

## 16 Years of Self-Control

Have you ever heard of A.C. Green? He played for 16 years in the NBA (mostly in the 1990s). After being drafted in 1985, he became a key contributor to the "Showtime" Los Angeles Lakers, winning two championships with them. He is well-known for only missing three games in his 16-year career, which gained him the nickname of the "ironman."

Beyond him hardly ever missing a game, he is probably most well-known for being deeply religious and maintaining his virginity until he got married at the end of his NBA career. This was tremendously hard for him to do (especially playing for the Lakers). In a recent ESPN story, Green talked about his time in the NBA. He said that while his teammates would sleep with different women in every city in which they played, he abstained. Whenever his teammates would make fun of him and send women to his hotel room, he quoted Bible verses to the women and stay committed to his convictions.

Green's teammates would make bets as to which one of them would persuade him to give up his virginity finally. None of them ever won. With every beautiful woman they sent to his room, they would all receive the same answer. "No!" In a league where players would sleep with thousands of women across the country, Green chose to stay pure. He chose to obey what God says about saving oneself for marriage. Contrast his actions with those of Wilt Chamberlain (who is said to have slept with about 20,000 women in his life). Unlike Chamberlain, A.C. Green had some serious self-control! It is incredible to think about how hard it must have been for him to remain sexually pure in the NBA for that long.

What about you? The Apostle Paul says that one of the fruits of the Spirit is self-control (Galatians 5:23). Peter says that God's people are to add to their knowledge, self-control (2 Peter 1:6). Self-control is when we say "no" to things that God says are wrong. It is when we discipline ourselves to resist sinful temptations and passions. Joseph exercised this when being tempted by Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39:9). Jesus applied this when being tempted by the devil in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). David should have exercised this when seeing Bathsheba bathing from the roof of his palace (2 Samuel 11:1-5).

God didn't make us animals (who live off instincts) or programmed robots. We are humans. God made us in His image (Genesis 1:26-27), which means we can make choices (Joshua 24:15). We can choose to do good or evil. We can decide to resist sin or give in to it. We can choose to obey God or Satan.

For 16 years, A.C. Green chose to resist sexual immorality. He refused to give in to the pressures of those around him. Will we decide to do the same today?