



Bible Study Guide

Fruit of the Spirit: Self- Control

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Fruit of the Spirit

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Prayer

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Galatians 5: 22-23

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

Introduction.

(According to Kenneth Copeland Ministries)

There are not nine different fruits—it is a nine-part Fruit. The Fruit is like an orange; inside the orange, there are numerous slices. So, imagine that each slice of the orange is one of the aspects of the Fruit of the Spirit.

The Spirit-fueled development of Christ-like character is liberating because it brings us closer to being the people we were designed to be, the people our Spirit-renewed hearts want us to be. – Tim Keller

The original word for “fruit” in Galatians 5 is karpos, and one definition means “a result of something.” So when the Fruit of the Spirit is displayed in our lives, it is a sign, or result, that the Spirit of God is leading us. Just like the branches of a grapevine have to be connected to the vine to bear grapes, the Fruit of the Spirit is evidence of being connected to Christ.

Why was the Fruit of the Spirit mentioned? Due to the five verses preceding it. They mention sinful acts, including sexual immorality, impurity, idolatry, hatred, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, and drunkenness. We have this thing called the flesh, and it is part of all of our human desires. Our flesh wants things that prevent God's Holy Spirit from leading us entirely. Galatians 5:17 says, “the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh.” Bottom line: you can be led by the flesh, or you can be led by the Spirit of God, but you can't be led by both—they are in constant conflict.

The most beautiful part of the passage in verse 23 is that we are told there is “no law against them.” In fact, it would be accurate to say that we can exhibit the Fruit without any limits or restrictions. We can never show too much love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Now, that's a goal to strive for!

As we grow in our understanding, of the “Fruit of the Spirit,” we'll recognize how the Fruit is manifested in our lives and in the lives today. Let's focus on the last fruit- self-control.

I. Defining Self-Control

A. Towards a definition

According to Marriam & Webster, restraint exercised over one's own impulses, emotions, or desires

B. What is Self-Control to God?

Self-control comes from the indwelling and transformation by the Holy Spirit. Strong's Concordance defines the word used in this bible verse, **ἐγκράτεια**, as “self-control – proceeding out from within oneself, but not by oneself.”



Biblical self-control means choosing to give up trying to control things on our own, surrendering to God for help, and working alongside Him for real change.

To exercise self-control is to properly discipline ourselves, set boundaries, and rules over our actions. A lack of self-control, then, leads to the free reign of **fleshly, worldly patterns** that end up exercising control over us.

What's one area of your life that is winning in the exercise of self-control?

Let's give praise to God for that! What is one area that is lacking self-control, in which you desire to grow? Let's thank God for his Word, which convicts us of the truth, and for his divine power, for it is everything we need for life and to grow in godliness.

II. How to live with Self Control according to God

A. Guard Your Whole Life With This Self-Control

Even when you have all the other fruit of the spirit in operation, without the fruit of self-control to help you rein in your natural desires, you'll fall vulnerable to the devil's persistent attempts to get you off task. And when he gets you off task, many things can and will go wrong in your life.

Perhaps the Apostle Paul put self-control or temperance last when he listed the nine fruit of the spirit because it affects all the other forces of the spirit. It helps us control our natural, physical tendencies, so that love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and meekness can flow in our lives unhindered.

When we were born again (accepted Christ as your savior/redeemer) our spirit was re-created—but our flesh was not. It stayed just the same, and at times, still wants to go the wrong way. But, self-control is what keeps our flesh in check and us in line. Self-control keeps us in good standing with God for all the promotions and victories God has for us.

Our flesh wants to pull you back into sin. Galatians 5 tells us that the flesh wants to get involved with things like “immorality, impurity, indecency, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger (ill temper), selfishness, divisions...envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like” (verses 19-21, *Amplified Bible, Classic Edition*).

Such things are deadly! They wreak havoc in our lives, but the spiritual force of self-control can handle every one of them. It can dominate even the strongest physical cravings and desires, and make our body behave when it's tempted to get out of line.

When we focus on exercising self-control in your life, you'll guard every area of your life—finances, health, relationships, career—everything. That's a fruit worth investing in!

Biblical Reference

“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”

Proverbs 4:23 NIV

“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.”

2 Peter 1:5-7 NIV

B. A Secret Strength

When we’ve been wronged and we’re angry, we feel anything but in control. Another person, or people, did something that we had no power to stop, and it hurt. In times like these, the devil doesn’t miss a beat. He moves in quickly to make you feel like a victim and convinces you that the only way to take back your power is to either lash back or hold a grudge—neither of which will get us anywhere.

The same is true when we’re tempted to gossip, lie, cheat or anything else that is against the Word of God. Giving in can feel like you’re being carried away to a place you never wanted to go. It feels as if you’ve lost control.

Self-control, on the other hand, is just that—perfect control of our own life. We may not be able to control what happens around us, but we *can* control the end result in our life by how we respond.

So, self-control is not self-suppression, as some may believe. It’s quite the opposite. Self-control is a secret strength. Webster’s dictionary defines *self-control* as “possessing power, strong, having mastery or possession of, continent, or having restraint of one’s self or one’s actions or feelings.”

That supernatural strength and power resides in the spirit of every born-again Christian, so it’s available to each of us! Some people naturally have a stronger will than others, but the fruit of self-control is a power that comes from the Holy Spirit Himself. That means even those who tend to be weak-willed or lack discipline can exercise the same power over life as anyone else. That’s a game changer!

No matter where you’ve struggled to have self-control (and we all have), you can access the secret power available to every believer and come out victorious on the other side of any situation. Believe that today. It’s the beginning of your next victory.

Biblical Reference

“Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.”

Romans 6:13 NIV

“You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”

1 John 4:4 NIV

C. Overcoming a Bad Habit

As we’ve moved through this lesson, you may have already identified an area where you’d like to develop more self-control. Maybe it’s in your eating habits, your temper, your patience, or your time spent online.

Whatever it is, the Bible says you’ve got this!

(Philippians 4:13)

Maybe you’ve already tried with your own strength and failed. Maybe even several times. However, God never asked us to try to do things on our own. We are never alone! He’s here to help!

Whether it’s speaking before you think, criticizing others or overeating, God’s power in us will never fail. It will enable us to overcome ungodly habits and fleshly tendencies that, on our own, we’ve been powerless to resist. As we yield to the Holy Spirit, we will mature in the Lord to the point where you don’t even want to do those things anymore!

Until then, whenever we were tempted to eat that container of ice cream or tell someone off at the store, stop and take the time to get yourself in line. Speak out loud and say, “No, spirit of temptation, I resist you in Jesus’ Name. I will not take the bait, and I will not lose control. I have the fruit of self-control growing strong in me, and I boldly have control over my actions!”

No person (or carton of ice cream) should ever have more control over your words and actions than you! God has given you the supernatural power to be in control of yourself. It’s time to use it!

Biblical Reference

“I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”



Philippians 4:13 NIV

“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”

1 Corinthians 10:13 NIV

“For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.” 2 Timothy 1:7 NIV

D. Tracing It Back

It's tough to think about, but every sad story you've heard about those who got caught up in issues of pornography, adultery, premarital sex, bankruptcy or addiction can be traced back to a lack of self-control. The lack of that fruit of the spirit made room for them to decide, *I'm going to indulge in this*, even though that person knew it wasn't right.

Rarely has anyone ever been sucked into some kind of fleshly act thinking, *This is a good thing to do*. Most people know better from the start, but they indulge anyway. They thought, *I'll just do it this one time*. Then one time led to another and, eventually, it got control of their lives. They wound up sowing to the flesh and then, reaped destruction (Galatians 6:8).

The force of self-control can prevent such tragedies! It strengthens us in those moments of decision, so our stories end up being glad ones instead of sad ones. It helps us make the right choices and empowers us to keep living an abundant life. So, How can you avoid falling into those wrong choices?

The Bible tells us:

- First, guard what is going in your eyes and ears. The devil is promoting sin on every platform—TV, movies, internet, music, magazines and social media. The more you expose yourself to it, the weaker you become.
- Second, be careful of the company you keep. The world is full of people whose lives are out of control. They do whatever feels good in the moment if they can get away with it. The Bible tell us to stay away from those kinds of people (see 2 Timothy 3:5). That's certainly good advice.

If we want to grow in the spirit and develop the fruit of self-control, we shouldn't hang around with people who are ruled by their flesh. We can love them, be kind to them, and share Jesus with them when the opportunity arises. But don't spend a great deal of time with them because the more you associate with people who lack self-control, the easier it will become for us to indulge in things that aren't right. So, let's choose your associations wisely.

When we do these two things, we'll never have to look back from an unexpected place of pain and heartache wondering where we went wrong.

Biblical Reference

“Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”

Galatians 6:8 NIV

“having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.”

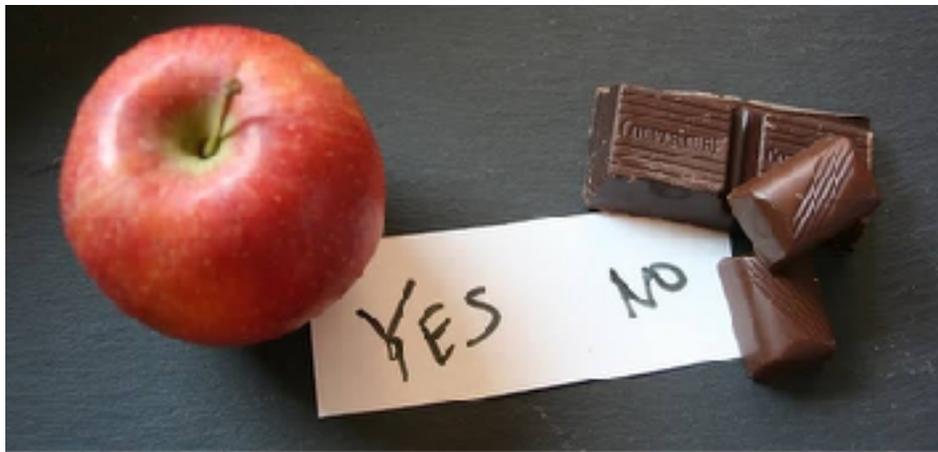
2 Timothy 3:5 NIV

“Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.”

Proverbs 25:28 NIV

“Better a patient person than a warrior, one with self-control than one who takes a city.”

Proverbs 16:32 NIV



E. Stay Awake in These Last Days

Jesus is coming back soon! When He arrives, you don't want Him to find you living like the world and being ruled by your flesh. You want to be spiritually ready to go. And the only way that can happen is if you follow His instructions to stay awake and alert in these last days.

The pressures and temptations are only going to mount in the days and years ahead, so we're going to have to double down on our determination to live as He has called us if we are to stand strong until the end.

Don't let that thought discourage you or make you afraid though. God is with you in this. He has given you everything you need to succeed, and He's standing by to help you all the way to the finish line. You are NEVER alone.

The only way He can come alongside us, though, is if we do as Paul told us when he said, "Let us watch". The Greek word translated *watch* means "to be sleepless." In other words, stay awake!

How do you stay awake spiritually?

By feeding on the Word of God, refusing to be lazy, and disciplining your flesh. Fasting is a great way to clear aside the flesh. If you've never made fasting part of your spiritual life, we encourage you to do so! You can learn more about when and how to fast from a link listed on the last day of this plan.

Whatever you do, make sure when Jesus returns, He finds you wide awake and ready to be with Him for eternity.

Biblical Reference

“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”

Luke 21:34-36 NIV

“Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. “Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”

Mark 13:33-37 NIV

II. Need Some Self-Control

(According to Mike Novotny of Time of Grace Ministries)

A. A Word to Impulsive people

The reformer Martin Luther once said, “All of us are either a Jacob or an Esau.” If you know the story of those twin brothers from Genesis chapters 25-32, you realize Luther was giving us a warning, not a compliment.

Jacob was that crafty momma’s boy who used his brain to outmatch his brother’s brawn. Esau was that impulsive hunter who could kill the beasts of the field but couldn’t kill his own impatience. Yet both brothers had this in common—they were impulsive. They were not willing to wait for God’s blessing at God’s time. They cut corners. They sinned.

The New Testament warns us about this kind of behavior: **“See that no one is . . . godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son”** (Hebrews 12:16). Don’t be like Esau and trade something as sacred as your character, your integrity, your clean conscience, or your spiritual inheritance for something as temporary as a bowl of soup.

The great deceiver will try to convince you that you need to sin. You *need* to. You can’t live without doing this or saying that. At the same time, the Spirit of Jesus (who is “the Truth”) will remind you that you can have a fulfilling, joy-saturated, good life with God, that

everything is yours in Jesus Christ, your Savior. I pray you listen to the Spirit today and trust the patient path of God in a corner-cutting world.

Biblical Reference

“See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son.”

Hebrews 12:16 NIV

B. The Fruit of Self-Control

We know better than to take a pint of ice cream to the couch. We know we shouldn’t hold it in our hands until the edges get all melty. We know we shouldn’t go digging for those chocolate-covered cow tracks like they are buried treasure. We know we shouldn’t, but we still do. We lack self-control.

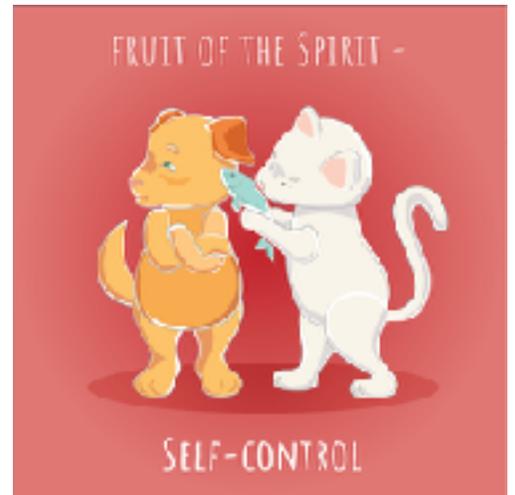
So where do we get the self-control we need to say no to temptation? When we could eat this or say that or dwell on this or sin like that, where can we find the power to say yes to God and no to sin?

The answer is found in Galatians chapter 5—**“The fruit of the Spirit . . . is self-control”** (verses 22,23). Self-control is a *fruit*. It’s grown. It doesn’t just appear in our hearts. It’s grown from a root. And that root is . . . Jesus. In the next verse, Paul says that you **“belong to Christ Jesus”** (verse 24). You belong to Jesus. You are his child. And he adores you.

That truth is powerful enough to produce a new spiritual power in you. When you realize that you belong to Jesus—loved by the Father, accepted into heaven, invited to the feast, chosen for the kingdom, valued in the mission, and filled with the Spirit—you find a deep sense of satisfaction and joy. A contentment so deep that sin starts to lose its grip. Self-control is, admittedly, hard to grow. But the soil of God’s love in Christ is rich enough to produce all the self-control you need.

Satan offers us something sweet (like giving someone a piece of our mind or driving to the mall again despite 0% of our budget helping the poor), and we have to decide whether to wait for God’s greater blessing or give in to the marshmallow of temptation.

This is where I’m amazed at Jesus. Starving in the desert, the deceiver used one of his oldest tricks, a promise of right-here, right-now pleasure. But Jesus replied, **“Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only’** (Matthew 4:10). Jesus’ willingness to wait was not just a good example for us to follow. It is our hope. our salvation. our perfection, to be later given to us at the cross.



I hope you are excited enough about future blessings to wait when you face today's temptation. But, no matter what you do, we know what Jesus did. He waited for the blessing of God. And that's good news for us all

Biblical Reference

“Jesus said to him, ‘Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”
Matthew 4:10 NIV

C. Willing to wait for it?

Satan offers us something sweet (like giving someone a piece of our mind or driving to the mall again despite 0% of our budget helping the poor), and we have to decide whether to wait for God's greater blessing or give in to temptation.

This is where we should be amazed at Jesus. Starving in the desert, the deceiver used one of his oldest tricks, a promise of right-here, right-now pleasure. But Jesus replied, **“Away from me, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve him**

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Are excited enough about future blessings to wait when you face today's temptation. But, no matter what you do, we know what Jesus did. He waited for the blessing of God. And that's good news for us all.

Conclusions/ Final Thought

Biblically speaking, self-control means choosing to give up trying to control things on our own, surrendering to God for help, and working alongside Him for real change.

If you lack self-control, you will be controlled by your whims. If you don't choose to rely on the Holy Spirit and aim to make the right choices, you can't become your best self.

Jesus gave up his life so that you could be set free from sin and death. This freedom is meant to be used to glorify God. When you give up the life ruled by desires that come and go, you discover the better and more meaningful life God has for you.



only” (Matthew 4:10).

As Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever will lose his life for my sake will find it” (Matthew 16:24-25).

When you die to yourself or surrender to God’s way over your own way, you will find a more beautiful and fulfilling life on the other side. Let eat the “Fruit of the Spirit ” to grow and get there.

***“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”
Galatians 5:22-24 NIV***



Prayer

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