

Making Better Choices

Awareness.

- Life is filled with choices. Some choices are as benign as whether to eat cereal or to eat eggs for breakfast. Some choices are complex, with great impact upon one's life, such as who a person should marry, or where a person should work. There are also choices which can determine and effect our relationship with other people, our reputation in the world, our income from our job, our relationship with our spouses, etc. Many of the choices within our lives will also have a direct bearing upon our relationship with our Almighty God.
- With this lesson, we will first show that man is in control of his life, followed by a look at what the Bible teaches regarding self-control and why self-control is crucial to the life of a Christian.

What Does The Bible Say About Self-control?

- Self-control is directly related to righteousness. The apostle Paul reasoned with Felix *“about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come.”* (Acts 24:24-25)
 - ❑ One who practices righteousness is righteous. (1 John 3:7-10)
 - ❑ Everyone who is born of God practices righteousness.
 - 📖 If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him. (1 John 2:29)
 - ❑ One cannot be righteous, nor can one live righteously, unless he exercises mental and bodily control in the way of righteousness. (cf. 2 Peter 2:21 refers to knowing the *“way of righteousness.”*)
- Self-control is part of the fruit of the Spirit which is to replace the works of the flesh. (Galatians 5:16-26)
 - ❑ One must **choose** to *“walk in the Spirit.”* By choosing to *“walk in the Spirit,”* one will choose *“not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”* (vs 16)
 - ❑ When a person **chooses** to walk in the ways of the flesh, he will engage in the works of the flesh. (vs 19-21)
 - ❑ However, when a person **chooses** to *“walk in the Spirit,”* then he will bear the *“fruit of the Spirit.”* (vs 22-23)

- ❑ Those who “*are Christ's*” have **chosen** to crucify “*the flesh with its passions and desires.*” (vs 24-25)
- Self-control is necessary to obtaining an imperishable crown. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)
 - ❑ Each Christian must **choose** whether or not to run in such a way so as to obtain the “*prize*” is up to each Christian. (vs 24)
 - ❑ The Christian must **choose** to be “*self-controlled in all things*” in order to receive that imperishable crown. (vs 25, ESV)
 - ❑ The apostle Paul exercised **self-control**, keeping his body in step with the directions and guidance found in God's word. (vs 26-27)
- Without self-control, a person is “*blind,*” having “*forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.*” (2 Peter 1:5-11)
 - ❑ **Self-control** is one of several well needed qualities within the life of one who has faith. (vs 5-7)
 - ❑ With these essential qualities, a Christian will be fruitful in the “*knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” (vs 8)
 - ❑ Without these essential qualities, a Christian will become short sighted and live his life, forgetting that he had been cleansed from his old sins. (vs 9)
 - ❑ When a Christian exercises **self-control** in obedience to the Lord, he will keep himself in the way of the Lord, avoiding the pitfalls of sin. (vs 10-11)

Reasons for Making the Right Choices

- The right choice can keep us in fellowship with God. The wrong choice can remove us from God's fellowship. Consider the following passages.
 - ❑ “*Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.*” (James 4:17) – **One must choose to do good!**
 - ❑ “*as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,*” (2 Peter 1:3) – **One must choose to use “all things that pertain to life and godliness.”**
 - ❑ “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*” (2 Timothy 3:16-17) – **One must chose to live by “all scripture.”**
 - ❑ “*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;*” (Philippians 2:12) – **One must choose to “work out” his “own salvation.”**
 - ❑ “*in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” (2 Thessalonians

1:8) – **There will be people who will choose not to “obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

- ❑ *“But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.”* (2 Thessalonians 3:6) – **There were Christians who chose to walk “disorderly and not according to the tradition which” they had received from the apostles.**

Who Can You Blame When You Make the Wrong Choices?

- You cannot blame God.
 - ❑ God has equipped Christians to live a faithful life. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
 - ❑ God has given Christians all things that pertain to life and godliness.
 - 📖 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, (2 Peter 1:3)
 - ❑ God does not tempt anyone.
 - 📖 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. (James 1:13)
 - ❑ God will not allow Christians to be tempted beyond what they can bear.
 - 📖 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)
- You cannot blame the devil; he the tempter. The devil does not force you to make the wrong choices.
 - ❑ You **can** resist the devil.
 - 📖 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)
 - 📖 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. (1 Peter 5:9)
 - ❑ You **must not** give place to the devil.
 - 📖 "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. (Ephesians 4:26-27)
 - ❑ Prepare yourself to stand against the wiles (schemes) of the devils.
 - 📖 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. (Ephesians 6:10-11)

- You cannot blame other people for your wrong choices.
 - ❑ Other people may tempt you.
 - 📖 Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come! (Luke 17:1)
 - ❑ Other people may influence you.
 - 📖 Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits." (1 Corinthians 15:33)
 - ❑ However, you do not have to follow the temptations and influences of other people. You can say no. The choice is **your choice** to make. Jesus instructed His followers to choose to fear God and not man.
 - 📖 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matthew 10:28)
- You cannot blame your circumstances.
 - ❑ Circumstances may lead you in certain directions with various examples and influences. But in the end, the command is for everyone to repent and "*come out*" of sin and worldliness.
 - 📖 "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent," (Acts 17:30)
 - 📖 "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." (2 Corinthians 6:17)
- Consider the apostle Paul, whose circumstances led him against Jesus Christ, but he came out and served the Lord. (cf. Acts 26:9; Acts 22:16; 9:18)
- Who can you blame when you make the wrong decisions? You can only blame **YOURSELF!**

Closing Thought

- Let there be no misunderstanding. You are in control of your life. You choose what to do and what not to do. It is your responsibility to exercise self-control, making the right choices, as well as the necessary changes, to either enter into fellowship with or remain in fellowship with God.
- If your life is filled with poor or bad choices, then do not try to blame other people. Take responsibility for yourself and make the necessary changes in your life today.
- Through His gospel, God is calling you today. Choose this day to follow the Heavenly Father. Choose this day to begin making better choices.