

TAKE CONTROL

WEEK FOUR: STOP

By Carey Madding

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Throughout our *Take Control* series, we've looked at the Proverbs of Solomon. This week, we'll also focus on the "wisdom book" of the New Testament, the book of James. If we are committed to developing self-control, let's *stop*, ask for God's help, and do what He tells us to do.

Where Am I Today?

- 1) We all have "over-issues." Consider some of your self-control struggles. Can you imagine a future time when you might feel you've had enough? Tell a fun story of excess in your past, like way too many ramen noodles during your college years.

Into the Bible

- 2) Read the passages below that talk about weakness, struggles or suffering. These can be a huge "deal-stopper" to faith for many people. Why would God allow pain and suffering in His world? List the benefits—the things we can gain—when we go through trials, testing and temptation.
 - a. Romans 5:3-4
 - b. Romans 8:17
 - c. 2 Corinthians 1:5
 - d. Philippians 3:10

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- 3) There is a guilt-cycle in our lives, even when we are sincerely trying to follow and obey God. Once we sin and “miss the mark,” we can often go temporarily berserk. Or, we can give up trying for good. How can we short-circuit this vicious cycle and get back on track fast? Look for ways in the scriptures below:
- a. 1 John 1:9
 - b. Hebrews 3:12-13
 - c. Psalm 119:9-16
 - d. Proverbs 27:17
- 4) The battle to overcome sin is won or lost in the battlefield of the mind. Greed, fear, anger, lust—every evil act or over-indulgence begins as a selfish, insecure or proud thought. *Sin* begins in our thought life (James 1:14). What are some specific actions that can help us win the war of our thought life?
- a. Philippians 4:8
 - b. Hebrews 3:1
 - c. 2 Corinthians 10:5
 - d. Ephesians 2:1-10

How Does This Apply?

- 5) There is a huge difference in what Satan might whisper to you and how God’s Holy Spirit speaks to your soul. One condemns and the other convicts. One accuses and the other encourages. The evil one says you are a total mess, a loser. The Holy One says you need to change this one thing; I want you to look like Me and be holy. **Read James 1:22.** Do a self-evaluation on the following areas:

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- a. Am I looking into the mirror of God's Word on a daily basis?
- b. Am I hearing any direction from Him—or am I always doing the asking and talking?
- c. When I sense a “next step” or something He has asked me to do (or not do), do I obey? Or do I justify?
- d. Am I ready to start taking the class for credit? Or can I admit I am just auditing Christianity?

Challenge: During the weekend message, Mike challenged us to find an accountability partner. It may be for a small thing. It may be for a huge “over-issue” in our lives. Be thoughtful and prayerful about with whom you share. Start with a smaller issue. Share, and see if your partner remembers to pray and check up on you. Give them permission to hold you to your commitment. Then note: Do they encourage me? Do they challenge me? If so, move on to more accountability. If you are married, spouses should be a first choice for most confidences.

Digging Deeper: Going Further on Your Own

- 6) All Old Testament Books have a New Testament equivalent in style, genre, or central theme. It shows a consistent thread in the Biblical narrative and a common Holy Spirit inspiration for the Bible as a whole. The only exception is the Psalms—so that people will sing their own “new songs” (Psalm 96:1). The Old Testament wisdom literature includes Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and parts of Job and Psalms. Much of James serves as the New Testament equivalent. These books go over, in detail, how to live a wise life that applies knowledge from the rest of the Bible. Who does James say is the source of wisdom? How does he differentiate Godly wisdom from demonic wisdom? How can we tell the difference? **Read James 1:5 and James 3:13-17.**