

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

activated

Vol 14 • Issue 10

TRAFFIC LIGHTS

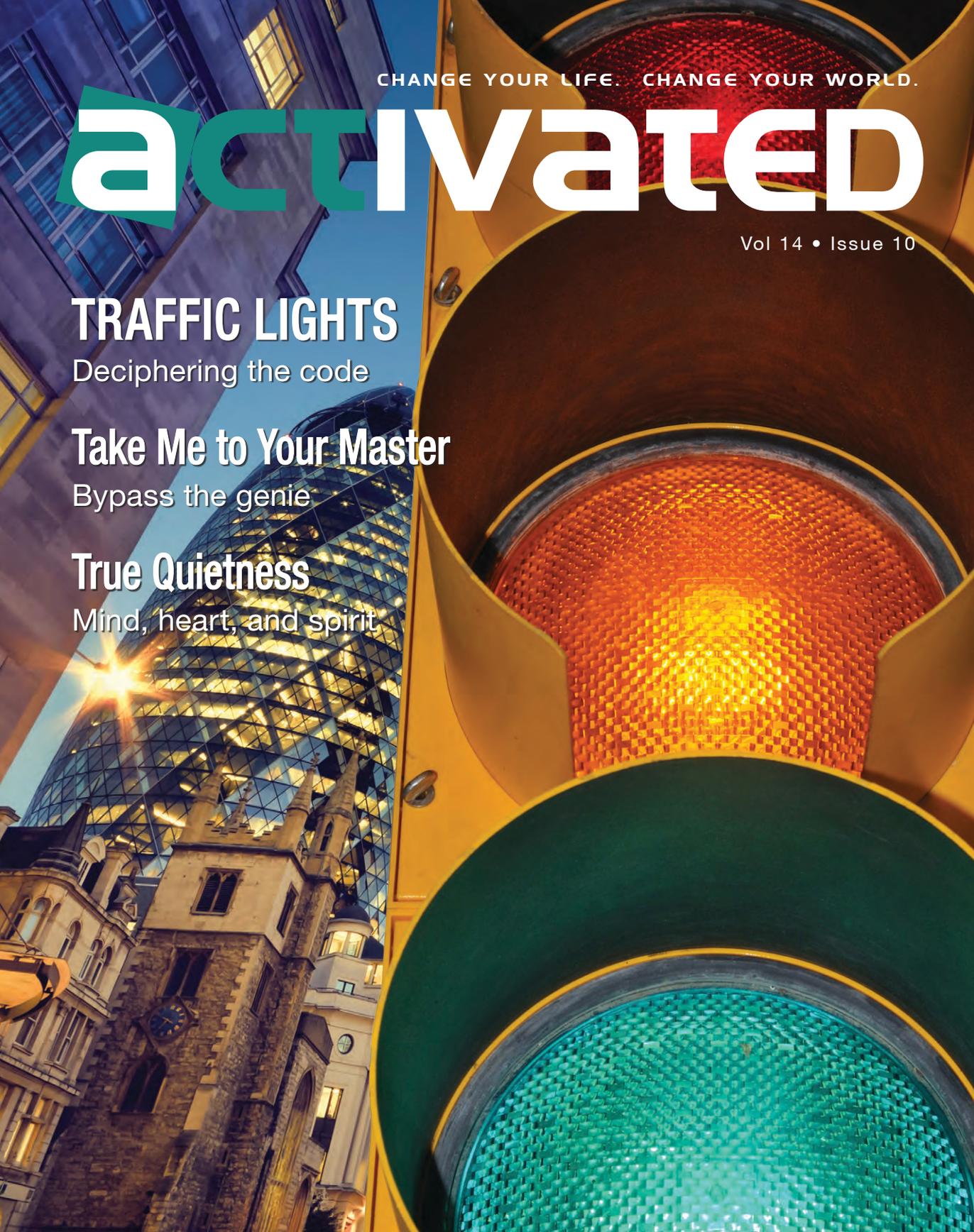
Deciphering the code

Take Me to Your Master

Bypass the genie

True Quietness

Mind, heart, and spirit





EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION GAINING CONTROL

Self-control is the ninth fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22–23. Though it's listed last, it's clearly an important one. It takes a lot of self-control to manifest the other eight fruits.

I recently read about the Stanford Marshmallow Experiment, conducted by Stanford University psychologists in 1972. During the experiment, a marshmallow was offered to each of the participating children, with the promise that if they didn't eat it for 15 minutes, they'd be given a second one. The researchers analyzed how long each child resisted eating the marshmallow, and after follow-up studies in 1988 and 1990, suggested that waiting longer—exercising delayed gratification—was correlated with future success. The findings are not considered conclusive, but it makes sense that having self-control is a positive factor in our lives.

My daughter Audrey is not yet two, but I can already see the struggle that takes place daily in her young mind with whether to yield to her anger and frustration or not. I take seriously the responsibility of helping her cultivate positive traits—patience, courtesy, consideration, respect, kindness, honesty—that all require self-discipline but will shape her character and prove valuable throughout her life.

Some of us have easier circumstances than others. For instance, Audrey currently finds chocolate and cake revolting—and if that continues into adulthood, it might fool some people into thinking she must be really self-disciplined (at least as far as sticking to a healthy diet). Unfortunately, being able to resist something we don't care for is not the same thing as self-control.

Each of us is unique and has a personal path for growth, so there are no obvious secrets to gaining self-control. However, if we commit our lives into God's hands, He will help us know what to do and not do, and the voice of our conscience will safeguard us in our weak areas.

Samuel Keating
Executive Editor

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A WHILE BACK I READ SOME TIPS ON HOW TO GET ALONG WITH PEOPLE:

- 1) Speak cheerfully.
- 2) Smile.
- 3) Address people by name.
- 4) Be friendly and helpful.
- 5) Communicate openly.
- 6) Be concerned about others.
- 7) Be generous with praise, encouragement, and appreciation.
- 8) Be genuinely interested in the feelings of others.
- 9) Avoid arguments.
- 10) Be helpful.

These are great tips, I thought, and I resolved to try to put them into practice in my daily life. Little did I know that an opportunity to do so would come along the very next day—but not exactly as I had expected.

My wife got annoyed with me for not helping her carry the laundry basket up to the roof. In our house,

there are six flights of stairs to go up before reaching the top, so it is quite a strenuous task to carry up a basket full of wet laundry to hang.

I tried to explain that I would have been glad to carry it if she'd asked, but she seemed to be convinced I was avoiding the job on purpose. *How unfair!* I was upset, and as hard as I tried, the only tip for getting along that I could remember right then was #9, "Avoid arguments"—but it was already too late for that one.

I remembered that when Julius Caesar was angry, he mentally repeated the entire alphabet before speaking, but I was going to need more than 26 letters to keep me from doing or saying something rash. Then I remembered the poem, "Let it Pass."

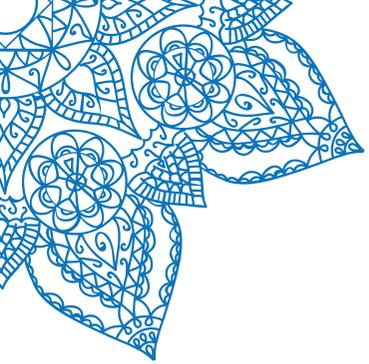
After a while, our tempers calmed down, and we made up. I apologized to my wife with a gift and a kiss, and somehow, the laundry basket incident quickly seemed insignificant. Now that the issue was brought to light,

though, come next laundry day, you bet I'll be sure to practice Tip #10—"Be helpful."

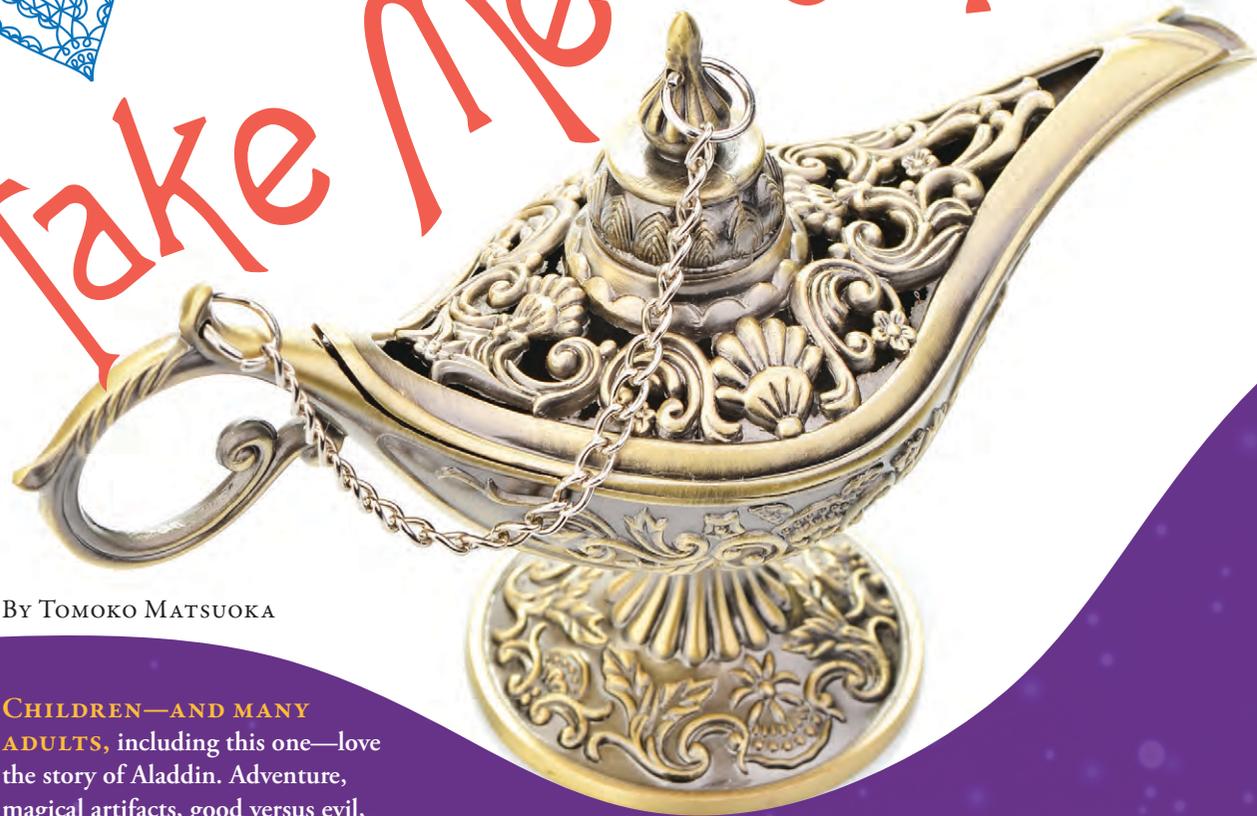
CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER IS A SCRIPTWRITER AND ANIMATOR IN MUMBAI, INDIA, AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■

LET IT PASS

Truly great folks never stoop
To answer petty things;
The unkind word, the bitter cut
That rankles deep and stings.
They are too big to notice them,
They simply pass them by,
And even with a smile sometimes
Or twinkle in the eye.
For they have found that after all
'Twas better in the end
To meet it with a smile, and then,
Just let it pass, my friend.
—Virginia Brandt Berg (1886–1968)



Take Me to Your Master!



BY TOMOKO MATSUOKA

CHILDREN—AND MANY ADULTS, including this one—love the story of Aladdin. Adventure, magical artifacts, good versus evil, and the ultimate success story of a beggar boy being transformed into a prince by an awesome genie. There’s something appealing about that easy success. Instead of having to discipline himself and work hard to succeed, Aladdin uses magic.

In real life, however, wish fulfillment takes on another form. We may not be blessed with Aladdin’s genie in a lamp, or Cinderella’s fairy godmother, but each of us has the means to make many things that we want and need happen. In

the real world, things like passing a test, acquiring a skill, or achieving some worthy goal happen as the result of mastering one object alone—ourselves. It’s not as glamorous, and success doesn’t happen overnight; and yes, it may seem like a poor replacement for a genie, or a few magic words and fairy dust, but it’s much more likely to have a lasting effect on your life.

Stephen Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, writes, “The undisciplined are slaves to moods, appetites, and passions.” I only need to look at the

past few days to be quite convinced of this. I like to think of myself as an independent being, completely in control of my emotions and desires, but—looking at the past two times I skipped exercising because the temperature wasn’t right, or when I “accidentally” started watching the latest episode of *So You Think You Can Dance* when I had a writing deadline to meet—I have to admit I’m not always as “in control” of myself as I would like to be.

If I were living today according to my “moods, appetites,

and passions,” I would begin by sleeping in, due to last night’s late movie watching. I might wake up at around 3 PM, and then would probably decide that I don’t feel like working right away. If I were hungry, I’d head to the store to treat myself to a pack of my new favorite flavor of potato chips. Upon coming home, I’m pretty sure I’d decide that with so much of my day already gone, there would be no point in starting anything, and instead that more relaxation was in order. ...

The thing is that even in the depths of a self-inflicted movie-viewing coma, and even when I decide to forgo this day’s exercise routine, there exists in me an opposing desire to *not* be a couch potato. I want to do more with my life than be a slave to my moods or impulses. I want to travel; I want to start my own business; I want to write books; I want to eventually be a fit and healthy 90-year-old lady who still enjoys every day. The difficulty lies in delaying my desire for immediate gratification to achieve long-term gain. In other words: I

need to learn how to control myself in the present so that I can have the future I desire.

Through learning how to control our impulses, we become the kind of person that others want to get to know. People who can control themselves usually:

- have better relationships with others, because they have learned to control their temper and feelings of annoyance over petty things.
- are generally physically healthier as a result of good exercise and eating habits.
- have disciplined their minds and have learned how to use knowledge to help them succeed.
- are filled with a healthy sense of self-worth, because they value themselves too much to indulge in negative or self-destructive habits.
- are often happier, because they’re getting what they want out of life.

Conversely, the Bible tells us “a person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls.”¹

Learning to control your impulses and desires is a skill that can help you succeed in life. You may want something very much, but never do anything to achieve it. The “achieving it” part is what requires hard work, putting in the hours, gritting your teeth, saying no to other things that might try to distract you—in a word: self-mastery. After all is said and done, the biggest key to achieving what you want—as well as the biggest hindrance—will likely be you.

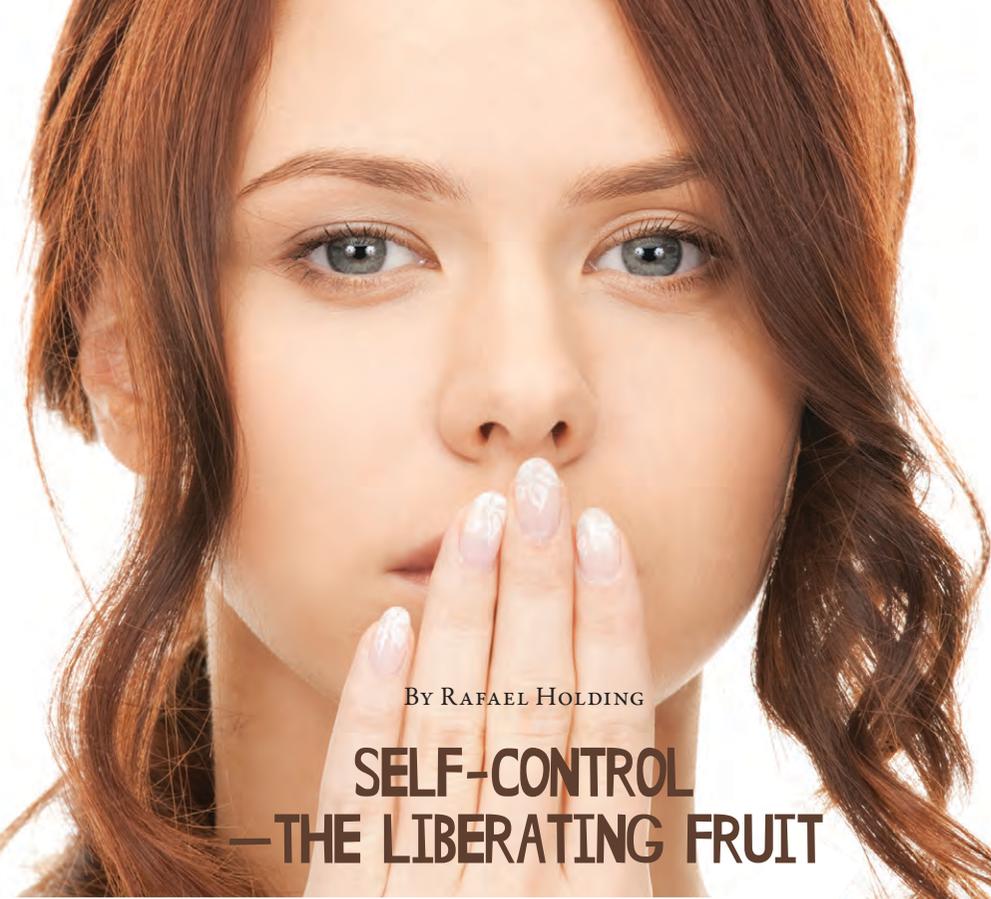
TOMOKO MATSUOKA IS A CONTENT DEVELOPER FOR MY WONDER STUDIO ([HTTP://WWW.MYWONDERSTUDIO.COM/](http://www.mywonderstudio.com/)), A CHRISTIAN CHARACTER-BUILDING WEBSITE FOR CHILDREN, AND LIVES IN JAPAN. ■

The best day of your life is the one on which you decide your life is your own. No apologies or excuses. No one to lean on, rely on, or blame. The gift is yours—it is an amazing journey—and you alone are responsible for the quality of it. This is the day your life really begins.

—Bob Moawad (1941–2007)



1. Proverbs 25:28 NLT



BY RAFAEL HOLDING

SELF-CONTROL —THE LIBERATING FRUIT

THE SECRET TO BUILDING SELF-CONTROL IS TO YIELD OUR LIVES TO GOD AND LET HIS HOLY SPIRIT GUIDE OUR THOUGHTS, our actions and our life. “Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world,” Paul advises, “but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.”¹

That doesn’t mean we won’t face temptation or continue to work to overcome bad habits and weak areas in our lives. We need to do our part, of course. We need to put up some resistance when temptation comes knocking, and we need to work on strengthening our weak areas. But the fact of the matter is, we all sometimes fall prey to temptation, give in to our personal weaknesses, and overindulge in some things that would be fine in moderation. The apostle Paul could have been speaking for us all when he wrote:

1. Romans 12:2 NLT
2. Romans 7:18–19, 21–24 NLT
3. Romans 7:25 NLT

He who makes himself his own master subjects himself to a fool for a master.—Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153)

We can only learn to know ourselves and do what we can—namely, surrender our will and fulfill God’s will in us.—Teresa of Avila (1515–1582)

I surrendered unto Him all there was of me; everything! Then for the first time I realized what it meant to have real power.—Kathryn Kuhlman (1907–1976)

I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can’t. I want to do what is good, but I don’t. I don’t want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway.

I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God’s law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me.

*Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?*²

But then Paul hit upon the answer:

*Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord.*³

RAFAEL HOLDING IS A WRITER IN AUSTRALIA. “SELF-CONTROL—THE LIBERATING FRUIT” IS ADAPTED FROM THE *GET ACTIVATED* BOOK *GOD’S GIFTS*, AVAILABLE FROM AURORA’S ONLINE STORE ([HTTP://SHOP.AURORAPRODUCTION.COM/](http://shop.auroraproduction.com/)). ■



the positive mindset

BY IRIS RICHARD

DURING A RECENT COURSE I TOOK ON COUNSELING, my classmates and I were exploring the topic of negative self-talk, and it quickly became obvious this bad habit had served as a damper to success, suffocated great ideas right at the start, and influenced reactions and perceptions about situations in each of our lives.

Negativity, ranging from regret over lost opportunities to bitterness, comparing unfavorably with others, jealousy, to little phrases like, “Oh, how clumsy I am,” “How could I be that dumb?” or “How could anyone like me?” seems all too common. Even my classmates who described themselves as generally positive admitted to regularly entertaining the habit.

I decided to embark on changing the way I think and made an effort to tune in to the messages that go through my mind. These are some of the strategies I have been learning about and trying to implement:

When a negative message pops up, replace it with a positive one. “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”¹

When faced with an obstacle or bad news, pray for a solution and imagine the good that God can bring to pass

1. Philippians 4:4
2. Romans 8:28
3. Micah 7:8 CEV
4. Philippians 4:8 NIV
5. Jeremiah 29:11 NIV

even out of a messy situation. “All things work together for good to those who love God.”²

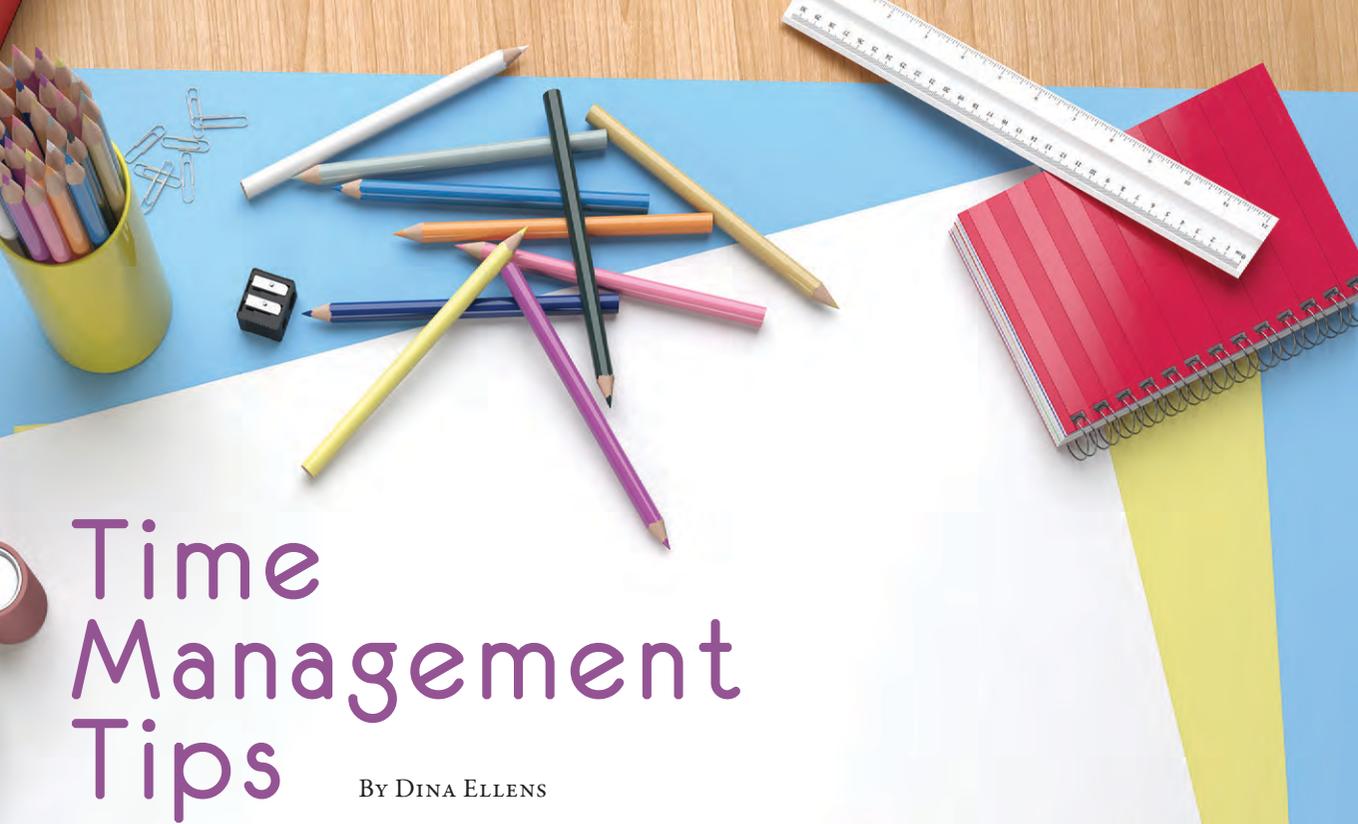
When things seem to go all wrong remind yourself that, no matter how small, there is always a ray of hope in each situation and a light at the end of every tunnel. “I may have fallen, but I will get up; I may be sitting in the dark, but the Lord is my light.”³

When going to sleep or doing exercises, instead of wandering off into negative self-talk, count your blessings and meditate on all the things in your life that *have* worked out. “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”⁴

When you’re feeling overwhelmed, fill your mind with thoughts of God’s goodness and love toward you. “I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”⁵

Even though progress may be slow at times, each step gets me closer to my goal, and I am already catching glimpses of “the new me.”

IRIS RICHARD IS A COUNSELOR IN KENYA, WHERE SHE HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTEER WORK SINCE 1994. ■



Time Management Tips

BY DINA ELLENS

WHEN MY BOSS AGREED TO LET ME START WORKING FROM HOME, I was excited about the prospect and confident that I could do an even better job than working at the office, but he responded with a knowing smile, “Just remember, I may call sometimes just to see if you’re at your desk. Don’t let me find you in the kitchen!”—My boss knew my love for good food and cooking!—“Just be at your desk by 9:00 every morning, and everything will flow from there.”

This advice was the foundation of one of the best time management tips I’ve ever found: Set your boundaries and discipline yourself to stick to them.

However, getting to my desk on time every morning was only the start. I’d then find myself overwhelmed by dozens of messages,

all relaying requests and things that needed to be done. It was hard for me to prioritize. Everything seemed to cry out to be done first!

Again, my boss came to the rescue. He suggested that I write down everything I had to do and send him the list. He would then go over it, prioritize it for me, and send it back. It was helpful to be able to draw on his experience, especially at the beginning. After a while, I was able to start setting my own priorities, but I have never gotten away from keeping a to-do list.

Once, after spending a morning on a low-priority project and failing to meet the deadline on something that was urgent, I learned another good lesson: “Do the important stuff first.” I’d been overly optimistic in estimating the time I’d need and thus failed to meet the deadline.

My boss had some more good advice: “At the close of each work day, take a minute to look over your to-do list. Then make a note of the two or three top-priority items to start on first thing the next morning.”

I found that at the end of the day, I actually do have the best insight on what still remains to be done, so it works well to start my day’s to-do list the afternoon before.

I ended up working from home as a personal assistant for many years, and I believe these tips and suggestions I received when I first started are what helped me build a reputation for being punctual and reliable.

DINA ELLENS LIVES IN WEST JAVA, INDONESIA, WHERE SHE IS ACTIVE IN VOLUNTEER WORK. ■



BY UDAY PAUL

WE NEED PATIENCE TO ACCOMPLISH OUR GOALS IN LIFE. Even when our situation is not ideal, it is important to persevere and make the most of what we have.

Most of us experience times when we are frustrated with our jobs or feel so unappreciated that we want to quit. However, before making a rash decision, we should look to God and His Word for guidance. Basing our decisions solely on our emotions or circumstances is not a wise thing to do, because these are unstable. If we cannot stick to our tasks through thick and thin, we risk being “double-minded and unstable in all [that we] do.”¹ The Bible says that God who has begun a good work in us will perform

- 1. James 1:8 NIV
2. See Philippians 1:6.
3. See Genesis 2:1-2.
4. See 1 Corinthians 3:9.
5. See Hebrews 13:21.

it to the very end.² God always likes to finish what He starts,³ but in order to accomplish His purposes through us, He needs our cooperation.⁴

Many of the great world-changers stuck to their tasks and persevered, even though it took a long time for any results to become visible. William Carey, the pioneer missionary to India who began a new wave in world missions, labored faithfully for years, learning the local languages and translating the Bible, but with little visible success. He suffered personal tragedy as well, losing a young son to dysentery, while his wife suffered a nervous breakdown. Yet Carey persevered and left behind an invaluable Christian heritage.

Sometimes, even though we don’t see much fruit from our efforts, our labors can open doors for others to enter later. The Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier once worked amongst the inhabitants of the Maluku

Islands, in present-day Indonesia. These savages had earned a justified reputation as cannibals and head-hunters, but Xavier bravely preached and taught among them for years. However, despite his courageous efforts, Xavier gained only a few converts, and eventually had to leave without much to show for his labors. Years later, however, other Jesuits entered through the door that he had opened, and as a result, tens of thousands of the inhabitants of these islands turned to Christianity.

May God help us to stick to the tasks that He calls us to do, and may we continue in them until we know for sure that our tasks are complete and it’s time to move on to something else.⁵

UDAY PAUL LIVES IN BANGALORE, INDIA, AND TEACHES ENGLISH AND PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT COURSES. ■



POINTS TO PONDER

GOVERNING YOURSELF



A PERSON WITHOUT SELF-CONTROL IS LIKE A BREACHED CITY, ONE WITH NO WALLS.
—*PROVERBS 25:28 CEB*

The Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline.—*2 Timothy 1:7 NIV*

Self-control is the ability to keep cool while someone is making it hot for you.—*Unknown*

If you would learn self-mastery, begin by yielding yourself to the One Great Master.—*Johann Friederich Lobstein (1736–1784)*

Every temptation that is resisted, every noble aspiration that is encouraged, every sinful thought that is repressed, every bitter word that is withheld, adds its little item to the impetus of that great movement which is bearing humanity onward toward a richer life and higher character.—*John Fiske (1842–1901)*

For want of self-restraint many men are engaged all their lives in fighting with difficulties of their own making and rendering success impossible by their own cross-grained ungentleness; whilst others, it may be much less gifted, make their way and achieve success by simple patience, equanimity, and self-control.—*Samuel Smiles (1812–1904)*

Conquer yourself. Till you have done this, you are but a slave; for it is almost as well to be subjected to another's appetite as to your own.—*Richard Burton (1861–1940)*

Not being able to govern events, I govern myself, and apply myself to them, if they will not apply themselves to me.—*Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592)*

Do you want to know the man against whom you have most reason to guard yourself? Your looking-glass will give you a very fair likeness of his face.—*Richard Whately (1787–1863)*

To rule self and subdue our passions is the more praiseworthy, because so few know how to do it.—*Francesco Guiccardini (1483–1540)*

Over the times you have no power.—To redeem a world sunk in dishonesty has not been given to you. Solely over one man do you have quite absolute, uncontrollable power.—Him redeem and make honest.—*Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881)*

Educate your children to self-control, to the habit of holding passion and prejudice and evil tendencies to an upright and reasoning will, and you have done much to abolish misery from their future lives and crimes to society.—*Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790)*

Self-control is a key factor in achieving success. We can't control everything in life, but we can definitely control ourselves.—*Jan Mckingley Hilado (b. 1991)*

Self-discipline begins with the mastery of your thoughts. If you don't control what you think, you can't control what you do. Simply, self-discipline enables you to think first and act afterward.—*Napoleon Hill (1883–1970)*

Hold yourself responsible for a higher standard than anybody else expects of you. Never excuse yourself. Never pity yourself. Be a hard master to yourself—and be lenient to everybody else.—*Henry Ward Beecher (1813–1887)*

A silly idea is current that good people do not know what temptation means. This is an obvious lie. Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. ... A man who gives in to temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later. That is why bad people, in one sense, know very little about badness. They have lived a sheltered life by always giving in.—*C.S. Lewis (1898–1963)*

I count him braver who overcomes his desires than him who conquers his enemies; for the hardest victory is over self.—*Aristotle (384 BC–322 BC)*

To enjoy freedom we have to control ourselves.—*Virginia Woolf (1882–1941)*

O blessed Jesus, give me stillness of soul in Thee.

Let Thy mighty calmness reign in me;

Rule me, O King of gentleness, King of peace.

Give me control, great power of self-control,

Control over my words, thoughts and actions.

From all irritability, want of meekness, want of gentleness, dear Lord, deliver me.

By Thine own deep patience, give me patience.

Make me in this and all things more and more like Thee.

—*St John of the Cross (1542–1591)*

We are never going to enjoy stability, we are never going to enjoy spiritual maturity until we learn how to do what's right when it feels wrong, and every time you do what's right by a decision of your will using discipline and self-control to go beyond how you feel, the more painful it is in your flesh, the more you're growing spiritually at that particular moment.—*Joyce Meyer (b. 1943)*

Most powerful is he who has himself in his own power.—*Seneca (4 BC–AD 65)*

If a man will understand how intimately, yea, how inseparably, self-control and happiness are associated, he has but to look into his own heart, and upon the world around. ... Looking upon the lives of men and women, he will perceive how the hasty word, the bitter retort, the act of deception, the blind prejudice, and foolish resentment bring wretchedness and even ruin in their train.—*James Allen (1855–1942)* ■

TRUE QUIETNESS

BY STEVE HEARTS

SOME TIME AGO, I found myself facing a situation that was beyond my ability to resolve. Alone in the stillness of the night, I racked my brain for a solution and finally sent up a prayer for direction.

As I lay on my bed, waiting to hear an answer, there was only silence. My patience started to wear thin, and just as I was about to get up for a glass of water, the still small voice spoke: *Are you sure you are being totally quiet and still?*

Of course I am! I beamed back. *I've been lying here all this time, perfectly still and silent, hearing absolutely nothing. The silence is driving me nuts!*

Your body may be perfectly still and silent, God said, but what about your mind?

1. See 1 Thessalonians 4:11.

Just like that, I quickly and clearly saw why I felt so exhausted, in spite of my outward stillness and quietness. Inwardly, I was racked with mental anxiety, trying to come up with the answers I needed.

I finally put on the brakes in my mind, gradually slowing down until I came to a complete stop. I'd had no idea how fast my mind had been racing. It felt good to now be mentally still, and I savored the peace that flooded me as my heart and mind began to relax. In my new state of mind, I was also able to savor the silence, every minute of it.

I eventually received the answers I sought, but not before discovering that true “quietness and confidence” is that of the heart and mind, not just the body.

By nature, I am active mentally, always planning, analyzing, reflecting, and pondering—and yes, I do my share of worrying and fretting as well. This experience is one that I have had to repeat a fair few times in my life, as God continues to remind me that true quietness and stillness is that of the heart and spirit. This is the type of quietness that allows God to move on our behalf.¹ Through it, battles are won, needs are provided, and answers are found. Most important of all, our relationship with Jesus is strengthened, and our connection with Him is made clearer.

STEVE HEARTS HAS BEEN BLIND SINCE BIRTH. HE IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■

Transformed

BY VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG

I ONCE ATTENDED A MEETING WHERE A 16-YEAR-OLD BOY SANG SEVERAL GOSPEL SONGS, and as he sang, his face shone with joy. I learned later that he had grown up in a horrible home environment. From the age of 12, he had been forced to steal to support his family, and within a year, he was also stealing to support his own drug habit, which his life of crime had led to. He had been arrested and spent years in and out of juvenile correctional centers. But one day, some young people met him on the street and led him to receive Jesus, and his life was completely transformed.

How had that transformation taken place? The Bible says, “All of us who have had that veil removed

can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.”¹ The transformation takes place by beholding Jesus. Many people try to transform their lives with human striving and carnal willpower, but through self-effort they can never experience the kind of transformation that boy did—never! It can only happen as we behold Jesus.

Jesus said, “Abide in Me, and let Me abide in you.”² This is the secret of the transformed life: Jesus abiding in you and living out His life through you. He'll do the transforming and change your life for the better if you give Him the chance!

VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG (1886–1968) WAS AN AMERICAN EVANGELIST AND PASTOR. ■



If you haven't yet asked Jesus to help change your life for the better, you can do so right now. Simply pray a prayer like the following:

*Jesus, I want to share my life with You. Please come in and transform me into a new person.*³

All I know is this works. It's not only worked for me, but I've seen it work for literally thousands and thousands of people. I have seen the transformation on people's faces when they receive Christ. I've seen the glory come on them, the light.—*Joyce Meyer (b. 1943)*

The same Jesus Who turned water into wine can transform your home, your life, your family, and your future. He is still in the miracle-working business, and His business is the business of transformation.—*Adrian Rogers (1931–2005)*

Traffic Lights

QUIET MOMENTS
BY ABI MAY

NO CITY IN THE DEVELOPED WORLD COULD FUNCTION WITHOUT TRAFFIC LIGHTS.

They are not physical barriers, but drivers choose to exercise self-control, and for the most part, follow their instructions: stopping for red, exercising caution for amber (yellow), going for green. The motorist who ignores the red light does so at the peril of his and other people's lives, while following the simple color code increases everyone's chances of reaching their destination safely.

Just so in life.

● RED LIGHT

Go home and wash up. Clean up your act. Sweep your lives clean of your evildoings so I don't have to look at them any longer. Say no to wrong.—*Isaiah 1:16 MSG*

Zaccheus was a tax collector—never a popular job—and to top things off, honesty was not too high on his priority list. Nonetheless, he went out of his way to hear what Jesus had to say, and Jesus in turn went out of His way to meet with him. Zaccheus got the message loud and clear that he should stop fiddling the books and cheating the people he was collecting taxes from. He saw the red light. He stopped in his tracks, made a pledge, and paid back over and above what he had stolen.¹

What would God want me to stop doing? Is there a sin, a bad habit? Perhaps it's smoking or overeating; perhaps it's playing computer games late into the night; perhaps it's snapping impatiently at a family member or coworker; perhaps it's simply

leaving the lights on and wasting electricity.

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.—*James 4:8*

Dear God, help me to be aware of the red lights in my life, to stop what is not helping me or others or pleasing You.

● AMBER LIGHT

The wise are cautious and avoid danger; fools plunge ahead with reckless confidence.—*Proverbs 14:16 NLT*

An amber light can have different meanings in different contexts, but the idea of a blinking amber light is, "Watch out, are you sure you're meant to go ahead?"

A woman in the direst poverty was about to cook up what little

remained of her meager food supply. This was to be a last meal for herself and her son, but the prophet Elijah arrived and requested to be fed. Give him what remained of their food? No doubt she paused to think this over. In the end, she chose to trust God and feed His prophet first. We are told that as a result of this act of faith, her supply of food was miraculously multiplied and her household survived through the entire famine.²

It is not always possible to know the outcome of our decisions. That's part of the mystery of life. What we *can* do is exercise caution, weigh up the options, consider the consequences, and pray for God's guidance. Receiving God's leading may take time; rarely do we receive the answers in a flash.

Many flowers open to the sun, but only one follows him constantly.—Heart, be thou the sunflower, not only open to receive God's blessing, but constant

in looking to Him.—*Jean Paul (1763–1825)*

Dear God, please help me to be cautious. Give me guidance to know the way in which I should walk, for I lift up my soul to You.³

● GREEN LIGHT

Go therefore.—*Matthew 28:19*

Green light. It's time to go. There's a lot of "going" in the Gospel narrative. Laborers are sent into the vineyard,⁴ freshly healed lepers are sent to the temple,⁵ the disciples are sent out preaching and teaching,⁶ Jesus Himself stayed on the move: "Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people."⁷ It wasn't activity simply for the sake of staying busy, but purposeful, meaningful action.

God calls us to activity. Our response to the needs around us

should not be merely sympathy, but action.⁸

If you stray to the right or the left, you will hear a word that comes from behind you: "This is the way; walk in it."—*Isaiah 30:21 CEB*

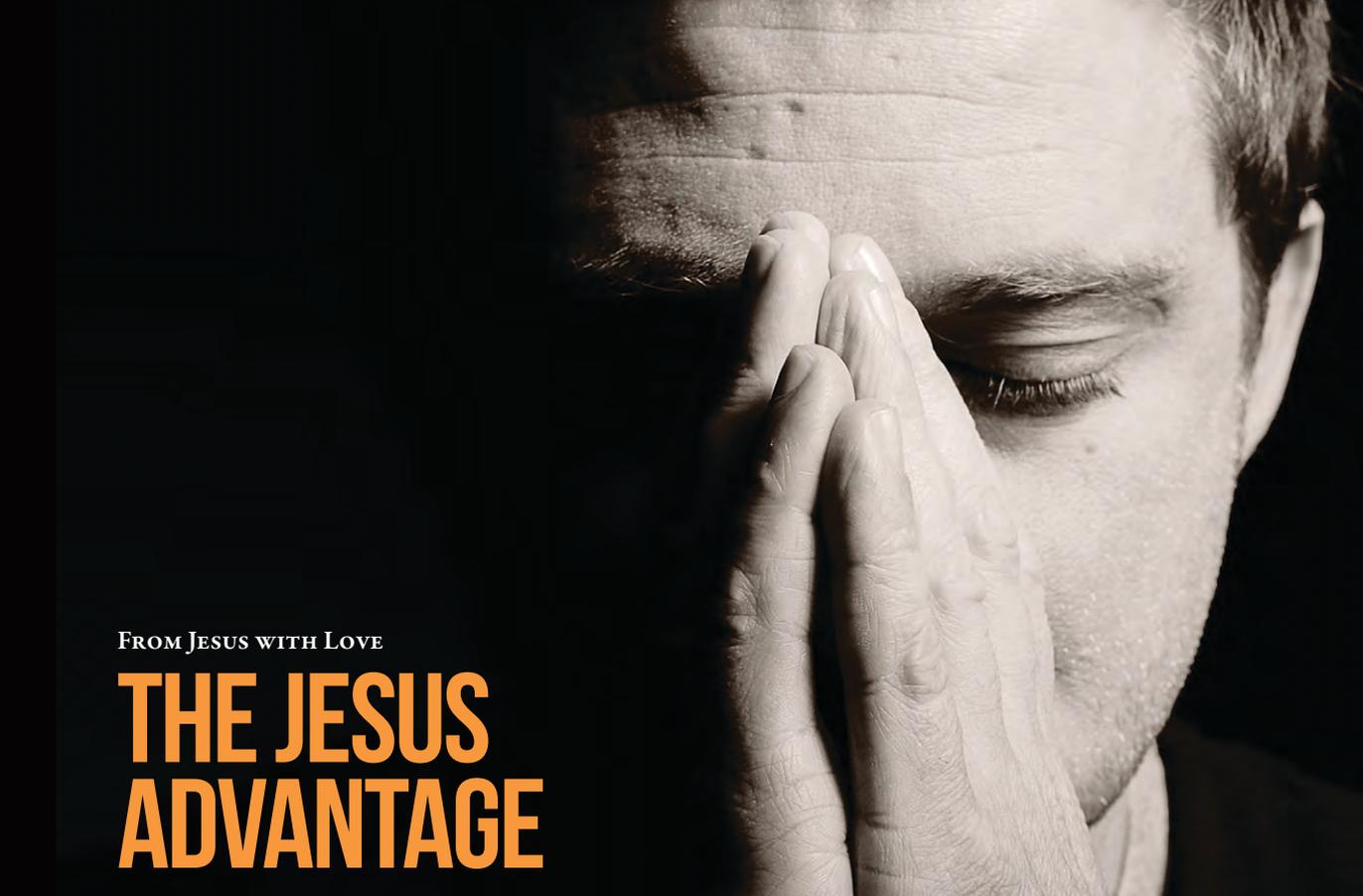
The strength and happiness of a man consists in finding out the way in which God is going, and going in that way, too.—*Henry Ward Beecher (1813–1887)*

We cannot live only for ourselves. A thousand fibers connect us with our fellow-men; and along those fibers, as sympathetic threads, our actions run as causes, and they come back to us as effects.—*Herman Melville (1819–1891)*

Dear God, help me not to hold back when it's time for action. Help me to go forward in faith. Amen.

ABI MAY IS A FREELANCE WRITER AND EDUCATOR IN GREAT BRITAIN. ■

1. See Luke 19:2–10.
2. See 1 Kings 17:8–16.
3. See Psalm 143:8.
4. See Matthew 20:6–7.
5. See Luke 17:12–14.
6. See Matthew 10:7.
7. Matthew 9:35.
8. See James 2:15–16.



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

THE JESUS ADVANTAGE

Some people naturally have a great deal of willpower or self-control, but that's not typical. If you have a hard time sticking to a resolution, developing a consistent routine, or building a new habit, I have good news for you: With Me in your life, you have a special advantage—the Jesus advantage.

My Spirit can work in your life in many ways, including by empowering you to manifest self-control. The key for partaking of this help is prayer. The first reason is that I work when you pray. In some way or another, and maybe in an unexpected way, I will do something toward answering your prayer.

Another is that asking for My help in a given area draws My insight and wisdom, and causes you to see your situation from a clearer perspective. Last but not least, when

you pray, I can show you things you can do that will help toward your goal. I am very practical, and I know you and how your mind works, so who better can give you ideas and tips of things to do to make your resolution or routine “stick” and work for you?

Even though you have the “Jesus advantage,” you will have to do your part. I'm not going to put on and lace up your running shoes. I'm not going to throw out the cookies you bought shortly after making a resolution to cut down on sugar. However, I can help you find your individual key, your impetus, your motivator, to help you do the things you need to do, and not do the things you need to stop doing. You're always going to face normal human struggles. But with the Jesus advantage, you can face them with beyond-human resolve.