

# **“Being Attractive Without Having to Look Good”**

## **“Self Control - God’s Extreme Makeover - Part 7**

Ephesians 3:14-21 August 23, 2009

We are promised that “*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.*” (Galatians 5:22-23) This is God’s Extreme Makeover for us and for all humanity. We are changed from the inside out, making us more attractive people; maybe not physically, but spiritually, and that is where true beauty comes from. Last week we started to talk about Self Control. We noted that it is pain and betrayal that triggers our lack of self control, and to make the pain go away, we reach for some medication to help us. Some of the medications we reach for are food, alcohol, shopping, drugging, sexing, working, and busyness. But our medications then become our temptations. Where we once controlled them, now they take control over us.

We want self control in our life, but we don’t have it because for self control to be effective, it always has to be on; it always has to be present; and it needs to go deeper than we want to take it. We do not have the discipline, the inner strength to maintain control in our life and so we need a plan. And God has that plan. To move toward a life of self control, of inner strength and temperance, I must

### **1. Go Below the Surface.**

That makes sense. If the problem is deeper than I realize, then I must get below the surface to see what is really going on. But once we go below, what do we do then? Where do we go? How do we proceed? The thing is, we have to know where to dig, and there are some digging points.

#### **A. I Am Not a Slave.**

In the midst of temptation, when we’re reaching for that medication in hopes of easing the pain, I need to remind myself, “I am not a slave.” That’s what I need to grab hold of, the realization that I am not a slave to this medication. I don’t have to be a slave to this behavior. It is the advice found in Romans 6: “*Sin is no longer your master. You’re no longer subject to the law which enslaves you to sin. Instead you are free by God’s grace.*” I’m no longer a slave to sin and God has given me the authority to be free, to be liberated from this.

This is an extremely important point that we have to believe in our hearts and lives. God, because of His grace, that love that we don’t deserve, has paid the price to liberate us from our slavery to sin. God’s grace is the key that sets us free. We don’t have to be dominated by a life of sin, of trusting and relying on the medications. We are free; no longer a slave to sin. Understand that we all go through the same cycle. There’s a temptation, and we give in to it. And when we give in, we feel failure. When we fail then we feel guilty, so guilty that we swear that we will never give into that again. This constant cycle beats us down. So before we get into the cycle, we need to remind ourselves that “I’m not a slave to that!” Remember that “*Faith comes from hearing the word of God*” (Romans 10:17). So say it. Because of God’s grace, I am not a slave. Allow it to invade, to fill

your heart and soul, and then permeate into your life and lifestyle, your actions. Let there be no room for the temptation. Remind yourself, AI am not a slave to that!”

Last week I talked about food being one of my temptations and medications. Is eating a sin? No. But gluttony is. I need to know when to stop. And usually I do know when to stop. I just don’t. Often I’ve said, “What does being full have to do with eating dessert?” It keeps leading me down that path to that cycle of gluttony. I have to tell myself repeatedly that I am not a slave to that. Maybe I need to make up some cards with that line and put them in my kitchen, my living room, my car, wherever, to remind me that AI am not a slave.” If your medication is shopping put the card in front of your credit cards. If it is pornography, put it by your computer. And know that I am not a slave because by God’s grace, I have the freedom to walk away. I can be free!

The second digging point is: **B. Ask the Deep Questions.**

We have to go below the service, we have to go deep, and so we have to ask the deep questions. Often we are pretty good at asking deep questions but we ask them about someone else. We need to ask the tough questions of ourselves. Case in point: You see me eating lunch, or maybe, just maybe over eating lunch, you don’t need to ask me if I am trying to hide my hurts, or what is bothering me to the point where I have to eat. That is my question to ask of me. You need, we all need to ask questions about ourselves. We don’t ask how to fix the credit cards or the computer. We ask, “What is so broken inside of me that I have to find some mask to hide the pain? What forces me into this never ending cycle of temptation, giving in, failure, and guilt? What keeps covering up the pain rather than dealing with the real problem?” They’re the deep questions.

Here’s an example that probably touches many of us: Self Worth. All of us want to feel valued; to feel wanted and accepted. When those feelings are absent, whether real or simply our perception, the pain begins to kick in. When the pain comes, when I feel deflated and defeated, I reach for that medication to make the pain go away. In this case, my medication of choice is achievement. Because when I achieve, when I do something good, then I get that value. Then I feel that worth. I feel acceptable and accepted. So I’m addicted to achievement.

Now in many ways, achievement is a good thing. But addiction is not. Then I have to ask myself why achievement is so important. What am I trying to cover up? The truth is that in and of myself, I do not feel as though I have any value or worth, and achievements will give me value. But when I tie my self worth only to what I do, what I achieve, I’m in trouble, because there will be times when my attempts to achieve fail, and my accomplishments amount to nothing. There is a better way. One of the principles by which I live is that life is precious. I have value simply because I live. And beyond that, I have worth because I was created by God and redeemed by Jesus Christ, who bore my death and rose for my sake. I have value simply because of who I am, and whose I am. And I belong to Jesus.

The cross is a symbol of what Jesus did for me. When He hung on the cross, He sacrificed His sinless life to pay for my sins, to liberate me from sin. He said to me and you, “You are approved! You are

valuable! You have worth!” That approval is what gives birth to inner confidence and inner strength. So when that sneaky voice begins to challenge me, accusing me of worthlessness, I can take control, I have the self control to say, ANo! I have worth just as I am. I don’t have to prove myself because Jesus already approved of me. I don’t need the temptations or medications, for I am in Christ.”

To some that might sound like just so much psycho babble. No! It is the Word of God. *Al pray that from His glorious unlimited resources He will give you mighty inner strength [that’s self control] through His Holy Spirit. May your roots go down deep into the soil of God’s marvelous love and may you have the power to understand how wide, how long, how high and how deep His love really is. May you experience the love of Christ and then you’ll be filled with the fullness of life and power that comes from God.*” We have value. We have worth. And when we allow God’s love to control us, we have the inner strength to control our world.

This first step is the most important. If we can grab hold of this one, the others come naturally. And it is the response to the most difficult problem: It is deeper than I realize. So the first step is to go deep. Go beneath the surface. The problem and solution are deeply connected. We start there, go beneath the surface, and then...

## **2. Gather Friends to Help**

When we understand what we’re struggling with, we invite others along for the ride, then our struggle for self control becomes easier. Why? Because when those around us know what we are struggling with, they can understand, and because they understand, they can help.

Jesus modeled this. He came to earth teaching and preaching about the Kingdom of God. He had the ability to do that all by himself. His connection with the Father was all the strength he needed. But at the very beginning, He built a relationship with others and invited them along for the ride. He did not do it alone. We sometimes look at Paul, the greatest evangelist in the history of the world. No way that I could have done all that he did. But he didn’t do it alone. He always had people around him to help him, and minister to him. Even to write his letters as he dictated them. God said, *"It is not good for this human one to be alone."* (Genesis 2:18) We are to be in this journey of life and faith together. Much of my spiritual growth has happened in the context of relationships. Other people have helped me. Proverbs 12 *"Fools think they need no advice but the wise listen to others."*

The idea that we need others can be a tough sell in this country because we grew up with this ideal of the rugged individualist. Call it the John Wayne factor. But the truth is, we need one another. We need someone to help us, to motivate us, to encourage us, to hold us accountable. We need somebody to love us enough to ask the tough questions, the deep questions. We need safe friendships that can allow us to be vulnerable and say, "Here’s what I’m struggling with," and, "Here’s where I need help." Safe people. Safe places. Go below the surface, and then pray that God will bring people into our life that will go below the surface with us, so we can get rid of that superficial, artificial world that most people live in, and seek instead the depth of love, joy, and peace, that God has created for us; that God wants us to have.

And finally, if you really want self control, **3. Give it All Up.**

If we want self control we’ve got to give it all up. AWait a minute Chuck, that doesn’t make any sense at all. To get control you have to give up control?” Yeah, that’s God for you. He has these principles that don’t make any sense according to the way of the world. And yet they work in our world. To really live, you must die. To win, you must lose. To be great, you must serve. To be first, you must be last. And to get self control, You must give up control.

For seven weeks we have looked at God’s promise in Galatians 5. And how does it begin? *AWhen the Holy Spirit controls your life ....*” This is the weird part, the fun part, the exciting part, the mysterious part. We can’t make the fruit of the Spirit grow in us because God does that. We can help prepare the soil, that is us, but God, and God alone, is the only one who can make it happen. And God wants to control our life, but He wants us to live it, and even to live to the fullest. But for God to take control, we have to allow Him to come inside, to transform us into who we can be; to develop within us love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and even self control. His presence is the only thing that can heal some of the pain that surrounds and invades my life. And with the healing comes the help, the strength to say no to the temptations and medications that are destroying us. We give up so Christ can come in. And then what we read in Galatians 2 comes to pass: *AFor when I tried to keep the law, I realized I could never earn God’s approval. So I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ. It’s no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live my life in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*” If we want self control, we can’t do it ourselves. We need to give control to God.

How can self control, how can all the fruit of the Spirit grow within us. We allow Christ to come in and take charge. We seek to move closer to God day by day through prayer and scripture, by seeking His presence. We strive to know Jesus better, and when we do, well, the promise is there. 2 Peter 1: *AWhen we know Jesus better, His divine power gives us everything we need for living a godly life. By that same mighty power He has promised that you will escape the decadence all around you caused by your evil desires.*” As we know God better, He gives us the power to escape those things that are tempting us, that are medicating us, that are controlling us. What a great truth, that God gives me everything that I need.

In a nut shell, it comes down to this: To develop self control I must realize that I can’t do it on my own. And, by the way, neither can you. If we could, we would have it already. No. I can’t do it on my own. I must believe that God can do it, and I must be willing to let Him.

My hope is that this series has helped you see the possibilities of what can happen when we allow God’s Spirit to invade our life, to come deep inside, to take control so we can experience God’s Extreme Makeover from the inside out. And I pray that we would all be attractive in the things that really matter in God’s eyes. What a glorious picture that would be. And in your life, may it be so. Amen