

# “Being Attractive Without Having to Look Good B Self Control”

God’s Extreme Makeover - Part 6

2 Peter 1:2-11 August 16, 2009

We continue looking at God’s Extreme Makeover. If you haven’t been here, we’ve been talking about how to become more attractive on the inside; beauty from the heart. It is the fulfillment of the promise found in Galatians 5: *“When the Holy Spirit controls our lives He will produce this kind of fruit in us - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.”* These nine attributes are called the fruit of the Spirit. Today and next week, we will talk about self-control. Self control? What does that mean? And what are the things about which we want to be in control? Thoughts and desires. Emotions. Words. Relationships. Habits. Food. Beverages. The question is, “How do I control these things so they don’t control me?”

What is the concern about a lack of self-control? For one thing, it’s embarrassing. We don’t even talk to some of our closest friends about areas where we lack self-control because when we lack self-control it leads to failure, which, in turn, leads to feelings of hopelessness. AAm I ever going to shake this addiction? Will I ever be free? It’s got such a hold on me.” It just makes us look bad.

The image that comes to my mind is Pig Pen from the Peanuts comic strip. Pig Pen goes through life with a dirt cloud following him wherever he goes. And it was one dirty, nasty, ugly cloud. Wherever Pig Pen went, that cloud loomed around him. That’s what the lack of self control feels like. It’s just this dirty cloud clinging to us wherever we go. Pig Pen couldn’t blame that cloud on anybody else. It was his. And we can’t blame our lack of self control on anybody else either. There’s nobody else to blame.

Of course, sometimes we do blame others. In the movie ABruce Almighty”, Jim Carey is given god-like powers. He used those powers very selfishly, and on one occasion, he caused a rival in the news room to loose control of his mouth, his speech while on the air. Often we believe that scenario and we blame our lack of self-control on God, the real God, not Bruce. But the thing is, our Lord is just the opposite of Jim Carey. God delights when we have discipline, when we have self control. He delights in it. In fact, God promises us that when He controls our life, He will produce self-control within us. But to understand why we struggle with this lack of discipline, we have to step into that dirty cloud that clings to us. As I step into that cloud, I see something that is universal with all of us. That cloud is filled with hurt, pain, and betrayal. We are wounded. One of the reasons we lack self control is because we have some of these deep hurts from our past and in our present. And when anybody has a hurt, what we want most is for that hurt to go away. We want to feel better. So we try to control the pain to make the hurt go away.

When we’re physically sick, when we’ve got some physical pain, maybe a congested head, when we’re achy, coughing, things like that, we want to make the pain go away so what do we do? Reach for medication. I’ll grab Tylenol or Zicam. I like Zicam in whatever form has not been taken off the market. Some people reach for Nyquil, but I heard Nyquil described as AJack Daniels with food coloring.” And having taken Nyquil, I can believe that. And it explains why you get a free plastic shot

glass when you buy it. But whatever our medication of choice, we just want the pain to go away. We want to feel better. And that principle, which we know is true in our physical being, is also true in our inner self. In an attempt to make the pain go away, we reach for our favorite medication. Some reach for food or alcohol. For others, it is shopping. Or drugging. Or sexing. Or working. Or busying. We use the medications to feel better, but the result is that the medication becomes our temptation. They worked well before and we want to feel that way again. The medications become our temptations, and we can’t control them.

In Roberta Flack’s song, “Killing Me Softly”, she sings about a performer who is “strumming my pain with his fingers, singing my life with his words.” Some of you might be singing that song right now. “Yeah, that’s me.” But I’ve got some good news. God cares deeply about the pain we have to deal with. He cares so much that He wants to come into our life as Lord, and develop self control within us so we don’t have to be dominated and defeated by those things that make us miss out on living life to its fullest. Like the previous messages, I want to look at the Biblical picture of self control and the problems that make us lose control. Once we understand the problem, then we will look at God’s plan, but that will be next week. My hope is that through this message, and through this series, that we can go forth with a lot more hope in our life.

### THE PICTURE

The Greek word for “self-control” is “hegkratas” which means “Having Power Over”. It is the picture of “Inner Strength”. In the King James Version it translates as “Temperance”. Temperance can be described as the Restraint of Passions or Appetites. So if we look at self control, having power over, inner strength, temperance, restraint of passions and appetites, why does God want us to have it? A couple of things.

Self control defends against temptation and destruction. Proverbs 25 “A person without self control is as defenseless as a city with broken down walls.” When you hear “walls” in the Old Testament, think about “walls of protection.” We want to protect something, but protect what? Something of value. What has value? Life. So we build walls around our life to protect it. And we want to fortify those walls. For when the walls come down, the temptations and medications begin to take over. And when life is destroyed, when we are hurt, we begin to drag others down with us. A lack of self control is not a solo gig. It negatively affects others.

On the other hand, self control leads to godliness and love. 2 Peter 1: “Your faith will produce a life of moral excellence. A life of moral excellence leads to knowing God better. And knowing God leads to self control. Self control leads to patient endurance. Patient endurance leads to godliness. Godliness leads to love for other Christians. Until finally you will grow to have genuine love for everyone.” Self control leads to godliness and love. And we want that in our life. We want to be seen as loving people, a people reflecting the character of Jesus, of God. So why is it so difficult to have self control in our life? Because of the PROBLEMS. There are more problems than the ones I’m going to give you. Because of time, I’m just giving you three. And they get more difficult as we go along.

### **1. Self Control Is Always On.**

A friend of mine was talking about my one uncle and he said, "He just doesn't seem to have a filter on his mouth. Whatever he thinks he says." Actually that is a Sprengle design flaw because it describes most of us and that can be a problem. But if you think about it, we are practicing self control all the time. Right now many of you are trying to control the urge to yawn. And since I said "Ayawn," all of you are now trying to stay in control. We practice self control. I was at Giant the other night and this very young couple came in, exhibiting all the characteristics of puppy love. The girl was dressed so that her underwear was showing. I don't know if that was intentional or not, but a tag was showing indicating that her underwear was inside out. I had the urge to say, "Excuse me, but your underwear is on inside out." Of course I also realized that her boyfriend could have responded by beating me up, so I practiced self control and remained silent. The impulses are there, but self control keeps us from acting.

Now you're thinking, "How is that a problem?" Think about your car brakes. If you are always riding the brake, they wear out quickly. Whenever something is always on, it can tire out. We can take it for granted, but if it is run down, it cannot be there when we need it most. It's always on. And because we have trouble controlling our thoughts and impulses, it always has to be on.

### **2. Self Control Is Always There.**

Now consider the temptations and the medications are always there. We can access them any time we want. So life becomes a 24 hour pharmacy where our chosen medication or temptation is just sitting there on a shelf that sits at eye level. We don't have to look for it. It's right there. That sounds like I'm talking about drugs or alcohol. Yes. But I'm also talking about shopping. How many shops and stores can you get to in 15 minutes? And then there is the Internet and QVC. And what about sex? A survey done by Focus on the Family found that 18% of men who call themselves "born again" Christians admit to watching porn. And up to 40% said that they have a struggle to not look at porn. We don't have to look for it. It's all around us.

What about food? Food is a medication that I struggle with. And it's tough. This past week, I had on my schedule a picnic, a breakfast, a lunch, and a wake. And they were all associated with my work. Just drive down George Street and you have Kirby's and Chinese, Papa John's, Manchester Café, McDonald's, Giant, Sheetz, Quizno's, The crab place, the Pizza Box, and another pizza place, and another pizza place, and an ice cream place, and Rutters. And that's just within a mile or so. The medication called food is everywhere. And to me, it is all tempting, and it is all available. Now I have worked on my food medications for a long time now, and I'd like to tell you that I've learned how to handle it in a healthy way. But I think you would rather have me tell you the truth.

The point is, because our temptations and medications are everywhere, self control has to always be with me, and it always has to be on. And it's not.

### **3. Self Control is Deeper Than I Realize**

Many people, maybe most people live life at a very superficial level where they pretend like they’re in total control. One of the things about Christians is that while we sometimes live it, we are also honest enough to admit it. AYep. That’s me. I’m sick. I need God’s help.” But most people live on the surface. And when we live on the surface we don’t really think about self control that much because we are just paying attention to the surface, to the appearances. And rather than look deep we keep things on the surface by saying, AI can handle it. If I really wanted to stop, I could. My issues aren’t that bad. It’s not as bad as others I know.” That’s denial. Denial keeps us on the surface. If you can stop, why haven’t you? How bad does it have to get before you stop? Is it going to take a divorce? Hospitalization? Are you going to hurt somebody or kill somebody? What does it take? It’s all surface comments. Others say, "It’s just me. It’s just who I am! So I drink. It’s not my problem. It’s your problem if you can’t handle it. Quit judging me. I’m not hurting anybody.” That sounds powerful and persuasive but it’s a crock, just so much fertilizer. It allows someone to reject responsibility and ignore their inner world. It keeps denial alive.

And it’s not just things that we say. It’s things that we do. When it comes to some of these issues, some of these problems, we try to fix the problem instead of fixing ourselves. If the problem is shopping, we cut up the credit cards rather than deal with the inner issue. We try to fix the problem. Or we try to make food work for us, taking out the calories and maybe the taste, but we don’t look at what’s happening inside. We try to fix the problem.

What about pornography? Sex therapy groups are the fastest growing addiction groups in the nation. 15% of all websites are pornographic. It affecting men and women; and it is even affecting boys and girls. And it’s destroying relationships. It’s destroying lives. We try to get blockers and filters on our computers. We even had a problem with that at a Youth Center one of my former churches was operating. But to a motivated teen, the blockers are a minor challenge at best. We can try to fix the computer, but the problem is deeper than a filter. We need to fix ourselves. We need self control at a level that is much deeper than we think.

It’s not hard for me to point out the problems. Self control has to be on all the time. It always has to be there. And it needs to go much deeper than we think it does. And since we violate those principles, control is being stolen from us. Instead of using the medications, the medications are using us. And I’d love to have a plan to deal with all this. I would love to help build self control in my life and yours, but I’m not that bright. I’m not that wise. And I’m not that strong. I don’t have a PLAN, but God does. It is a plan to offer help and hope, and we will look at that next week.

This week, I want to give you a pretty tough homework assignment. I want you to take a seriously honest look at your life; not just on the surface, but deep inside. What are the temptations and the medications that you use to cope with the stress and the hurts? Don’t try to deny them to yourself, but expose them. What are the excuses you use to justify your behavior? What are the problems in your life, the hurts in your life? And then let us pray: AAlmighty God, I try to pretend that I am in control of my life but I have allowed things to come into my life that are trying to control me; that are controlling me. I do not have the strength to defeat them. Lord Jesus, come into my life in a powerful

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way that I might be healed; that proper control might be restored. In the name of Jesus. Amen.” And in your life, may it be so. Amen.