

Fruit Of The Spirit — Self-Control

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness and **self-control**. Against such things there is no law.

--Galatians 5:22-23

Control is often defined as exerting force on someone or something for the purpose of manipulating that person or thing to do what you desire. We think of companies or cartels controlling prices or a government controlling territory. We might even think about a parent controlling a child (or visa versa). While control may be exerted in any of these situations, today we are not going to look at outward control but inward. Today's topic is self-control.

Leader's Note: Pick one or more depending on the makeup of your group.

- ? What do you think of when you hear the phrase "self-control"?
- ? Do you think of self-control as "keeping from" or "striving for" something and why?
- ? How can someone display self-control in each of the following areas?
 - o Physical
 - o Emotional
 - o Mental
 - o Spiritual
 - o Financial
 - o Relational
- ? Who is someone you think embodies self-control or a lack of self-control and why?

Leader's Note: The purpose of these opening questions is not to get a right or wrong answer but to start out your discussion on self control from culture and by this to get your group talking about the idea of self control.

- ? What can we learn about self-control from each of the following passages?

Leader's Note: Divide your group up into pairs. Assign one passage to each pair. Have each pair look at the passage and prepare to come back to the larger group and share their answer to the question "What can we learn about self-control from your passage?"

Proverbs 25:15-28 (ESV)

- ¹⁵ With patience a ruler may be persuaded,
and a soft tongue will break a bone.
- ¹⁶ If you have found honey, eat only enough for you,

- lest you have your fill of it and vomit it.
- ¹⁷ Let your foot be seldom in your neighbor's house,
lest he have his fill of you and hate you.
- ¹⁸ A man who bears false witness against his neighbor
is like a war club, or a sword, or a sharp arrow.
- ¹⁹ Trusting in a treacherous man in time of trouble
is like a bad tooth or a foot that slips.
- ²⁰ Whoever sings songs to a heavy heart
is like one who takes off a garment on a cold day,
and like vinegar on soda.
- ²¹ If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat,
and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink,
- ²² for you will heap burning coals on his head,
and the LORD will reward you.
- ²³ The north wind brings forth rain,
and a backbiting tongue, angry looks.
- ²⁴ It is better to live in a corner of the housetop
than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.
- ²⁵ Like cold water to a thirsty soul,
so is good news from a far country.
- ²⁶ Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain
is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.
- ²⁷ It is not good to eat much honey,
nor is it glorious to seek one's own glory.
- ²⁸ A man without self-control
is like a city broken into and left without walls.

Possible Answers: A form of protection. Oftentimes counter-cultural (and perhaps counter-intuitive). An outward depiction of our inner self. Extends to all areas of life (relationships, appetite, government etc.).

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (ESV)

²⁴ Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. ²⁵ Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ²⁶ So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. ²⁷ But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

Possible Answers: It requires discipline and control—control motivated and fed by what we're running towards. Having a goal is important.

1 Timothy 2:8-10 (ESV)

⁸ I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; ⁹ likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, ¹⁰ but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works.

Possible Answers: Self-control is the opposite of showing off, and to do good works requires self-control.

2 Timothy 3:1-9 (ESV)

¹ But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ² For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. ⁶ For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, ⁷ always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. ⁸ Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. ⁹ But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men.

Possible Answers: A lack of self-control can quickly lead to other areas of sin. It is not the same as love of self.

Galatians 5:16-17 (ESV)

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

Possible Answers: Self-control is a result of "walk[ing] by the Spirit." It is part of our battle against our flesh. The flesh (sinful desires) are against the Spirit (Godliness).

? We see people everyday who exhibit self-control (e.g. marathon runners, those that stick to a diet, people who make it through medical school). How is this different than the self-control that comes through the Holy Spirit?

Possible Answers: Self-control today is normally thought of as controlling my passions or desires in order to obtain my goals or achieve my ambitions. It is only with the power of the Spirit that we can put God's will above our own.

? In what areas do you struggle to have self-control?

? How could walking with the Spirit lead to increased self-control in your life?

? What is our community application of these passages?