

THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-CONTROL

By Rick Boxx

Years ago, a consulting client of mine was in a printing-related industry. The principal partners enjoyed numerous opportunities within their industry, many of which were strategic to their company's future growth.

This was why, however, I was stunned when I discovered the two partners were seriously discussing buying a donut franchise in addition to their business. What do donuts have to do with printing? Fortunately, I was able to convince them it was a bad idea.

Business leaders, especially those who are successful and attract attention, are offered new business opportunities almost daily. Sometimes sales pitches and projections can sound very tempting. Without self-control, it can easily lead to chasing something far off track from your God-given calling or purpose.

We find the need for self-control and focused thinking addressed in the Bible: "Like a city that is broken into and without walls is a man who has no control over his spirit" (Proverbs 25:28). The question is, with so many enticing opportunities coming our way, how do we sort through them and determine which are the ones worth pursuing?

This is one reason mission statements are important, both corporately and personally. They help to define things such as, "who are we?", "what do we do?", "why are we here?", and "what do we intend to accomplish?" I know of business owners and executives who have crafted mission statements and regularly refer to them as constant reminders of what they and their companies should be about. These can, in effect, serve as self-control mechanisms to keep us from diverting away from our mission and goals.

Another proverb that fits this discussion is, "Where there is no revelation [prophetic vision], the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law" (Proverbs 29:18). There are many applications for this verse, but certainly having a clear sense of mission and vision can help us in maintaining self-control, rather than following rabbit trails that can take us far off track.

A well-known passage, Galatians 5:22-23, describes the "fruit of the Spirit," characteristics of a truly spiritual person who is faithfully following Jesus Christ. These are "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and...self-control." Then it says, "Against such things there is no law."

These are all traits that should be exhibited by believers in the business and professional world – what 2 Corinthians 5:20 calls, "Christ's ambassadors." The self-control spoken of relates to not becoming controlled or consumed by ungodly things, and demonstrating proper actions and words. But it also can

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由香港工商基督徒協會 (CBMC Hong Kong Ltd) 逢週一發放

地址：香港上環禧利街 2 號東寧大廈 20 樓 2004 室 Tel: (852) 2805-1923 Fax: (852) 3747-6218

Email: enquiry@cbmc.org.hk Web: www.cbmc.org.hk

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apply to being able to avoid – as did the business partners I was working with – making unwise decisions that could hurt their effectiveness in the workplace.

Besides having a clearly defined mission statement, one other asset for maintaining self-control is seeking to remain constantly aware of the presence and guidance of God in your life. When seeking to evaluate a new, intriguing opportunity, it helps to remember, “Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails” (Proverbs 19:21). To protect the future of your business, learn self-control and the courage to say “No” to everything that doesn’t fit your mission.

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CBMC INTERNATIONAL: Jim Firstahl, President
2850 N. Swan Road, Suite 160 ▪ Tucson, Arizona 85712 ▪ U.S.A.
TEL.: 520-334-1114 ▪ E-MAIL: mmanna@cbmcint.org

Web site: www.cbmcint.org Please direct any requests or change of address to: jmarple@cbmcint.org

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. If you were to rate yourself in terms of self-control, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you rank yourself? Explain your answer.
2. Can you think of a time when you unwisely responded to an opportunity and later you regretted having done so? Or if not, can you recall an example of someone you know? What was that situation, and what was the outcome?
3. Does your company have a mission statement? If so, is it referred to often? What about yourself – have you ever considered writing a personal mission statement to serve as a guide to where and how you invest your time, talents and resources – and not become distracted by opportunities that do not fit your mission statement?
4. If you conclude you are somewhat deficient in the area of self-control, how might you go about trying to improve in that area?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Proverbs 16:2-3, 16:9, 20:24, 27:1; Titus 2:2; 2 Peter 5-7

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