

BE LIKE JESUS

Am I Becoming the Person God Wants Me to Be?

LESSON 4 – HOW DOES GOD FREE ME FROM SINFUL HABITS?

*“For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. ¹²It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live **self-controlled**, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” **Titus 2:11-13 (NIV)***

The bible refers to our bodies, as well as the sin we created by our choices, as the “*flesh*.” Our flesh wants to take care of itself and always be first, no matter the cost to anyone, including our own selves. The flesh causes damage, even to the point of self-destruction. In this case we are separated from God, essentially having no choice but to choose self.

1. The Question is: How does God **FREE** us from addictions and sinful habits?

- A. Let us talk about **self-control**. Everyone at some point struggles with self-control, it is the presence of the sin nature within us. There is a constant *internal* attack always going on within us. *Temptation*, *thoughts*, and *attitudes* flow through us, wanting self to be on the throne and get its own way.
- B. The **world** is an *external* destructive influence that attacks us as well. The Bible defines the *world* as the lust from our hearts, brought on from us wanting all that see, with pride as the ultimate root driving this systemic problem. That is why we find a big fat “I” in the middle of the word **pride**!
- C. God desires us to demonstrate self-control and how do we? **We must choose God over self.** (**Titus 2:11-13**) & **Proverbs 25:28** “*Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.*”

2. We have the power through **CHRIST** to control ourselves.

- A. Self-control might be better understood as **God-control**. We control ourselves by giving control over to God. We *surrender*, the flesh gives up, and God takes command. In fact, self-control is best achieved when harnessed to the practice of total *surrender*.
- B. As we **YIELD** to the Spirit, the Spirit takes control of our lives and leads us to live out God’s good will. Self-control is thus not about *trying hard* but about *yielding hard*. Self-control is yielding to God’s power to do the things we should and to not do the things we should not. Self-control is impossible in our own strength. Our sin nature will wear us down and get the best of us.
*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” **Galatians 5:22-25***

The Bible offers practical instruction on how to grow in self-control.

1. One way is to **FLEE** from people, environment, or situations that tempt us to lose control.
*“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will **flee** from you. ⁸Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” **James 4:7-8***
2. The second way is also defensive in nature, is to **RESIST**. We can tame our tongues, reduce fights and quarrels, control our selfish desires, and mitigate the negative influences of the world and the devil.
*“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹**Resist** him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.” **1 Peter 5:8-9***