

Willpower or Determination

A year ago I lost more than 30 pounds and four inches off my waistline. The all-out effort involved a combination of strenuous exercise and better eating habits. I exercised 3 hours a day last summer, avoided unhealthy foods and eliminated snacks completely. I also drank lots of water and considered it progress to feel hungry between meals. My success was based on a combination of determination and willpower.



The determination was evident when I went to the Y early in the morning, even when I didn't feel like it. I just plain made up my mind to do this and wouldn't let any excuse deter me from my goal.

People have often said that losing weight is the easy part. Keeping it off is more difficult. Keeping it off is a lifestyle change, which takes willpower. The dictionary says willpower is the "ability to control oneself and act with a firmness of will." Willpower is what sustains the effort over a long period of time. Without it we would slip back into old habits.

As human beings we are weak. We rationalize when we want to do something we shouldn't. As we make a lifestyle change we fight an internal battle in our mind. The body is conditioned to seek the "status quo" craving what we have worked so hard to eliminate. It takes self-control to not go back to old habits. *Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control (Proverbs 25:28).* Don't give in to temptation.

So, how do we win that battle? Think of it as a battle between good and evil. As a person of faith we have a powerful weapon. We can draw upon God for strength that far exceeds our own. Fixing our attention on Jesus can help us fight off the urge to eat that bowl of ice cream, or whatever unhealthy behavior tempts you. Draw upon God's strength to keep you on the right path, as He wants what is good for you. Satan, on the other hand, leads you on a destructive course. He is planting the tempting ideas you consider as you rationalize poor choices. The way to win that battle is to listen only to the voice of God as you seek a more righteous path. Shut off the suggestions from Satan. Keep focused on God just as sheep listen only to their shepherd's voice. *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me (John 10:27).*

Determination will get you started. Making up your mind to get started is an important first step, but it is the easy part. It takes willpower to make the change permanent. Willpower – asking God to give you strength – will keep you on the path to success. Satan will attempt to erode your determination but is powerless if you only listen to God. There is no better positive influence on our will than God himself. Let "Thy will be done" as you seek to defeat Satan.

Question: Do you have both determination and willpower when altering your life habits? Willpower relies on God for strength; determination is all on you.

Prayer: Most gracious, loving Heavenly Father. You know what is best for us. You also know how difficult it is to change life-long habits. Guide us to make the changes we need to make and give us strength to accomplish the goal. Amen.