

Satan Loves This – Do You?

The Problem

Promotes the Decline of Civilizations

The vast majority of self-help gurus, psychologists, and educators promote and support something that Satan absolutely loves and practices. You and I tend to practice more than we will admit, so, too often, we love what Satan loves!

This problem actually leads to very serious issues. Consider the book Family and Civilization by Dr. Carle Zimmerman. It was written in 1947. Dr. Zimmerman researched and studied all the powerful civilizations – Assyrian, Babylonian, Sumerian, Greek, Roman, and Western – and documented evidence that a single key element dismantled each.

He summarized his findings by looking at the smallest unit of a society – the family, and showed how the change in the family leads to the overall decline in civilization. Here is what he found.

Characteristics	Trustee	Domestic	Atomistic
Commitment	Extended Family (Children, Parents, Grandparents, Aunts & Uncles, Entire Clan)	Nuclear Family (Children, Parents, Grandparents, Aunts & Uncles - limited)	Self (Children, Parents, Grandparents, Aunts & Uncles - limited)
Family Health	HIGH	GOOD	POOR
Promiscuity	Low	Low	High
Divorce	Low	Low	High
Juvenile Delinquency	Low	Low	High
Individual Rights	Subservient to extended family; downplayed	Subservient to rights of nuclear family; downplayed	Community rights are subservient to individual rights

Note the common increasing element or the common degrading element. What do you see?

Emphasis on individual rights, ME, or self

Please do not assume that he or I are against individual rights – that is extremely important to a free society, but it is also its undoing when that is raised above the good of the society.

“The health of a democratic society may be measured by the quality of functions performed by private citizens.” — Alexis de Tocqueville

Dr. Zimmerman also listed 8 Symptoms of an Atomistic Society.

1. Marriage loses its sacredness, frequently broken by divorce.
2. The traditional meaning of the marriage ceremony is lost
3. The feminist movement abounds
4. There is an increased public disrespect for parents and authorities in general
5. There is an increase in juvenile delinquency, promiscuity, and rebellion
6. The hostility of the pseudo-intellectuals to the traditional family soon spreads to the common people, sealing the doom for the society
7. There is an increase in adultery
8. There is a tolerance for and spread of sexual perversions of all kinds

How many of those are evident in our society right now?

It's Called "Self-esteem"

While many people would say a focus on "ME" is bad, most would not say having high self-esteem is bad. It is another of those words or terms that have been redefined. The redefinition makes what is bad appear okay when it isn't. Satan LOVES the term and wants each of us to esteem ourselves HIGHLY!

But, self-esteem was the primary motivation for Satan's fall – ME, ME, ME, pride and self-love were his undoing.

The whole notion of self-esteem was theorized as the grand solution to most of society's ills. In fact, one of the early leaders of the self-esteem movement, Nathaniel Branden, said

I cannot think of a single psychological problem – from anxiety and depression, to fear of intimacy, to spouse battery or child molestation – that is not traceable to the problem of low self-esteem.

And, Andrew Mecca, the drug treatment expert who became the head of the California Commission on Self-Esteem, stated,

...virtually every social problem can be traced to people's lack of self-love.

Those sentiments and ways of thinking have permeated our society since the 70's and have continued to blossom in each generation. For instance, Whitney Houston offered a great summary of the philosophy in her 1980s hit, "The Greatest Love of All." The chorus is:

*I decided long ago, never to walk in anyone's shadows
If I fail, if I succeed
At least I'll live as I believe
No matter what they take from me
They can't take away my dignity
Because the greatest love of all
Is happening to me
I found the greatest love of all
Inside of me
The greatest love of all
Is easy to achieve
Learning to love yourself
It is the greatest love of all*

The greatest love – of course, loving yourself. Really?

That same message has been carried to the next generation by artists like Lady Gaga, who reassured her fans at a concert,

"You're a superstar no matter who you are or where you come from – and you were born that way! When you leave tonight, you don't leave loving me more, you leave loving yourself more!"

So, self-esteem requires that everyone gets a trophy, otherwise it might damage them. Political correctness, you can't use well-defined words that describe bad behavior or sin, because that might hurt their self-esteem.

All of this is based on the theory that high self-esteem produces productive citizens, while low self-esteem leads to unproductive ones. So, if people feel better about themselves, it will reduce drug addiction and bad choices and increase the number of productive citizens throughout the world.

Christians Fell for It

Many Christians have been proponents of this theory as long as the self-esteem gurus who started it. Many of them jumped on the wagon because they believed this was clearly stated in the second of the two greatest commands.

Mark 12:31—You shall love your neighbor as yourself

I can remember one person stating, “See, it says right there that if I don’t love myself, then I will not be loving my neighbor with the love God wants me to have for them.”

Is that what it is saying? Does the language even imply that?

Of course not. Can I twist it to make it say that? Well, of course I can. But it is actually stating the opposite. I would say it this way, “You already love yourself, most likely preoccupied with yourself, spend a lot of time thinking about yourself, and try to get others to love you. That takes a lot of time and energy, so take that time and energy and use it for the benefit of your neighbor.”

Let me be absolutely clear – NO, the Bible does not teach us to esteem ourselves!

God Calls It “Self-love”

Am I sure? Absolutely, turn to 2 Timothy 3:1-2 to see how the Lord looks at this topic.

*1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:
2 For men will be lovers of themselves...*

People will be

- Making everything about ME
- Self-esteeming not esteeming others
- Self-centered, selfish, self-absorbed, self-indulged, self-satisfied, self-sufficient, SELF, SELF, SELF
- Loving “ME”
- “Flashing their ME”



Is the Apostle Paul in any way implying that loving yourself is something God wants for us? Definitely not! It does not say, “...the last days will be outstanding, because men will be lovers of themselves...” It says that when people have self-love, it is part of a **perilous time**.

Satan wants everyone focused on self-esteem or self-love because it is the exact opposite of what God tells us in His Word. God wants this, Satan doesn’t - Philippians 2:3-4

3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

How clear can God be? If you want something similar, look at Romans 12:10-11

10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, 11 in honor giving preference to one another;

Does it say anything about finding out more about who you are, learning how to love yourself, forgive yourself, and be a “unique snowflake”? NO! God is making it clear that serving others, esteeming others, is a higher priority than esteeming ME. How can we know that for sure? Just continue reading in Philippians 2, and you will see an example of what ESTEEMING OTHERS involves.

Look at the verses that immediately follow in Philippians 2:5-11.

5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

There is not a single speck of self-love or self-esteem in that passage; it is exactly the opposite – Jesus is esteeming us. In rough paraphrase, Jesus said,

1. I know that I am God, but
2. I will empty myself of my reputation, my God resume', and anything that looks like God
3. I will be like a bondservant (different than a servant or slave, He is free but willingly serving)
4. I will take on the appearance of a man
5. I will humble myself to die
6. I will humble myself to die on a cross
7. God the Father will exalt me

Notice the very clear pattern here – vastly different pattern than that of Satan

- Satan's pattern
 - I will become like God – he was thrown out of heaven
- Christ's pattern
 - I will humble Myself to be used by God – He was exalted above every name

Satan is trying to get everyone to believe his path is correct. He is deluded. He knows what his end result is because he can read the Bible just like we can. But he is a deceiver, the father of lies, a slanderer, and all of his energy is directed at getting you and me NOT to OBEY God's Word

Keep in mind, Satan is constantly using his ONE strategy on us to get us to be disobedient. What is that strategy again? The same one he used with Eve in the Garden of Eden –

“Did God really say...”

Isn't that happening with everything that you see in the world? It is a constant deception to get you to think:

- God is holding something back from me
- God is keeping some secrets from me
- God is working against me
- God is playing games with me
- God is actually laughing at me

But God is telling you very clearly that if you want to be ESTEEMED, it isn't about SELF-LOVE, it is about OBEDIENCE to God and His Word. Look at Proverbs 3:1-8.

*1 My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands;
2 For length of days and long life and peace they will add to you.*

3 Let not mercy and truth forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart,
 4 And so find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man.
 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding;
 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.
 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil.
 8 It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones.

And finally, if you want one of the best verses God gives us about the danger of self-esteem, look at James 3:16!

Where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

The Damage

It Hasn't Worked

What's great is that even secular research has concluded that the self-esteem theory is not the answer. A review panel for the Association for Psychological Science revealed that

"...high self-esteem does not make people more effective or easier to get along with. People with high self-esteem think they're more popular, charming, or socially skilled than other people, but objective studies find no difference. Their self-esteem generally does not lead to better performance at school or at work, and it does not help prevent cigarette smoking, alcohol and drug use, or early sexual behavior. While there may be a correlation between low self-esteem and problems like drug addiction and teenage pregnancy, that doesn't mean that low self-esteem causes these problems. It actually works the other way: Being a sixteen-year-old pregnant heroin addict can make you feel less than wonderful about yourself." (Willpower, p191)

Created More Problems

Further research on self-love will not inspire any performances by Lady Gaga. Clear research studies show (see information in [Willpower](#), especially chapter 9):

- Across the country, students' self-esteem went up while their performance declined. (As my co-host Paul Moore said on our radio show, "The students felt better about doing worse.")
- Professional hit men and serial rapists have a remarkably high level of self-esteem
- Increased levels of self-esteem tend to result in hostility, and people in jails and prisons more often have high, not low, self-esteem
- There is no modern epidemic of low self-esteem; in fact, most people already feel pretty good about themselves. Children, in particular, tend to start that way
- Narcissism has increased sharply in recent decades
 - Students feel entitled to higher grades without having to study
 - Young workers expect a quick rise to the top without "paying their dues"
 - Words like "I" and "me" have become increasingly common in hit songs
 - Narcissism is no longer considered wrong by the American Psychological Association
 - Narcissistic Index was around 15 in the early 1980's, now it averages around 17.5
 - College freshman self-esteem survey is up 20% since the early 1980's, but their actual math and science scores have consistently fallen during the same time period

Dr. Roy Baumeister, in his book [Willpower](#), says, "The theory of self-esteem was a well-intentioned attempt to use psychology for the public good, and it indeed seemed promising at first." He was an early

proponent of self-esteem, but years of research found no correlation between increased self-esteem and greater good for society.

Here is one of his most important conclusions:

“On the whole, the benefits of high self-esteem accrue to the self while its costs are borne by others, who must deal with side effects like arrogance and conceit. At worst, self-esteem becomes narcissism, the self-absorbed conviction of personal superiority. Narcissists are legends in their own minds...”

And you can find many articles discussing the dangers and consequences of focusing on self-esteem. Here are some older ones to show that people have been concerned about this, and that research has shown it doesn't work.

Dick Meyer, Editorial Director of CBSNews.com, is based in Washington. October 4, 2002

WASHINGTON—My personal gag instinct has now been reinforced by reams of genuine psychological studies indicating that high self-esteem...is not the fount of nirvana and low self-esteem is not the root of all evil. New, serious studies have found that rapists and robbers are as likely to think highly of themselves as dentists and dockworkers. ...the London School of Economics...Dr. Nicholas Emler's research found no clear link between low self-esteem and behaviors we automatically associate with low self-esteem – juvenile delinquency, teen smoking, drug use, or racism. “There is absolutely no evidence that low self-esteem is particularly harmful,” Emler said. ...The self-esteem lobby has infiltrated pedagogy and parenting in a huge way. Stacks of books tell parents to tell their kids that they're special. Teachers too. The kids might not be taught to spell “special” but special they are. We're all special. The new research on self-esteem suggests that all this isn't just silliness. Unchallenged self-esteem therapies used in real life to attack problems like teen pregnancy, juvenile crime, and alcohol abuse are probably sapping time and energy from far more productive responses. ...I'll go way out on a limb here and say that it's better to teach a growing Self skills like discipline, control, tenacity, charity, manners, sportsmanship, and math than it is to teach a Self to chant, “I'm special, and I love myself every day and in every way.” ...Often it's those things that take us outside of our own Selves and into communities or other people's needs that are most therapeutic – religion, volunteer work, mentoring, teaching, coaching, cheering on your team.

George Will, Syndicated Columnist, April 21, 2005

WASHINGTON—...From childhood on, Americans are told by “experts” – therapists, self-esteem educators, grief counselors, traumatologists – that it is healthy for them continuously to take their emotional temperature, inventory their feelings, and vent them. ...Because children are considered terribly vulnerable and fragile, playground games like dodge ball are being replaced by anxiety-reducing and self-esteem-enhancing games of tag where nobody is ever “out.” But abundant research indicates no connection between high self-esteem and high achievement or virtue. ...Sensitivity screeners remove from texts and tests distressing references to things like rats, snakes, typhoons, blizzards, and ... birthday parties (which might distress children who do not have them). The sensitivity police favor teaching what Sommers and Satel call “no-fault history.” Hence, California's Department of Education stipulating that when “ethnic or cultural groups are portrayed, portrayals must not depict differences

in customs or lifestyles as undesirable” – slavery? segregation? anti-Semitism? cannibalism? – “and must not reflect adversely on such differences.” Experts warn about what children are allowed to juggle: Tennis balls cause frustration, whereas “scarves are soft, nonthreatening, and float down slowly.” ...Remember the theory that because Vietnam was supposedly an unjust war, it would produce an epidemic of “post-traumatic stress disorders.” So a study released in 1990 claimed that half of Vietnam veterans suffered from some PTSD – even though only 15 percent of Vietnam veterans had served in combat units.

The following citation has been lost, but the story, whether real or made up, is what has been seen.

An elementary school teacher was teaching her class about heroes, so she asked her class of 25 to name their heroes. The first little girl stood up and provided a list of Madonna, Michael Jackson, and Boy George. The next student was a boy, and he quickly named Michael Jackson, Spiderman, and Superman. And so it went around the room.

None of those answers was surprising to her; in fact, she expected them. What was extremely surprising was to hear who eight of the children named. No, it wasn’t another rock star and certainly not Andrew Jackson, George Washington, Charles Lindbergh, or Thomas Edison.

The surprising, even shocking thing was that they called themselves heroes. It is one thing to replace the figures of Mt. Rushmore with rock stars; that’s bad enough, but to replace them with yourself is a sad indictment of a self-absorbed society.

Those are a few of the many that you can find. A few more are included in the GR8 Relationships study guide in Chapter 6 or Course 6 online.

God Tells Us It’s Bad!

Go back to 2 Timothy 3 and read what comes after “lovers of self”.

2. *For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,*
3. *unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,*
4. *traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,*
5. *having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!*

I see this passage more as 1 BIG THING – SELF-LOVE and all of the ways it is manifested. Consider these.

1. “disobedient to parents” –Rebellion in the family. Children will be unwilling to do what their parents ask or want. They are not teachable. We can assume that the parents are part of the problem as well, since lovers of self imply an inappropriate parenting style.

Disobedience to parents is part of the problem, but with day-care centers, separations of families, and so forth, it is difficult for children to comprehend what a parent is and what their role is supposed to be. – John MacArthur

2. “...unloving...” – The Greek word actually means without a familial love. People who love themselves have little to share with anyone, even their own family. Remember, Dr.

Zimmerman's statement about the last family style – it's all about "ME," not the family or others, just "ME."

3. "...lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God..." – A clear focus and attitude that is ME-centered, and it is all about ME being happy and feeling good. Noticed that this passage starts with "lovers of self" and ends with "lovers of pleasure". That is the natural progression, seeking the next pleasure, adrenaline rush, the next new thing, the next sensation, because it is ALL ABOUT ME.

"Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" does not suggest that we must choose between pleasure and God; for when we live for God, we enjoy the greatest pleasures (Ps. 16:11). The choice is between loving pleasure or loving God. – Warren Wiersbe

4. "...boasters, proud, blasphemers...unthankful, unholy...unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty."

Note the final item in verse – "And from such people turn away!" These people are not someone that you want to listen to, much less hang out with.

Self-esteem is the "wisdom" of the world. It is not God's true wisdom. Here are two excellent quotes.

"The world looks for happiness through self-assertion. The Christian knows that joy is found in self-abandonment." Elisabeth Elliot

"The heart of every problem is a problem in the heart." Warren Wiersbe

So, the message of self-esteem sounded appealing, but so did eating the fruit in the Garden of Eden.

God esteems humility as evidenced earlier by Jesus' example in Philippians 2. He provides wonderful instruction and an invitation to better thinking and living with these verses.

1 Peter 5:5-6—"...God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time."

James 4:10—"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up."

God resists those who practice the message of self-love, self-esteem, and "ME flashing." Consider this: if you were part of a small group of ten believers consistently practicing the example of Christ, how many people would be looking out for you? All the others, nine people. But if everyone practices self-esteem, that number goes down significantly, and most end up looking out for themselves.

Worse yet, based on 1 Peter, **God resists you!**

When things are done that don't fit inside God's boundaries, don't expect things to go well. Self-esteem, self-love, self-absorption, and self-sufficiency are all out of bounds, because they put SELF first – ME above God, independence above dependence. That is acting JUST LIKE SATAN!

Satan loves self-esteem, and when we are lovers of self, we are just like Satan.

The Alternative

Well, am I supposed to hate myself? No, that would violate Romans 12:3, which tells us to have a sober view of ourselves. However, we do need to change our thinking. This graphic is a critical message to remember.

Additionally, there is a superior Biblical alternative to loving ourselves or self-esteem.

Marshmallow Test

Here is a hint at the answer. Go to YouTube and watch this short video before you read further.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QX_oy9614HQ

Since God's Word and secular research show that self-esteem doesn't work for the good of society, what does? There IS something that consistently shows up in people with higher grades, higher levels of income, reduced addictions, increased productivity, reduced sexual promiscuity, reduced teenage pregnancy, and the list goes ON and ON.

What made a big difference in those kids?

Self-control or self-governance

Now, the marshmallow video is cute and fun, but here is "the rest of the story."

The original Marshmallow Tests were done in the late 1960's by Dr. Walter Mischel. Much later, he decided to find out what had happened to all the children who had originally been in the experiments. The ones who had shown the most willpower at age 4:

1. Had better grades and test scores
2. Scored 210 points higher on their SAT (15-minute holdouts versus 30-second holdouts)
3. Were more popular with their peers and teachers
4. Earned higher salaries
5. Had a lower body mass index
6. Had fewer problems with drug abuse

The research states that those traits could be genetic, but it also showed a strong link to the nurture and development of the child's **self-control**. That development was a dividend paid back to the child throughout their life. (*Willpower* p11)

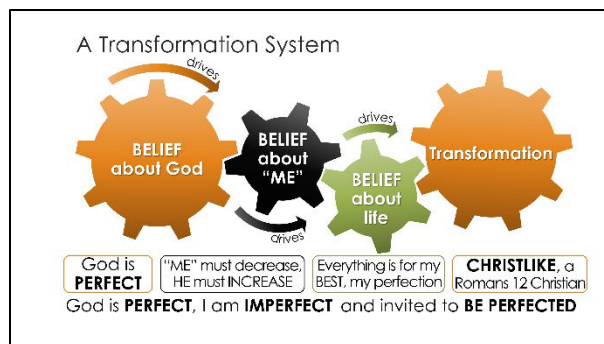
Consider this sidebar: Despite all the self-esteem psycho-babble, most of the video game industry has not fallen prey to that message. As with life, you start as a newbie and don't move forward until you achieve certain outcomes and gain proficiency.

Yes, there are bad values and bad morals in many of the games, but one thing they get right is that they teach some clear elements of self-control – having goals to achieve, measuring how you are doing, and pairing you with others – those are simple ways to build self-control.

So, let's define self-governance or self-control.

"Passing up immediate gratification for future benefits."

An easy way to think about self-control or self-govern is to reverse the words. They become...



Control self, Govern self

What's the Difference?

Here are some thoughts about the difference between self-esteem and self-governance. This is not supported by research, but it is offered for your consideration.

Self-esteem	Self-governance
1. Primarily Subjective, feelings-based	1. More Objective, facts-based
2. The individual determines its existence and "level"	2. Others can note or imply its existence and "level"
3. My internal feelings are the standard I use to verify its existence	3. My external results, change in behavior, imply or verify the existence
4. I verify it, primarily based on how I feel about myself	4. I and others can verify it, primarily how I behave
5. Often requires affirmation or encouragement (demands respect?) from others without verifiable evidence of achievement or outward results	5. Aided by affirmation and encouragement from others based on visible, clear progress toward the desired result that I want to achieve
6. Ignores or is less accepting of criticism if it doesn't fit the current view of self	6. More likely to accept criticism even when it does not feel good
7. Focused on inward change with a hoped-for, but more often without any specific outward desired result or behavior change	7. Focused on an inward change evidenced by an outward desired result or behavior change, evidence can be seen by others
8. Benefits me, because I think it will – "I am a unique snowflake"	8. Benefits me, because of my achievements and failures
9. Believed to be increased by positive thinking and affirmations	9. Believed to be increased by "just doing it", being a disciplined person
10. Actually increased or enhanced through self-control and achievement	10. Actually increased by serving others, clear goals, monitoring progress, support, and pre-deciding

Additionally, the results from each are vastly different. The research provides ample evidence for each of these columns.

Self-esteem	Self-governance
1. Lower performance – "Showing up = achievement"	1. Higher performance – striving to achieve, scoreboard is reality
2. Entitlement and demands (I am a unique snowflake)	2. Earned privileges and rewards; requests rather than demands
3. Confidence from thinking it's true, because I think it is	3. Confidence from doing, experiencing, and achieving
4. Self-absorption	4. Self-direction, initiative
5. Need to be served	5. Service orientation
6. Intolerance of others	6. Tolerance of others
7. Irresponsible freedom	7. Responsible freedom
8. Incivility and hostility toward others	8. Civility and collaboration with others
9. Segregation and separation from others	9. Including others (Not demanding respect)

What's the Benefit?

Most of the time, when you hear self-control or self-governance, you will start thinking something like – “I need to be more disciplined. I need to gut it out. I need to have more resolve.” Yes, that may be true, but before we talk about the real answer to self-control, let's talk about some great benefits of having self-governance.

Secular research shows that self-governance or self-control provides these outstanding benefits. Again, this information is from the book Willpower by Baumeister and Tierney.

1. Is a better predictor of GPA than IQ or SAT scores
2. Rates a manager more favorably by subordinates and peers
3. Makes you exceptionally good at forming and maintaining secure, satisfying attachments with other people
4. Makes you better at empathizing with others and seeing their perspective
5. Helps you be more stable emotionally – less prone to anxiety, depression, paranoia, eating disorders, drinking problems, and more...
6. Helps you remove anger or get angry less often, and be less aggressive when angry
7. Aids better physical health, even healthier teeth
8. Aids better financial health
9. Aids stability in marriage and relationships
10. Helps keep you out of prison

***Overall, lower self-control leads to being sicker, poorer,
and more likely to spend time in prison***

When you think about the spiritual benefits for us, it means that everything God is inviting us to do to experience the Abundant Life would be part of our lives. This is a very incomplete list.

1. Helps commitment to eternal rather than temporal things (Romans 2:7-9a)
2. Helps you transform into Christlikeness (2 Peter 1:5-8)
3. Encourages faith and dependence on God (Hebrews 11:6)
4. Helps maintain a proper view of self (Romans 12:3)
5. Helps the body of Christ, serving others with your gifts (Romans 12:4-9)
6. Helps you esteem others more than yourself (Philippians 2:3-4)
7. Helps you stay away from the slippery slope to sin (2 Timothy 2:22)
8. Aids contentment (1 Timothy 6:6)
9. MOST IMPORTANTLY – Helps you obey God (Proverbs 3:1-8)

Finite to Inexhaustible

Based on those benefits – I want some of that!

Here is a big problem. Current research treats self-control as a finite resource, but we all have it. Studies show that people can develop and demonstrate incredible willpower like David Blaine

- Fasted for 44 days and lost 54 pounds
- Stood for 35 hours, 80 feet in the air without a safety harness, atop a round pillar, 22 inches wide
- Spent 63 sleepless hours encased in a block of ice

- Entombed in a coffin with 6 inches of headroom for 7 days, consuming nothing but water
- Spent 44 days above the Thames River sealed in a transparent box with temperatures ranging from subfreezing to 114 degrees.

They also found that the things those people focused on were highly controlled, but other areas of their lives weren't. That is significant information, because you and I can identify with that. We do well in some parts of our lives, but in others, it may be a wasteland of willpower.

Additionally, they are on to some real truth when they call willpower or self-control an energy. When I first read that, the "Oh WOW light" flashed in my head. That was exciting to me, because you and I, as children of God, not only have the energy for self-control...

We have an inexhaustible supply of it.

Think about it. The Holy Spirit lives inside of us, right? The Holy Spirit is the energy to live the life of Christ that is also inside of us, right? So, we have the energy, but how does that translate into an inexhaustible supply of self-control?

The Fruit of the Spirit is what? Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and WHAT? SELF-CONTROL!

What great news! We have an inexhaustible supply of Self-control as long as we are walking in the Spirit. So, here is a way I look at my life; it may work for you as well. Any area of my life that shows a lack of self-control may mean that area is still being managed by me, or, worse, that I am not walking with the Lord as much as I need to be.

If we want more self-control, it's time to pay attention to how much we are walking with the Lord. The Holy Spirit is the ultimate ability to have an inexhaustible supply of self-control or self-governance.

5 Actions That Help

Now that you know you have the inexhaustible supply available, here are some basic steps you can use to allow the Holy Spirit to help you exhibit more self-control. These steps are NOT to replace your constant abiding walk with the Lord. They are supplementary steps that demonstrate your personal responsibility and commitment to trust and follow Him.

1. Pursue Serving – Delays the Flashing ME
 - a. Encourages a focus on others, instead of self-gratification
 - b. Encourages WE not ME
2. Pursue Clear goals – You need a clear THERE, a clear end result
 - a. Transformation may be too long-term for you
 - b. Find 1 to 3 clear targets to help you focus your energy in the short term
 - c. Big enough to demonstrate progress, short enough to maintain progress
 - d. Very short could be daily, but the accumulation of daily success is powerful
3. Pursue Monitoring – You need to know how much progress you have made
 - a. Accept all criticism valid until proven otherwise (humility)
 - b. Look for objective evidence, look for facts, not subjective feelings
 - c. Helps determine progress or regression
 - d. Make your daily or weekly measurements easy to see and understand (Example: Thankfulness – weeks 1-4: 4 or fewer complaints daily, weeks 5-8, 2 or fewer complaints daily)

4. Pursue Frequent Rewards and Feedback – Practice, improve, Reward
 - a. Get 1 or 2 Accountability Partners
 - b. Share with them what you want to accomplish
 - c. Have them check on you regularly
 - d. Create a simple question to ask you (Example: “Did you complain 4 or fewer times yesterday?”)
5. Pre-decide – Think about how you will handle the temptations to remove the emergency
 - a. Make decisions on how you will deal with your temptations
 - b. Create plans to avoid or remove temptations (Example: How will I handle my friend being mean to me?)
 - c. Spend energy BEFORE the emergency, not during it
 - d. Help reduce Hyperbolic Discounting!

None of the steps is difficult, but they do require work. My speculation - people have less self-governance because they aren't aiming at anything – they have no goals. Their primary focus in life is to feel good, not realizing that feeling good primarily comes from serving rather than being served.

PRE-DECIDING may be the “secret sauce” to keep you on track. In fact, here is an interesting piece of information.

People who exhibit self-governance / self-control tend to use it less than others.

Why? Self-control is really needed in an emergency, when you are starting the slide down the slippery slope. Pre-deciding helps you avoid the edge so you don't reach it in the first place. When you are in an emergency, you are less likely to get away.

Satan uses the power of Hyperbolic Discounting to get us onto the slippery slope of sin. What is that?

Here is a great illustration of what Hyperbolic Discounting is, in a very practical illustration about Eric Clapton's relapse into alcoholism. Hyperbolic Discounting undid him. This illustration assumes that you know about the classic book, Pilgrim's Progress. If you remember, Christian was on a journey to the Celestial City and encountered obstacles along the way. Well...

“Think of Eric Clapton on that Saturday evening as a repentant sinner who is literally on the road to salvation, like the hero of Pilgrim's Progress, the seventeenth-century allegory. Suppose that he, too, was journeying toward Celestial City. While traveling through the open countryside, he can see the city's far-off golden spires and keeps heading in their direction. This evening, he looks ahead and notices a pub strategically situated at a bend in the road so that it's directly in front of travelers. From this distance, it looks like a small building, and he still keeps his eyes fixed on the grander spires of the Celestial City in the background. But as Eric the Pilgrim approaches the pub, it looms larger, and when he arrives, the building completely blocks his view. He can no longer see the golden spires in the distance. Suddenly, the Celestial City seems much less important than this one little building. And thus, verily, our pilgrim's progress endeth with him passed out on the pub's floor.” (Willpower, p183)

Pre-deciding says, “Eric, you have already thought about this situation, and you are ignoring what you said you would do. You are getting too close to the pub, time to walk in a different direction.”

God does not put us into the proximity of temptation – WE DO!!

Pre-deciding is very powerful. To help it work best for you, practice what Don Geiger, one of my previous pastors, would say – “Be as drastic as necessary!”

Pre-deciding is not drastic, but it may require drastic choices.

Consider my enjoyment of Dr. Pepper. Okay, “Hi, I’m Hermann, and I am a Dr. Pepperholic.” I really enjoy drinking Dr. Pepper, especially when I am watching football games. If I set a target to reduce my Dr. Pepper consumption, what drastic decisions might I need to make?

- Drink tea instead of Dr. Pepper when watching football – not too drastic
- Drink Dr. Pepper only when watching football, but no other time – a little drastic
- Watch soccer instead of football – that’s really drastic for me
- Work in the yard instead of watching football – that’s drastic
- Get rid of my TV’s – that’s drastic

Notice something that shows up in each of those statements. It is simple yet can be very profound if you follow the pattern. There is a START doing something rather than just a STOP doing something. That is God’s formula for life, and it clearly is illustrated in...

- Repentance – turn from and turn toward

Revelation 2:5—...repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place...

- Renew the mind – turn from bad thinking and start thinking God’s way

Romans 12:2—...be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Philippians 4:8—Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

- Blessings and Cursings (Deuteronomy 30:19) – choose the blessing, not the cursing, from what is bad and turn toward what is good

Deuteronomy 30:19—...I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.

- Righteousness and Unrighteousness

Romans 6:13—And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

Romans 2:7-9a—7 eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; 8 but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, 9 tribulation and anguish...

If I decide in advance how I will handle drinking Dr. Pepper, it will help me achieve my goal dramatically. It may require drastic actions that will test my commitment to my goal. And I need to START doing something instead of just STOP drinking Dr. Pepper.

Pre-deciding is thinking about how you will steer around the temptation or not get close to it in the first place. If Eric Clapton had pre-decided, he would have thought through his path home to stay completely away from those places that put him on the “slippery slope”.

Self-governance of Christ

Jesus Christ’s life is THE example of self-governance. He “made Himself of no reputation” (Philippians 2:6), delaying gratification of His position in heaven, came to earth, was born as a man, lived as a servant, and died a painful death. But then, He was raised from the dead, exalted above all other names.

1. He chose to serve us because we had no other way out of the stranglehold of sin and death.
2. He had a clear goal to pay the price for us. He knew the cross was His target for His ministry on earth.
3. He had a clear plan and what appeared to be clear measurement criteria, because He made statements referring to how it wasn’t yet time. He knew where He was in His progression toward the cross.
4. He was in constant touch with His Father. That regular time was apparently the feedback that He needed to know things like the next steps. Now, He would not be taking any wrong steps, because He is perfect, but the feedback was still crucial. The same is true for us; we need that feedback more, because of our imperfection.
5. He chose God’s Word to fight His battle with temptation as evidence in His encounter with Satan in the wilderness. Jesus was ready for the temptation because He knew God’s Word, and I speculate that He had pre-decided to trust what His Father had said rather than what was enticing Him at any given moment.

Try the 5 steps and see if they work. Let me know about your results!

One Thing to Remember

If you want to feel better about yourself, then achieve something, create something, or persevere with something, because telling yourself you are a unique snowflake won’t work.

***Don’t Love Self, instead, Control Self with the
inexhaustible power of the Holy Spirit.***

*James 3:16—Where envy and self-seeking exist,
confusion and every evil thing are there.*

Additional Quotes and Thoughts Not Used

The key is to obey, do what God asks

- You don’t need to understand it – just obey (See the parable of the two builders, Hear – do.)
- We don’t get understanding by reasoning through God’s Word; we obey it, and then we see that it is like honey, not bitter, and we start understanding what God was talking about

"In a democratic society, each citizen is habitually busy with the contemplation of a very petty object, which is himself." — Alexis de Tocqueville

The American Republic will endure until the day Congress discovers that it can bribe the public with the public's money. — Alexis de Tocqueville

"It was never assumed in the United States that the citizen of a free country has a right to do whatever he pleases; on the contrary, social obligations were there imposed upon him more various than anywhere else." — Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America

"It's not an endlessly expanding list of rights — the 'right' to education, the 'right' to health care, the 'right' to food and housing. That's not freedom, that's dependency. Those aren't rights, those are the rations of slavery — hay and a barn for human cattle." — Alexis de Tocqueville