

Self-Control

Have you ever watched a piece of paper being blown around by the wind? There's just something I really enjoy about watching it. But I got to thinking what it would be like to be riding on that piece of paper. Part of me wants to think it would be kind of fun. Kind of like a roller-coaster. But at the same time I think about how it would feel to be constantly, randomly, and drastically tossed around by every slight breeze that comes by with no stability or peace in sight. It got me realizing some times my life is like that.

There are many things in life I cannot control. But what I can control is how I act, and how I react to how the wind blows. And that will affect how my ride through life goes. I really enjoy throwing paper airplanes. It never ceases to amaze me that by taking the same piece of paper that the wind would normally toss around randomly and violently and shaping that paper... giving it some structure... that paper can become an aircraft that glides beautifully and evenly on those same air currents that send the unstructured piece of paper into fits. (Unless of course you make paper airplanes like I make paper airplanes, in which case it drops like a rock). Self-control is the structure that keeps us stable in an unstable and violent environment.

I've had a leaking toilet for about 6 months now. Maybe longer. Every once in awhile I would complain about it and say "I've got to fix that toilet." Then, I distract myself with other things far more pleasant to do and before long I've forgotten all about that toilet. Until, of course, I hear it flush itself again. And it's funny, I finally just recently went out and decided to by the \$4 flapper it needed, turn off the water, replace the old flapper with the new one, turn the water back on and voila! I had a non-leaking toilet and it felt great! It took a trip to Home Depot and 10 minutes to do. Why didn't I do it six months ago?

For the past few weeks Heather and I have not watched any TV. We even went so far as to unplug them both and remove them from the living room and our bedroom. I gave up caffeine at the same time. I've had people comment on what great self control I must have. I've stopped smoking, alcohol, caffeine, swearing, fighting, heck, I've stopped doing all sorts of things at one time or another in order to get them under control. And then I picked and chose the things I was willing to do in small amounts and patted myself on the back saying "What great self-control you have".

I've realized something about myself. I'm actually pretty good at not doing things. If I had my way I think I'd sit on a couch and do nothing. My record for sleeping is 36 hours with only 2 or 3 nature calls. Suddenly I'm realizing that self-control is not just about denying yourself. It's about choosing to do. That's real self-control. It's choosing to act in a godly manner and then keeping it up, persevering.

Bible text: 2 Peter 1:5-8. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive.

What's great about what he wrote is that self-control is just a part of the building block to so much more. You start with faith and add goodness. You take that goodness, and add knowledge. Once you know what does and doesn't need to be done you add the self-control to do what's good and not do what

isn't. Then you add perseverance so that you don't fall back into those old bad habits. And that leads to Godliness, brotherly kindness, and in the end the most important thing, love. It requires self-control to show someone your love.

I've had many opportunities to show my love to my wife through various projects in the house. Some she's known about and expected and others she hasn't. But as I look back on some of the things I managed to do I realize that I needed the self-control to be able to choose to give up what I wanted to do for something that was going to be hard work but allowed me to do something that means much much more. That is showing my wife I love her. How much more I can I show her, you, my neighbors, and people I haven't met yet my Love and more importantly, God's Love, if I grow my self-control?

Self-control isn't just about not doing. It's about doing.