

© Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study, www.intothyword.org

Is the Character of Self-Control working in you? Here is how you can find out. Take a careful look at this character and fruit of Self-Control from God's most precious Word by examining the passages below. Now ask yourself:

1. How do I exhibit Self-Control in my daily life?
2. What can I do to develop a better attitude of Self-Control?
3. What blocks Self-Control from working and being exhibited in me?
4. How can I make Self-Control function better, stronger and faster, even in times of uncertainty and stress?

Self-Control, sometimes referred to as *Temperance*, is allowing God to be in control of our will and hearts, and to be diligent in seeking the Spirit to enable us. We can know what not to do, and guard the areas in which we are weak. This will allow us to have discipline and restraint, with obedience to God and others. It is not allowing distractions to derail or remove us from His will and plan, so we will not be held back from what Christ has called us to do. This comes down to how we trust in our Lord, we can trust God for the future because we can see what He has done in the past.

(Proverbs 16:32; 25:28; Romans 13: 12-14; 1 Corinthians 6:12; 9:25-27; Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Thessalonians 5: 22; Titus 2:12; Hebrews 12:2; 2 Peter 1:5-7).

Self-indulgence is the opposite, from eating a pound of chocolate at once or partying your way to oblivion. Too much excess will leave you empty and alone, it will at best cause us to gain a lot of weight and lose your friends and at worst lose your life and miss out on our heavenly reward! Self-indulgence seeks what is fleeting when we as a Christian are made for eternity.

Self-Control is not the subject of the media; you may perhaps never see a movie with this as the premise because it is anti-climatic and perhaps boring. The world wants us to grab all of the gusto that we can, go for that brass ring regardless of the consequences or who we step on to get it or taking the responsibility of our actions. Yet, Christ is calling us by His example and Word to seek what is in eternity that is permanent and lasting not what is fleeting and empty. Christ was our greatest example from the humbleness of the incarnation through Gethsemane to the Cross He was the perfect model of self-control! Self-control will be the key to inner strength that will help deliver us from fear, depression, harm and the pain of life by being focused on Christ and not our circumstances. Christ's strength in us that we cannot do on our own! And the key to receive this strength is our surrender to His Lordship over all aspects of our lives! Remember, God wants us to have fun too, and enjoy life; we are not to be prudes at the same time we are not to seek sin either!

When we have been wronged, we experience feelings of betrayal, and consider retaliation to be justified. God calls us out of retaliation and into reconciliation. This is an aspect of forgiveness, and when we fail to forgive, we are the ones who suffer the most. Anger, resentment, shame, bitterness, contempt, and defensiveness all synergistically build on top of one another, so every segment within us is held hostage with these emotions that stifle us. We become controlled by our hurt and thus unable to reach the destination we desire, what Christ has for us. Do not allow what others may have done or may do control you, it will block the flow of the Holy Spirit and self-controlling love, and the festering of the rotten fruits will continue to the point that Christ is crying out to us in the wilderness, yet we cannot hear Him.

We are called not to seek revenge or get others back or retaliate against those who have wronged us (Prov. 20:22; Rom. 12:17). Rather, we are called to bless and do good to those who do not like us or who have hurt us. When we pay someone back to get even, we only end up escalating the issue and thus hurting ourselves and usurping God's authority to judge (1 Cor. 4:12; 6:12; 6:18; Eph. 5:8-10; 1 Thess. 4:1-2; 5:12-15). This does not mean we are to endure abuse or unlawful actions; rather, it has to do with our attitude. It is a balance between the exercise of the Fruit of the Spirit and setting up boundaries to protect us (Prov. 16:32; 25:28; Rom. 13:12-142; Gal. 5:22-23; Tim. 2:22, Heb. 12:2; 13:4; 2 Peter 1:5-7).

We are called to be a person who acts and respond to others with kindness and altruism. However, when this happens, people will sometimes take advantage of you. You need to be able to discern when to respond, how long to continue, and when you should stop. This goes into relationships and commitment. The key to this will be effective, communication and listening.

Now, let us consider how we can be the person God called us to be while at the same time model Christ-like character (Heb. 13:4) and the balance between self-sacrifice and not being taken advantage of. We do this when we embrace God as our center and His character as our goal. So, we need to think and act with the Fruit of the Spirit—*self-control*.

When God is in control of your will and heart and the Spirit is enabling us to do life well. This will also allow us to build and control relationships in light of what is healthy and best, based on the function of the rest of the fruit. In this way, we can make every effort to represent Christ and make the most of what we are given for His glory. We are stewards of all that we have, whether small or great. The better we use our gifts, the more generous He is with us with more gifts, abilities, and opportunities. We are called not to waste our opportunities, but to be diligent and faithful to our call, abilities, and prayer with love and hospitality. Do what God has called you to do and do it with passion, truth, and in love!

The Fruit of the Spirit is all about cultivating what God gives, just as fruit from a tree is the byproduct of a healthy, well-watered, and cared for trees. It is the same with a growing Christian: We are farmers of God's provision and gifts. He gives us the seeds to make the crops. How are they doing? Budding, drought, bumper crops, do they need water, care, cultivation, fertilizer? Are you being the weed killer to your own fruits (Gen. 1:28; Hos. 10:1; 14:7-8; Matt. 13:3-8, 31-32; Luke 8:11; John 14-15; Rom. 1:13; 15:30; Gal. 5; Phil. 1:11, 22; Col. 1:10)?

Real submission breeds closeness when it is formed from love. If it is subjugated, such a barrier to God is formed that even our prayers will not be heard! Thus, compassion, care, and love pave the way to effective, relational harmony and blessing from God. Pride and our strong-willed attitude set up a barrier, making all we do ineffective, destructive, and meaningless. If we want God to be attentive to us, we must do our part by being attentive to others without iniquity (1 Pet. 3: 7-12).

Reflection

When we cultivate and build our faith to produce good Fruit. This is from Christ's characteristics of the Holy Spirit flowing in, and through, and then out of us. Thus, our fruit is an offshoot of the care we make in paying particularly close attention to His Word so we can grow more righteousness. Our growth and development in Christ is paramount and this results from our mindset and attitude in our relationships. This is the central feature of our faith development that results from saving faith. In the Old Testament, Israel is the vine that bears fruit for God. Now, the Church is to bear this fruit to promote the Gospel. In John, Jesus switches that metaphor as God will produce the fruit through the believer. We are the "vine" He is the "root" and trunk (Gen. 1:28; Hos. 10:1; 14:7-8; Matt. 13:3-8, 31-32; Luke 8:11; John 14-15; Rom. 1:13; 15:30; 1 Cor. 16:15; Gal. 5; Phil. 1:11, 22; 4:7, 17; Col. 1:6; Heb. 12:11; 13:15).

- Here are positive examples from Scripture (Gen. 39:6-18; II Sam. 16:5-13; Dan. 1:8-16)
- Here are negative examples from Scripture (Gen. 3:1-7; Nub. 20:7-12; II Sam. 13:1-19; I Kings 21:1-7)

Further Questions

1. How would you define Self-Control?
2. What are the things that lure you to be self-indulgent?
3. How does the excess of life counteract Self-Control?
4. What happens to our relationships with God and others when we relinquish self-control?
5. When have you been filled with Self-Control the most?
6. In what situation did you fail to have Self-Control in which you should have?
7. What issue is in your life that would improve with more Self-Control?
8. Think through the steps you need to take to put self-control into action in a specific instance. For example, how can you place safeguards against the areas in your life where you are weak? What about premarital sex and boundaries to prevent it? Or, how can you make sure you act with kindness, but do not allow yourself to be taken advantage of too much? Or, how can you avoid situations, things, certain people, and places that may cause you to lose control? Or, how can you balance having joy and fun, but not allowing them to become excesses that lead to sin?

Remember, we make the fruits by taking His yoke so it will create the blossom, and when we keep His yoke (growth in our faith and practice of being a disciple) you will bear the fruit. It is what we are in Christ, not so much what we do in His name.