without leaning on the Spirit of God to help us through those difficult times where our wants and desires are raging. Therefore, we must overcome the flesh and allow God's Spirit to guide us instead.

# How a Lack of Self-Control is Exhibited

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*"You must admit you have self-control before you can use it". ~Carrie Latet*

Self-control begins with an understanding that you cannot have everything you want just because you want it. For example, food in moderation is good, but eating in excess and with a lack of restraint can be bad for your health and wellbeing.

Why is it so hard to control yourself when you want something? Sometimes you feel like you just have to have it, and have it right now. Whatever your temptation is, maybe for you it is food, cigarettes, alcohol or sweets, you have a hard time saying no to yourself where this thing is concerned. There may be many areas in life where you need to have self-control, but find it difficult to maintain. Why is it so hard to deny yourself when in some cases you know the end result of your lack of willpower will lead to health problems, dependency, or worse?

## **We Have Become a Society Who Wants Everything NOW!**

Not in a few minutes, not in an hour or a day or months, but INSTANTLY! The root of the lack of self-control is that most people want immediate gratification. We live in a society that is fast paced and with lots of pretty things that we want; even if they aren't the best thing for us. Think about food! Americans tend to eat in excess. Why is that? Because we are bombarded, everywhere we go with commercials and billboards that encourage us to supersize our order. The fast food companies prey on our inability to resist our desires. While good for the businesses pushing the ads, it's anything but helpful for those of us who pull out our wallets because we can't fend off the flashy ads and growling tummies.

Another example of self-control is how we use our words. There are times when what we want to say to a person is not the best thing to say. It may be hurtful, prideful or offending to the other person; therefore self-control must be used to keep our thoughts to ourselves instead of hurting another. A lot of people today, especially young people, have been brought up to express how they feel openly and honestly – no matter how brutal that is. However when the result is one that gives the impression that it's all about ME, ME, ME and doesn't take into consideration the effect those words will have on someone else, the line has been crossed. Holding your tongue does not make you look weak, submissive or even dumb; actually it's just the opposite.

### **No One Said It Was Easy to Practice Self-Control, but It IS Worth It**

Denial of your desires is hard work, but once you do it's more than worth the labor you put in to accomplish it. Sometimes we don't feel like we even need to control our desire. We feel entitled to enjoy and do whatever we want to with little regard for the outcome. This arrogance is often what keeps us from having self-control in the first place and acknowledging those behaviors that need to be controlled. There is never a reason for a lack of self-control. We must be ever aware that we have help, and when the desire is before us, we must resist. When the temptation seems impossible to resist God always provides a door of escape (1Corinthians 10:13).

To avoid a lack of self-control it must be acknowledged that our excessive wants; our carnal desires; our entitled attitude is not pleasing to God. We need to seek Him in those areas where we lack self-control. Allow Him to work in us to remove the need to gratify our desire to have it all and have it all right now.

# What Happens When We Lack Self-Control?

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Have you ever seen a driver of a car lose control? In a split second they went from hands steady on the wheel, foot on gas ready to break, eyes focused on the road oblivious to the distractions around him, to a frightening view of death due to an accident. That is how fast we can lose control when we start compromising; giving in to desires and not staying grounded in Christ.

In order to live a fulfilling life, you must find balance between everything you do. Practicing self-control helps you achieve this balance and maintain stability in your life daily. As we all know, anything done in excess is not good. There are several dangers that present themselves when we lack self-control in our lives. Let's take a look at some of them now.

## **Dangers of Not Having Self-Control**

### ***1. Relationship Dangers***

The lack of self-control is risky to relationships. When we live to satisfy our own desires our relationships suffer. The reason this happens is because we are being selfish – plain and simple. We focus on ourselves and what WE want when we fail to rein in our lack of self-control. In turn this can cause us to neglect our friends' and families' needs in the process. Just like anything else that's been ignored, eventually those we're neglecting will walk away. Because you have put your own wants so far ahead of the relationship needs, you have put them in a place where they no longer feel needed, important to you, or loved. This selfishness can and will eventually destroy the relationship.

## ***2. Health Dangers***

There are a ton of instances where not exhibiting self-control can affect our health, but almost all of them boil down to us not seeing the reward as being valuable enough or happening quick enough to resist the temptation. Let's take exercise as an example. Almost everyone knows they should exercise because of the wonderful health benefits we receive when we do. However, many of us opt to not keep fit and give excuse after excuse for not doing so. The reward of doing such is phenomenal - increased health, better body tone - but the cost or time required to see results is too great for many of us. We would rather be comfortable than prepare our bodies for a long prosperous life.

## ***3. Spiritual Dangers***

Another danger, perhaps the most dangerous one of all, caused by a lack of self-control rests in the deceiving lies the enemy tells us and we believe. Satan works extremely hard to keep us focused on ourselves and our own desires instead of being focused on how we could be a blessing to those around us. These lies pull us further and further away from God and our purpose in life. When we give in to these fleshly wants, we are allowing Satan to win. We are basically admitting that we have allowed him to take control of us.

The lack of self-control can be dangerous not only to our bodies, but our minds, our self-esteem, and relationships just to name a few. Because a solid grasp on self-control is necessary to fight the demise of all of these things and in turn who we are as children of God, it is extremely important that we decide what is truly important in our lives and pursue those things, acting with self-discipline every step of the way.

# 4 Key Steps to Gaining Self-Control

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*“Everyone must choose one of two pains: The pain of discipline or the pain of regret.” ~Jim Rohn*

When it comes to self-control there is a dilemma for many. That dilemma is how to actually exercise self-control. It is hard to maintain something when it seems like there is so much coming at you. Exercising self-control when your friend betrays you or your child is being defiant is a difficult task, to say that least.

What do you do when circumstances and events are causing you to lose the very thing that you can't seem to maintain, but try desperately to do daily? How do you find that moment to snatch self-control up and use it as the Word says you should?

There are some key concepts of self-control that will help you to regain your willpower, discipline and self-control.

## **1. Understand what it really is**

Understanding what self-control is will help you to find those areas in which you actually lack it. The definition of self-control is the control of one's own emotions, desires, and actions. Oftentimes you will make excuses for your behavior by comparing yourself to someone else. This is a trick the enemy uses to keep you believing that a little sin is ok and that your lack of self-control is no big deal. You know better than that. You know that it IS a big deal; otherwise you wouldn't want to get control of it in the first place, right?

## **2. Acknowledge where you lack restraint**

Think about what areas of your life are out of balance because of your lack of self-control. Make a list of those things you struggle with controlling. Be honest with yourself as you write the list and pray about what other areas need some improvement.

## **3. Pray about those areas that you need more self-control**

After you understand how important self-control is in your life and acknowledge the areas that you need to work on, the next step is to ask God to help you. He is there waiting for you to ask for His assistance. He wants to aid you in living a more fulfilling life and that includes self-discipline too. It will be because of His power, not yours, that you will be able to overcome those areas of life where you need more self-control

## **4. Be accountable**

One of the best ways to overcome any obstacle or keep focused on a task of any kind is to ask someone else to keep you on track. Share with another sister or brother in Christ about your attempt to do better in whatever area you will focus on first. Allow that person to hold you accountable to the behavior that God desires. When you slip or fall, don't be discouraged, just admit your problem, talk it through and move on to towards a better more obedient you.

Believe it or not, you already have self-control within you. It's just waiting on you to reel it in. If you take the time to examine the areas you need help with, seek God's assistance and ask for help from others, you will find it easier to work through each of these keys to regaining self-control. By applying them daily you will no doubt be able to exercise the self-control that is already a part of you as a Child of God.

# For Further Study – Scriptures on Self Control

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Proverbs 25:28

2 Timothy 1:7

2 Peter 1: 3

Proverbs 1:2

Ephesians 6:13

Hebrews 12:11

Proverbs 25:28

Proverbs 13:4

Galatians 5:22-23

1 Corinthians 9:27

Titus 2:11-14

2 Timothy 1:7

Titus 2:12

Titus 1:8

1 Corinthians 9:25

Proverbs 15:32

Proverbs 13:18

Galatians 5:23

Matthew 18:15-17

Proverbs 13:24

Romans 14:1

Matthew 7:1-2

Proverbs 22:6

Hebrews 10:30

Ephesians 6:4

Matthew 22:36-39

Proverbs 29:17

Proverbs 19:18

Proverbs 15:5

Hebrews 13:5

Luke 18:9-14

Proverbs 29:15