

CHARACTER IN MARRIAGE SERIES:  
A character-based counseling resource for couples.

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# SELF-CONTROLLED HUSBAND

*Governing Yourself  
So You Can Lead Well*



LOVE CAN LAST  
RESOURCES



# What Is Self-Control?

**Self-control** is the ability to govern your thoughts, emotions, desires, words, and actions rather than being governed by them.

You will experience anger, temptation, frustration, stress, and strong desires. Self-control doesn't mean you stop feeling them. **It means you choose how you respond.**

You don't have to obey every feeling, impulse, or desire.

A self-controlled man creates space between what he **feels** and what he **does**. He pauses, considers what matters, and chooses his response.



## THE BIG IDEA

*Self-control is choosing who you will be before the moment chooses for you.*

## SELF-CONTROL IS NOT...



### Suppressing your emotions.

You can feel deeply without letting your emotions control your behavior.



### Never making mistakes.

Self-control includes taking responsibility when you lose control.



### Ignoring your desires.

Desires are real, but they don't have to determine your choices.



### Controlling other people.

Self-control begins with governing yourself.



## REFLECT

*When do I find it hardest to stay in control of myself?*

# What Has the Power to Control Me?

**Self-control** becomes necessary wherever something has the power to influence your choices.

Sometimes it is an emotion. Sometimes it is a desire, habit, fear, or impulse. The challenge is not simply recognizing these influences, but deciding whether they will determine what you do.



## TAKE A MOMENT

*Where am I most likely to do what I feel like doing, even when I know it is not what I really want for my life?*

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*What tends to have the greatest influence over my choices?*

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## WHAT INFLUENCES MY CHOICES?



### My emotions

Anger, frustration, impatience, hurt, or disappointment.



### My desires

Sex, pleasure, comfort, attention, or immediate gratification.



### My habits

Patterns that have become automatic or difficult to change.



### My impulses

The urge to act now without considering the consequences.



### My stress

Pressure that makes it easier to react, withdraw, escape, or make poor choices.



### My need for control

The desire to have things go my way or to make others respond the way I want.



*Self-control begins when you recognize what is trying to take control.*

# Four Practices of Self-Control

*Self-control is not one decision.  
It is a way of responding that is practiced every day.*



## 1. PAUSE BEFORE I REACT

I create space between my emotions and my response.



## 2. RESIST WHAT CONTROLS ME

I do not automatically give in to desires, impulses, or habits that pull me away from what matters.



## 3. CHOOSE WHAT MATTERS

I make choices based on my values and commitments, not simply on what feels good or easy in the moment.



## 4. STAY STEADY UNDER PRESSURE

I remain responsible for my words and actions when I am angry, stressed, disappointed, or tempted.



## REFLECT

*Which practice comes most naturally to me?*

*Which practice needs the greatest growth?*

*Self-control is choosing who I will be before the moment chooses for me.*

# The Everyday Tests of Self-Control

**Self-control** is revealed one choice at a time. The moments that test you are opportunities to decide whether your emotions, desires, or impulses will control you—or whether you will govern yourself.

A self-controlled husband understands that everyday moments shape the kind of man and husband he becomes.

| THE TEST                                                                                                                             | THE SELF-CONTROLLED CHOICE                                                                                       | WHAT SHE EXPERIENCES                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
|  <p>I am angry or frustrated.</p>                   | <p><b>I pause before I respond.</b><br/>I give myself space to choose my words and actions.</p>                  | <p>She experiences <b>steadiness.</b></p>          |
|  <p>I feel disrespected or criticized.</p>        | <p><b>I stay responsible for my response.</b><br/>I can disagree without attacking or becoming intimidating.</p> | <p>She experiences <b>respect.</b></p>             |
|  <p>I am stressed or overwhelmed.</p>             | <p><b>I manage myself.</b><br/>I don't make my stress an excuse to mistreat her.</p>                             | <p>She experiences <b>emotional stability.</b></p> |
|  <p>I am tempted by something I want.</p>         | <p><b>I choose what matters most.</b><br/>I don't let an immediate desire make a decision for me.</p>            | <p>She experiences <b>trust.</b></p>               |
|  <p>I want to do what feels easier right now.</p> | <p><b>I follow through on what matters.</b><br/>I choose responsibility over immediate comfort.</p>              | <p>She experiences <b>reliability.</b></p>         |



## REFLECT

*Which everyday test most often challenges my self-control?*

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*What self-controlled choice will I practice the next time I face it?*

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*Every test of self-control gives me a choice: let the moment control me,  
or choose how I will respond.*

# When Desire Wants to Decide

Desire is a normal part of being human. We all experience things we want, crave, or feel drawn toward. Self-control does not mean eliminating desire. It means deciding what to do with it.

The challenge comes when **what I want right now begins to control what I choose.**

This can happen with:



Sexual behavior or pornography



Alcohol or substances



Gambling or spending



Food or other physical habits



Technology, gaming, or social media



Comfort, avoidance, or other compulsive habits

Sometimes self-control means saying **no**. Sometimes it means creating distance from temptation, changing a habit, setting a boundary, or asking for help.

*A desire can be powerful  
without being in charge.*



## BEFORE YOU ACT



What do I want right now?

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What am I tempted to do?

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What could this choice cost me?

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What choice reflects the man I want to be?

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## ONE AREA TO ADDRESS

A desire, habit, or impulse I need to bring under greater control:

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One change I can make to help me manage it:

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*Every test of self-control gives me a choice:  
let the moment control me, or choose how I will respond.*

# Self-Control Is Experienced

Self-control may begin within you, but it never stays there. The way you manage your emotions, desires, words, and choices affects the people closest to you.

Your wife experiences your self-control in the way you respond when things are difficult.

## WHEN YOU GOVERN YOURSELF, SHE EXPERIENCES...



### Steadiness

She doesn't have to brace for unpredictable reactions when you are angry, stressed, or disappointed.



### Respect

Your emotions may be strong, but they do not give you permission to speak or act without respect.



### Trust

Your private choices and public commitments are consistent with the man you say you want to be.



### Responsibility

You take ownership of your behavior instead of expecting her to manage your emotions, impulses, or consequences.



## CONSIDER YOUR IMPACT

*What does my wife consistently experience because of the way I govern myself?*

*Where might she experience the opposite?*

*What is one change I can make that would help her experience greater steadiness, respect, trust, or responsibility from me?*

*Self-control is personal, but its impact is relational.*

# Begin the Practice

Self-control grows through practice. You do not need to change everything at once. Choose one area where greater self-control would make a meaningful difference in your life and marriage.



## MY VISION

*What kind of man do I want to be when I am angry, tempted, stressed, or disappointed?*

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## MY PRACTICE

This week, I will practice:

- ☐ Pause Before I React
- ☐ Resist What Controls Me
- ☐ Choose What Matters
- ☐ Stay Steady Under Pressure

The situation where I most want to practice this is:

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## MY COMMITMENT

*When I feel myself losing control, I will remember:*

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One action I will take differently this week:

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