

THE SOUTHWESTERNER



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GROWING IN SELF-CONTROL

CODY WESTBROOK

Every Christian should strive to know more about God and His word and have the courage and conviction to apply God's will to his life. But that knowledge and conviction must be utilized properly. This is where self-control takes center stage. Self-control is the ability to master one's desires and passions so that they may be kept under control, or restraint. Brother Woods said, "It denotes self-government, discipline, the ability of one to control his own life" (Commentary on 2 Peter, Gospel Advocate). Desire, in and of itself, is not necessarily wrong, but left unchecked will become sinful (c.f. Jas. 1:13-15). For example, God created man with sexual desires, and these are perfectly normal and natural. However, sexual intimacy is designed for marriage. Therefore, outside of the marriage relationship, we must keep those desires under control (1 Thess. 4:3).

Paul highlighted the importance of self-control when he compared the Christian life to a race. Competitors in the Ancient games were required to spend ten months in training, which consisted of certain dietary restrictions, regular exercise, and other requirements. A long distance runner does not simply get out of bed one morning and decide to run a marathon. He must discipline his body with proper diet as well as physical and mental training. But, the Christian race is eternally more important than the Boston Marathon. A runner may get himself into running shape after months of training, but finishing the Christian course successfully is a life-time proposition. Paul said,

And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we an imperishable crown (1 Cor. 9:25).

Because of the importance of our race the Hebrews writer said that we are to

lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us (Heb. 12:1).

Self-control becomes a reality only when the gospel is applied to one's life. After all, the gospel is a message of self-control. When Paul stood before Felix "he reasoned of righteousness, self-control, and judgment to come..." (Acts 24:25). But, unlike Felix, we must be willing to heed its temperate teachings and make application. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23) that is developed when we allow the spirit, through His word, to direct and influence our lives. When confronted with our desires, the word of God gives us the knowledge and wisdom needed to be able to overcome!

Solomon said, "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city" (Pro. 16:32), and again, "Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down without walls" (Pro. 25:28). Self-control is a sign of Christian growth. The more mature in Christ we become, the easier it is to temper our appetites and desires. But, we must be committed to growing in this aspect of Christianity. "Keep your heart with all diligence..." (Pro. 4:23). Be on guard for those things that will tempt you, and avoid them. Pray, as Christ directed, "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil..." (Matt. 6:13). Meditate upon and memorize scripture that will help you to overcome the temptation of the evil one (c.f. Matt. 4).

Paul wrote that we are not to allow ourselves to be

taken under the power of anything (1 Cor. 6:12). He also wrote, "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Rom. 13:14; c.f. Col. 2:11-12; Eph. 4:22-24; etc.). May God help each of us to arm ourselves with the mind of Christ so that we may abound in self-control!

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GAME CHANGERS: THE MORAL CHARACTER OF JOSEPH

Ronnie Scherffius

Most are familiar with the phrase game changer. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, a game changer is "a person, idea, or event that completely changes the way a situation develops." An example of a game changing invention from history might be the steam engine or the light bulb. In our modern age, the Internet is an example of a game changing technology. If we consider sports one might consider Bob Gibson a game changer - literally! In 1968, the St. Louis Cardinals' pitcher so dominated batters (268 strike outs and a 1.12 ERA) that the following year the league lowered the pitcher's mound by five inches!

In the Bible we read of a number of men and women who, either for their actions, words, or example, brought about great changes that affected the lives of others. Because of his moral character, Joseph was a game changer like no other! When we think of Joseph our minds conjure thoughts of a favored son, a colorful coat, prophetic dreams, being sold into slavery, or his elevation to great prominence in Egypt. But Joseph was a man of great moral character.

What is moral character? The word moral comes into the English language from a Latin word meaning "manner of conduct." Character is from a Greek term that carries the idea of an "engraved mark" and was often used of the "imprint on the soul." In time the word came to refer to a "defining quality of a person." Thus, moral character is the manner of conduct that defines the true quality of person.

When we consider Joseph's moral character we immediately recall his response

to the sexual advances of Potiphar's wife:

There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God (Gen. 39:9)?

How many today, faced with a situation of compromising their integrity, have cast away self-control and run headlong into sin? But Joseph was a man of integrity and quickly offered three reasons for maintaining his moral character: 1) the woman who approached him was the wife of another man; 2) the act she was soliciting him to commit was "great wickedness"; 3) such an act would constitute sin against Jehovah God! Rather than yielding to sin (and a sin from which he would certainly escape immediate reprisal) Joseph changed the game and forever provided humanity with an example of winning over the adversary: "And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out" (Gen. 39:12). Perhaps the moral character of Joseph was in the mind of Paul when writing to Timothy as he encouraged "flee youthful lusts" (2 Tim. 2:22) - not only sensual desires, but also pride, ambition, and, the desire of power over others that such a position might bring.

Indeed Joseph was a game changer, but the impact of Joseph's moral character was not limited to denying a heathen woman's immoral solicitations. Few who achieve the high position which Joseph attained would refrain themselves from retribution and vengeance against his enemies. How many nights might we suppose Joseph laid sleepless as his mind replayed the day when his life was changed forever: stripped of his coat, cast into a pit, sold to strangers, forcefully removed from the love of this father, and delivered into bondage in a strange land? By what plot and through what scheme might he inflict misery upon his brothers who through envy and hatred desired nothing for him but death? Yet, the record shows Joseph was a man of forgiveness rather than vengeance:

And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. 5Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life (Gen. 45:4-5).

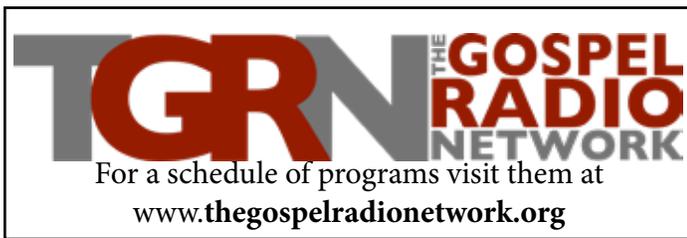
Joseph's character was marked by the qualities of a kind, merciful, and loving God. He was also fully aware of

God's sovereignty over man and of God's right alone to exact vengeance for the wrongs of man (Gen. 50:19).

Joseph was a game changer. By his moral character he not only maintained his purity but has influenced and emboldened countless others to flee from an adversary who seeks their destruction (1 Pt. 5:8). Exhibiting the character of his God - Joseph chose the path of peace over payback and remission over revenge. How many lives could we change if we would but follow his supreme example! Are you a game changer? Whose life will you change by imitating the game changing character of Joseph?

The Midtown Messenger, the Midtown Church of Christ Weekly Bulletin, January 27, 2019

SW



“YOU ARE OF YOUR FATHER...”

Andy Baker '06

In the heart-felt book of John, Jesus has several confrontations with the Jews to prove to them His deity; for this discussion, see John 8. The hardness of heart of these people broke the Savior's heart as they claimed allegiance to God, to the things of God, and to God's faithful servant, Abraham. However, Jesus cuts to the core of their hypocrisy and powerfully says in 8:44, “You are of your father, the devil...” What were some things that betrayed their “true father's” identity?

They were ignorant of their spiritual heritage (8:32-36).

Being honored by a family name is not necessarily wrong. However, pride had blinded these Jews to the point of ignorance of their history when they say, “we are

Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone” (8:33). People who will blindly trust in mom or dad's religion without investigating their own need to be free might rightly ask, “who truly is my father” (8:44)?

They shut out the words of Jesus to make them free (8:36-37).

Jesus said, “if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you” (8:36-37). Literally, “no place in you” could be translated, “has no room to work in you.” If we shut out the words of Jesus in our life, we need to ask, who truly is my father?

They did not do the deeds of their earthly father (8:40-41).

After a repeated appeal to Abraham as their father, Jesus reminds them, “if you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham” (8:39). The New Testament legacy of Abraham is quoted in Romans 4, “Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness” (4:3). When God spoke, Abraham humbly and obediently listened and followed. When God speaks in His word, do Abraham's descendants today hear and humbly and obediently respond? If not, who is truly our father?

They indulged the desires of their spiritual father (8:43-44).

The devil is a liar and murderer (8:44). It is that way because “he speaks from his own,” that is, it is not a question of what God wants, but the devil is manipulative to try to get what he wants. He speaks from his own interests. If God's word is opened and rightly divided, will a person try to make God's word bow to their desires, or to make their desires bow to the word of God. If the former, that person might ask, “who truly is my father?”

The Messenger, the Maud Church of Christ Weekly Bulletin, October 22, 2017.

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Word of Life

Sundays at 7:30 am

KLBJ Radio 590 AM or 99.7 FM

Past recordings are available to listen to at
swcofc.org/wordoflife

Record for the Week of September 1, 2019

Bible Class	152
Morning Assembly.....	212
Evening Assembly	149
Iglesia de Cristo	
Morning Assembly.....	N/A
Contribution	\$N/A

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PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER:

Bonnie Thetford, mother of **Bobbie Cauley**, has been placed in Hospice Care.

Sue Shamburger is in S. Austin Hospital dealing with complications from congestive heart failure.

Caleb Crouch, son of **David & Gina Crouch**, will be deploying to the Middle East with his Army Reserve Unit.

Health Concerns: Tom Genduso, Charles Houston, Caroline Little Pat Lyckman, Clarence Whetstone, Angela Young.

Shut-ins: Jeannette Hansen, Rosemary Garrett, Jon Little, Bobby Johnson, Elvira Martinez, Ginny Oswald, Jan Smith..

Others: Sonny & Lee Barr, Rodney Boes, Bill Ellison, Ada Fleming, Bonnie Gomer, CK Holt, Deborah Hoover, Nell McCown, Bill & Nancy Ponds, Kay Westbrook, Gib Young.

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RADIO PROGRAM – *The Word of Life* | Sunday, 7:30 am | KLBJ, 590-AM and 99.7 FM | online at swcofc.org/word-of-life