

## Self Control

Online Sermon:

<http://www.mckeefamily.com/sermons>

When faced with difficult or unpleasant situations, what kind of self-talk goes through your mind? Are you the type of person who tends to be passive, avoiding confrontation to the point of internalizing your frustration, replaying in your mind



what you wish you could say but never do? Do you find yourself suppressing your emotions, choosing to violate your own rights rather than risk offending others by being honest? Or, on the other hand, do you

express your emotions in a way that aims to dominate, even if it means disregarding others' rights and feelings? Do you resort to tactics like belittling, humiliation, or overpowering others to get your way? Whether your response is passive or aggressive, Dr. Stoop explains that “those caught in these behavior patterns do not feel good about themselves afterwards”<sup>1</sup> because both involve violating either your own or someone else’s inherent

rights. Remember, God sees our struggles and meets us in them with His grace and patience. He doesn’t expect us to have it all figured out but invites us to grow day by day through His Spirit.

Assertiveness is a balanced approach to self-expression that neither retreats into passivity nor advances aggressively. It is not driven by fear or the desire to dominate but rather by a deep motivation rooted in love and respect.<sup>2</sup> Being assertive means valuing yourself enough to communicate openly and honestly, while also respecting others' rights and needs. It seeks a win-win outcome that benefits everyone involved. In contrast, non-assertive behavior often manifests in an “I should” and “I can’t” attitude as seen below.

I	Immobilization	I	Inadequate feelings about myself
S	Saying – not doing	C	Controlled instead of being in control
H	Hung up on Guilt	A	Apathetic
O	Overy anxious	N	Negative results
U	Underlying Anger	T	Total despair <sup>3</sup>
L	Lowered self-esteem		
D	Depression		

<sup>1</sup> You are what you Think, Loc. 2024

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Loc 2040

To overcome this cycle, Dr. Stoop recommends a structured approach: first, identify situations where you respond non-assertively, then clarify your thoughts, actions, and others' potential motives, and finally choose a positive response. By following these steps, a person can foster an "I can" mindset, encouraging self-confidence, expressing feelings honestly, requesting what they need, and seeking mutually beneficial solutions. While it may feel daunting to step out in assertiveness, know that God is with you every step, giving you courage and wisdom as you rely on Him. He delights in giving you strength for every situation.

To understand the benefits of assertiveness, let's look at Paul's confrontation of Peter in Galatians 2:11-14, where Peter's actions conflicted with the gospel's inclusive message. Initially, Peter ate freely with Gentile believers, treating them as equals in

#### Galatians 2:11-14



Christ. But when certain Jewish Christians arrived from Jerusalem—those who believed Gentiles should follow Jewish customs—Peter withdrew

from the Gentiles out of fear of judgment. Paul could have remained silent, fearing backlash, or could have approached Peter aggressively. Instead, he chose an assertive response, addressing Peter directly and calmly, explaining how Peter's actions contradicted the gospel's truth that salvation is by faith in Christ, not by law. Peter did not respond with hostility but

humbly accepted Paul's correction, and the two later worked together as "partners in the gospel." This outcome was a win-win for all involved: Paul upheld his convictions without overstepping boundaries, and Peter and the Jewish Christians gained a deeper understanding of the gospel's unifying message, strengthening community across cultural lines.

Imagine a time when you wanted to speak up but held back out of fear, or when frustration led you to speak too harshly. These moments reveal that assertiveness, when rooted in love and respect, fosters peace and honors God. Working in a large



company with over 300 people, I regularly navigate the unique communication styles of ownership, vice presidents, managers, supervisors, and front-line employees. I remember being tasked

with developing and implementing a new software program across multiple divisions. While I had ownership's support, I knew that pushing too hard could make managers feel their leadership was being challenged, potentially creating tension. So, I prayed that God would help me present the program's benefits from the managers' perspectives, allowing us to find a win-win solution. Though the conversations were challenging, in the end, the managers embraced the software and appreciated its value. This experience reminded me that true assertiveness doesn't require us to compromise others' dignity but to approach

every situation with prayer, respect, and a desire for mutual understanding.

## Self-Talk and God

While self-talk and assertive behavior can lead to positive outcomes, it's a mistake to believe that we are the masters of our own destiny. Visualizing a shift from poverty to wealth, illness to health, or strained relationships to strong ones does not guarantee such changes will happen. Many motivational speakers and faith teachers mislead Christians by presenting God as a genie who grants every wish.

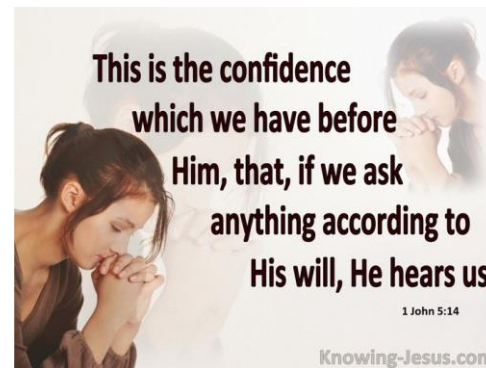


### Is God a Genie in the Bottle?

They misinterpret verses like, “You may ask anything in My name,” implying that this is a formula to receive whatever one desires. According to this perspective, if one lacks money, they should simply ask for riches in Jesus’ name and expect abundance. If diagnosed with an incurable disease, they should ask for healing and expect immediate restoration. And if they pray as though their request has already been granted, they will certainly receive it. Renewing our minds takes time, and God walks patiently with us, celebrating every small step. Be encouraged that each time

you choose His truth over doubt, He is faithfully at work, transforming you from within.

A discerning Christian, however, understands that God grants requests according to His will (1 John 5:14). While some positive-motivational teachers may argue that God desires His followers to experience good relationships and health, the true power of prayer lies not in the act of asking but in the



sovereignty of the One who answers. God’s ways are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9), and while He sometimes grants physical healing, He may also allow suffering to serve a deeper purpose, as

shown when Paul prayed for the removal of his “thorn” and was instead taught reliance on God’s grace (2 Corinthians 12:7-9). Trials can foster spiritual growth, compelling us to trust God through adversity (James 1:2-4). Additionally, while we may pray for healing on earth, we recognize that ultimate healing is often fulfilled in heaven, where pain and death no longer exist (Revelation 21:4). In every prayer, our heart should align with Jesus’ own words: “Not my will, but Yours be done” (Luke 22:42).

## Assertive Living Suggestions

Let me challenge you to put God’s Word into action. Although we have the Spirit of God within us, like the Apostle Paul, we still struggle to do what is right in God's sight. In our modern world, constant streams of information and imagery can make it difficult to keep our minds focused on God. Capturing



every thought and aligning it with His truth is not easy, but by faith and the grace of God, it is possible. Philippians 4:8 encourages us to dwell on what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable—a call that

requires intentional time spent with God. To renew your mind (Romans 12:2), consider writing down key scriptures for daily meditation. For example, Psalm 139:23-24, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts,” can be a prayerful invitation for God to reveal anything in you that needs confession. Memorize 2 Timothy 1:7, which says, “For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline,” so that, when faced with confrontation, you can respond confidently yet with respect for others. Reflect on Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,” to remind yourself of God’s strength in you. Finally, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, which calls us

to “rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances,” encourages us to find joy even in trials. Each week, write out and meditate on a new verse as God reveals areas for growth, allowing His Word to transform your thoughts and actions.

## Self-Talk and Self Control

To take “every thought captive” for Christ and exercise self-control, we must recognize that while we lack control over many aspects of our lives, we do have the power to choose how we respond in thought and emotion. In the race of life, we are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses—those faithful believers who did not receive all they hoped for in their lifetime but who inspire us to trust the Good Shepherd. He leads, protects, and guides us in righteousness for His name’s sake, especially when trials arise that threaten our peace and hope. Our response is not to treat God as a genie to fulfill our every desire but to trust fully in His promise that “in all things God works for the good of those who love Him.” To live as living sacrifices, as Paul urges, we need daily transformation through Christ, allowing Him to renew our minds. Like the Psalmist, our prayer should be “search me, O Lord,” seeking to align with His will and finding joy in both good and challenging times. By inviting Christ to shape our thoughts, we gain the mind of Christ, placing others' needs above our own, serving Him with all that we are, and running the race to win the eternal prize He has set before us. As you go forward, may you feel God’s presence guiding and empowering you. May you know that He celebrates every step you take toward Him, and may you be filled with His peace, strength, and joy in all you do.