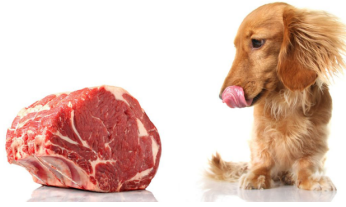


# **“Control Yourself”**

By Allan Pole



Theme: Harness the freedom to choose for tremendous benefits.

Text: Judges 14:12-18 & 16:1-6; Genesis 39:6-12 & 41:41-44.

Here's a thought: Three of the most volatile areas of life are money, sex and power.

During the early days of aviation, a stunt pilot was selling rides in his single-engine airplane. One day he got into an argument with an old farmer who insisted upon taking his wife along on the ride - at no extra charge. The pilot finally offered, "Look, I'll take you both up for the price of one if you promise not to utter a sound throughout the entire trip. If you make a sound, the price is doubled." The deal was made and they all climbed aboard. The pilot then proceeded to take the aircraft through manoeuvres designed to make the bravest tremble. But not a sound came from the back, where his passengers sat. Exhausted, he landed the plane. As the farmer got out, the pilot exclaimed, "I made moves up there that frightened even me, and yet you never said a word. You're a fearless man!"

"Thank you," replied the farmer. "But I must admit that there was one time when ya almost had me."

"And when was that?" asked the pilot.

The farmer replied, "That was about the time my wife fell out!"

Samson and Joseph are a study in contrasts. They were separated by 600 years. Joseph lived 1700 years before Christ. Samson lived more than 1100 years before Christ.

Self-control can be defined as, "Rejecting my own desires and doing what is right in all areas of my life." Joseph demonstrated self-control and he lived to a ripe old age. Samson walked away from self-control and to an early death.

Joseph and Samson demonstrated their self-control, or lack thereof, in three arenas.

Three of the most volatile areas of life are:

**Money**

**Sex**

**Power**

**Money**



We read an excerpt from Samson's life in Judges 14:12-18:

12 "Let me tell you a riddle," Samson said to them [his Philistine adversaries]. "If you can give me the answer within the seven days of the feast, I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty sets of clothes. 13 If you can't tell me the answer, you must give me thirty linen garments and thirty sets of clothes." "Tell us your riddle," they said. "Let's hear it." 14 He replied, "Out of the eater, something to eat; out of the strong, something sweet." For three days they could not give the answer. 15 On the fourth day, they said to Samson's wife, "Coax your husband into explaining the riddle for us, or we will burn you and your father's household to death. Did you invite us here to rob us?" 16 Then Samson's wife threw herself on him, sobbing, "You hate me! You don't really love me. You've given my people a riddle, but you haven't told me the answer." "I haven't even explained it to my father or mother," he replied, "so why should I explain it to you?" 17 She cried the whole seven days of the feast. So on the seventh day he finally told her, because she continued to press him. She in turn explained the riddle to her people. 18 Before sunset on the seventh day the men of the town said to him, "What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?" Samson said to them, "If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle." NIV

Samson lost a bet and was in a bind. Apparently, he did not have the money to pay off the debt. Was Samson wise with money? I highly doubt it! It probably burned a hole in his pocket (or wherever he carried his money). I have this

feeling that Samson and his money did not spend a lot of time together.

Joseph was second-in-command in Egypt in Genesis 41:47-49:

47 During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully.

48 Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. 49 Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure. NIV

Joseph knew how to get his resources to work for him. He spent less than he made during those seven years when the land produced bumper crops. Do you know people that live from pay cheque to pay cheque? I have discovered that for many it does not matter how much they make, there never seems to be enough. It is no coincidence that when there is something to be bought, they *must* have it.

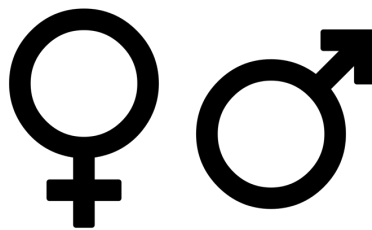
One fellow declared, "I never worry. I've got enough money to last me the rest of my life - unless I buy something."

How are you doing with your finances? Do you spend less than you earn? Are you content with what you have?

Two of the most volatile areas of life are:

Money

**Sex**



Judges 16:1 could have described a typical night for Samson:

One day Samson went to Gaza, where he saw a prostitute. He went in to spend the night with her. NIV

Joseph faced sexual temptation in Genesis 39:6-12:

6 So he [Potiphar, captain of Pharaoh's palace guard] left in Joseph's care everything he had; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate. Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, 7 and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!" 8 But he refused. "With me in

charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. 9 No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" 10 And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her. 11 One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. 12 She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house. NIV

Some say that Potiphar's wife was very beautiful. She was no dog. She wanted Joseph to come to bed with her. The temptation was real.

Joseph did not stick around and try to reason with lust. He knew that once the hormones get pumping they are like a locomotive - hard to stop. He headed for the hills!

A mother and granddaughter were watching a 1930s film on television. As it ended with the usual romantic conclusion and fadeout of that era, the teenager observed, "Wow, Grandma, your movies ended where ours begin."

Our entertainment industry has become obsessed with sex. Condoms are placed in high schools because, after all, our young people can't control themselves and they need some protection. I don't buy that argument - they *can* control themselves. They need positive role models, the challenge to remain pure and the power of God to help them save themselves for their marriage partner.

Just in case we think the early church had it easy, consider what Eva C. Keuls writes in, "The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens":

Athens is described as "a society dominated by men who sequester their wives and daughters, denigrate the female role in reproduction, erect monuments to the male genitalia, have sex with the sons of their peers, sponsor public whorehouses, create a mythology of rape, and engage in rampant saber-rattling [threats of violence]."

God created sex and it is a powerful motivator. Sex is beautiful when it is expressed within God's design. Whether the impulses are heterosexual or homosexual in nature, the temptation is not the sin. What makes or breaks us is what we do with these temptations. Imagine what our lives would be like if we acted on every urge we had!

I have discovered that couples who sleep together before marriage have a

greater likelihood of difficulty in handling their anger and conflict. Why? Because the foundation of their relationship is built upon lack of self-control. This affects:

- 1) Their respect for one another. Each partner tends to have less respect for the boundaries of the other.
- 2) How they deal with conflict. Angry words and actions expressed without self-control drive a wedge between them.

Sex is intended by God to be the loving, intimate, physical expression of a spiritual union between two consenting adults within a heterosexual, life-long marital covenant. When self-control puts the fences around this gift of God fulfillment is the result.

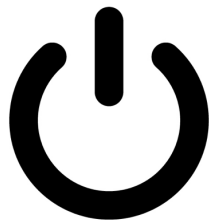
Are you feeding your mind with good and godly material to keep your thoughts pure? Have you had a sexual relationship outside of marriage? Do you vow to God, to yourself and to your future mate that you will keep yourself pure from this day forward?

Three of the most volatile areas of life are:

Money

Sex

**Power**



Samson was given incredible physical power by God. He begins to jeopardize his power in Judges 16:4-6:

4 Some time later, he fell in love with a woman in the Valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah. 5 The rulers of the Philistines went to her and said, "See if you can lure him into showing you the secret of his great strength and how we can overpower him so we may tie him up and subdue him. Each one of us will give you eleven hundred shekels of silver." 6 So Delilah said to Samson, "Tell me the secret of your great strength and how you can be tied up and subdued." NIV

Samson was a hunk. Physical power was given to Samson by His Creator to lead the people of Israel in victory over their enemies. Just as any talent or ability is entrusted to people by God, what they do with this power is within their ability to choose. Samson abused this power to his destruction.

Joseph was given incredible political power by God. He is promoted to power in Genesis 41:41-44:

41 So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt." 42 Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. 43 He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and men shouted before him, "Make way!" Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt. 44 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt." NIV

The Bible goes on to explain how Joseph used his power to help his family. Even though his own brothers had sold him into slavery about 20 years earlier he still helped them.

When an office holder in Ottawa died, a perennial office seeker hurried to the House of Parliament to tell the Prime Minister that he'd like to "take the deceased man's place."

The Prime Minister answered, "If it's all right with the undertaker, it's all right with me."

Do you get frustrated when people will not agree with you or do what you want them to do? Are you more concerned with how *you* live or with how *others* live?

Fathers, which Biblical character would you like your daughter to date? Samson or Joseph?

How can you develop self-discipline? Here are some tips:

1. Start small. Start with your room. Clean it, then keep it clean. When something is out of place, train yourself to put it where it belongs. Then extend that discipline of neatness to the rest of your home.
2. Be on time. That may not seem very spiritual, but it's important. If you're supposed to be somewhere at a specific time, be there on time!
3. Do the hardest job first. Doing that will prevent the hardest jobs from being left undone.
4. Organize your life. Plan the use of your time; don't just react to circumstances. Use a calendar and make a daily list of things you need to accomplish. If you don't control your time, *everything* and *everyone else* will!
5. Accept correction. Correction helps make you more disciplined because it shows you what you need to avoid. Don't avoid criticism; accept it gladly.

6. Practice self-denial. Learn to say no to your feelings. Occasionally deny yourself things that are all right just for the purpose of mastering it.
7. Welcome responsibility. When you have an opportunity to do something that needs to be done, then volunteer if you have a talent in that area. This forces you to organize yourself.

Self-control is given by God to whoever will welcome and nurture it. It is listed in Galatians 5:23 as a fruit of the Spirit. This virtue grows as a result of abiding in Him consistently over time.

English poet John Milton (1608-1674) raises the standard:

The command of one's self is the greatest empire a man can aspire unto, and consequently, to be subject to our own passions is the most grievous slavery. He who best governs himself is best fitted to govern others. He who reigns within himself and rules his passions, desires and fears is more than a king.

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Harness the freedom to choose for tremendous benefits.

