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Spirit-Controlled vs. Self-Controlled

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Spirit-Controlled vs. Self-Controlled

Do you ever find yourself making a choice that you know in your heart is not God-honoring, but that you decide to pursue anyway? Even when you've committed your life to Christ, you may not always be living the way God wants you to live. The Bible describes two types of Christians: self-controlled and Spirit-controlled.

Self-controlled

You've given your heart to Jesus, but you still make decisions that reflect what *you* want, not necessarily what *God* wants? This is a time when you are acting in a *self-controlled* way, rather than in a *Spirit-controlled* way.

Q. Describe one of these times in your life: What happened, how did you feel, what was the result?

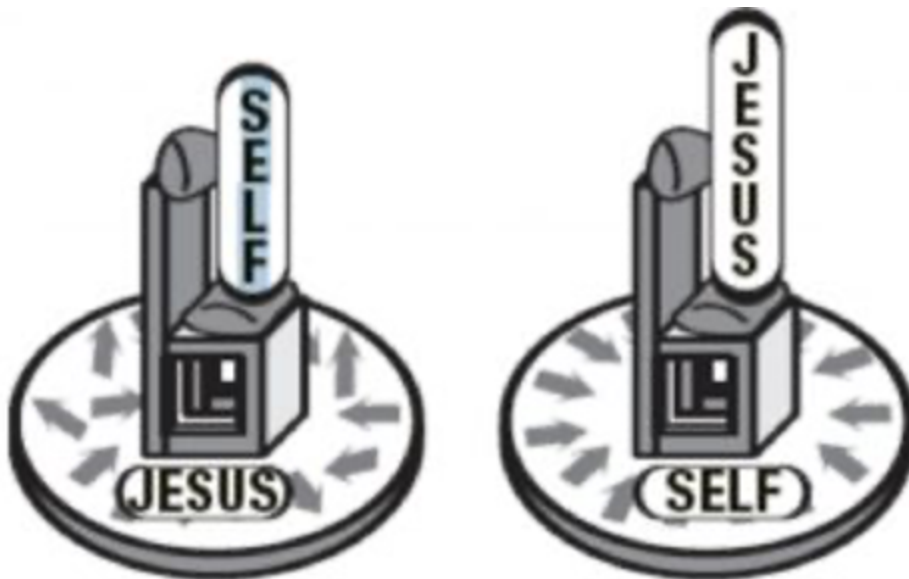
Spirit-controlled

Being Spirit-controlled requires *allowing* the Holy Spirit to control your life. It is a decision, a free choice for you to make. Self-controlled behavior is caused by a lack of *surrender* to Jesus. When we act in a self-controlled way, we are trusting in our own efforts to live the Christian life. It is only through the *Holy Spirit* that we can truly experience God's best for us and can accomplish His work.

The two thrones below illustrate these two types of individuals.

The throne on the left illustrates a Christian who has given his/her life to Christ but has chosen to continue to rule his/her own life.

The illustration below depicts a Christian who has put Jesus on the throne of his or her life and is allowing the Holy Spirit to control their choices and behaviors.



When you are SELF-CONTROLLED, all your activities, interests, desires, and choices are dictated by self, leading to a life of frustration and defeat (represented by the arrows going every which way).

Galatians 5:19–21 describes the Christian who has self at the center of his life: “Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, depravity, idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish rivalries, dissensions, factions, envying, murder, drunkenness, carousing, and similar things. I am warning you, as I had warned you before: Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God!”

Q. When are the times in your life when you are most likely to act in a self-controlled way?

When you are SPIRIT-CONTROLLED, all your activities, interests, desires, and choices are directed by Jesus resulting in harmony with God’s plan, (represented by the uniformity of the arrows). This is the abiding life, a life controlled by the Holy Spirit, which results from being obedient to the Word of God.

Galatians 5:22–23 describes a person who is Spirit-controlled: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

Q. When do you most often act in a Spirit-controlled way?

Todd's Story

“For three years I had been consumed with the desire to join the elite drinking club for ‘cool’ guys in my high school ... the ‘Mavericks.’ Before coming to Christ, I would have ‘sold my soul’ to have been asked to join. Even though I was now a Christian, I thought it would still be okay to join ...I could still follow Christ and belong to this exclusive club. I began to seriously consider going all out for Christ and what it might mean to put aside all the things in my life that were self-destructive. As I was trying to make this decision, I got asked to join the Mavericks! I immediately knew that the stakes were high and that Satan was trying to derail my decision for Christ. I didn’t give him the pleasure: I turned my life completely over to God ... and God gave me true freedom ... and an awesome life!”

Q. Have you ever experienced this type of “decision” time in your life? What was the result? How did you get through it? What could have helped you or hindered you into a different decision?

As Romans 12:1 says, “Therefore I exhort you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice—alive, holy, and pleasing to God—which is your reasonable service.”

Take some time to watch the four-part video series “[Be Filled With the Holy Spirit](#)” and read “[How to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit](#)”. Giving your life to the Holy Spirit is a decision ... a free choice for you to make. It is done by simply putting your life into the hands of a trustworthy God. Just as you came to Christ by faith for the forgiveness of your sins, you must by faith ask the Holy Spirit to control your life. If you desire for the Holy Spirit to be in control of your life, simply pray the following:

“Heavenly Father, I want You to change my life from being self-controlled into one that is Spirit-controlled. I confess my selfish thoughts and actions, and give You, Holy Spirit, control of my life right now.”

Q. What does this commitment mean to you?

Application

Take some time right now to sit in God’s presence. Ask Him to fill the empty places in your life with Himself. Ask Him to allow you to experience His love and for the Holy Spirit to control you completely.