

## “How Do I Live a Life of Self-Control and Conquer My Bad Habits?”

It has been well said that the ABC's of effective change are: A. Attitude B. Action and C. Accountability. This study presents the biblical process of developing a life of self-control which results in establishing and maintaining healthy habits.

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**Introduction:** self-control = Greek: egrateia = taking a strong hold on the way we live

2 Peter 1:5-9 “Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or shortsighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.”

diligence = Greek: spoude = earnestness, effort and haste

### I. The Power of Habits

- Almighty God has created man with a marvelous capacity to do certain things without conscious thought. “I am a bundle of habits.”
- A habit is a recurring pattern of attitude and behavior that meets a real or imagined need and is formed through frequent repetition.
- “Habit is a cable; we weave a thread of it every day, and at last we cannot break it.” (Horace Mann)

### The Life Cycle of a Habit

**Trigger – Action – Rationalization – Realization – Repeat**

All attitudes and behaviors—good or bad—are habit-forming attitudes and behaviors.

“Great is the power of habit.”

### II. The Abuse of Habits

Behaviors like...

Attitude (Habitudes) like...

- “We spend the first half of our lives learning habits that shorten the second half.”
- For every bad habit, there is an equal and opposite good habit.

### III. The Habit Test

- 1 Cor. 6:12 “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.”

**Question #1 “Is what I'm doing helpful to me and others?”**

- 1 Cor. 6:12a “..but not all things are profitable (Greek: sumpherei = worthwhile, helpful, profitable)
- 1 Cor. 10:23-24 “All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor.”
- “Is it worthwhile?” “Is it good for me?” “Is what I'm doing helpful to me and others?” “Is it profitable?” “Does it edify (build up) or destroy?”
- Romans 14:12-16 “So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this-- not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died. Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil...”

**Question #2 “Does what I'm doing enslave or control me?”**

- “A habit is either the best of servants or the worst of masters.” (Nathaniel Emmon)
- 1 Cor. 6:12b “...I will not be mastered by anything.” e.g. “I have to...”
- “Habit, if not resisted, soon becomes necessity” (St. Augustine)
- Who's in charge? Me or my habit? Is my habit my master or my slave?
- Romans 8:15 “For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!”
- The Lies: “I can handle it” “I can stop anytime I want.” “It's not really a habit.”

**IV. The Challenge: The A.C.T. of Change**

A = Admitting it      C = Confessing it      T = Turning from it and to something else

**Admission #1. “I need more self-control.”**

- 1 Timothy 4:7 “...discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness...” (NASB)
- 1 Timothy 4:7 “Spend your time and energy in training yourself for spiritual fitness.” (NLT)

**Admission #2. “I am tired of the inconsistencies in my life.”**

- Prov. 25:28 “Like a city that is broken into and without walls is a man who has no control over his spirit.” — A man without self-control is an easy victim to influences that can destroy him.

**Admission #3. “I want something better for my life.”**

- I want to live a life controlled by the Holy Spirit and not bad habits.
- 1 Cor. 9:24-27 “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.”
- It will take the power of the Holy Spirit to buffet my body and make it my slave, instead of being enslaved by the habit.
- What is our primary goal? To live the live God designed me to live—for His honor and glory!

- “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Cor. 10:31)

- It will be a life-long battle. (cf. Phil. 3:12-14)

*“Lord God Almighty, I have a problem with a habit that is not pleasing to You. I can't seem to stop. I need the help of Your Indwelling Holy Spirit. Search my heart and reveal to me what might be causing this. Show me the way out. Bring to my life a greater desire for self-control, discipline and godliness. I do this for Your honor and glory. In Jesus' Name. Amen.”*

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