



# gracefellowship

Everything  
September 8, 2019  
Growing in Goodness

**:: 2 Peter 1:3-5**

**3 His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.**

**4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.**

**5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, *self-control***

- Pray

Brief series recap...

We are focusing on building a godly life and have seen that it is God who gives us everything we need for that life. But we also have a role to play in growing in godliness by adding to our faith important ingredients, which will allow us to have a life centered on Jesus. As we grow in these things more and more we find that we are participating in the divine nature and escaping the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Picking up in today's message...

Those desires Peter talks about are things at work within our own hearts and minds that would entice us away from Jesus in order to attempt to find satisfaction and pleasure in created things rather than the Creator.

Last week Bryan talked about knowledge, both in the sense of knowing facts and details and information about the Bible and faith, as well as having a deeply intimate knowledge of God. Today we are moving on from that to the next quality Peter says we need to add to our faith: self-control. I think there is a very good reason Peter places this characteristic in this particular place in his list.

**Self-control is saying no to sinful desires, even when it hurts.**

When we become a disciple of Jesus we immediately want to do the good Jesus did in the world. We also want to get to know Jesus as intimately as possible,

growing in knowledge of Him through the study of His Word, spending time with Him in prayer and learning to listen to the Holy Spirit. As we get to know Jesus, we want the Holy Spirit to help us look and behave more like Him. Following salvation we go through a lifetime process called sanctification- being changed to be like Jesus from the inside out! Self-control is one of the means by which we take a look at the sinful areas of our lives and learn to say “no” to them in order to say “yes” to walking in God’s light.

Jesus said anyone who wanted to be His disciples must deny themselves daily, take up their cross and follow Him. (Mark 8:34) That means learning to die to our former way of life in order to pursue a life of godliness. It means giving up things that steal intimacy with Jesus in order to chase hard after Him. Dying to ourselves means we allow the Holy Spirit to take a deep dive into our hearts and root out the sinful areas that don’t look like Jesus. But it also means we work with the Holy Spirit, once He exposes sinful areas in our lives, and we practice self-control to walk away from sinful, harmful things in order to more fully reflect the glory of God.

**When we practice self-control we look at two things: the plan of God for our lives and our own personal desires and we choose which we deem to be best.**

I wish I could say that I always choose the right thing- the godly thing. I wish I could say that sin doesn’t often win out. But having self-control is a constant battle. Jesus told His disciples on the night he was going to be arrested and taken to trial that the reason they couldn’t stay up and pray for Him wasn’t that their spirits weren’t willing, it was that their flesh was weak. When the choice was stay up and pray all night or take a nap, they didn’t have enough self-control to pray. They gave in to their flesh. John Piper writes about this very idea:

**“The very concept of “self-control” implies a battle between a divided self. It implies that our “self” produces desires we should not satisfy but instead “control.” We should deny ourselves and take up our cross daily, Jesus says, and follow him. Daily our “self” produces desires that should be denied or controlled.” - John Piper**

All of us would like to believe that when faced with temptation to sin we would practice self-control and walk with Jesus rather than giving into that temptation. But it’s hard! Satan doesn’t tempt us with things that we easily say “no” to! He throws things in front of us that really cause us to crave the sinful pleasure rather than following Jesus. Let’s watch a video clip of what it looks like to have a temptation placed in front of you and then to be asked to practice self-control.

*The Marshmallow Test by Igniter Media (3:28): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QX\\_oy9614HQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QX_oy9614HQ)*

I'm betting Satan will put temptations in front of you that are much more difficult to say no to than a marshmallow. Maybe you have to practice self-control when it comes to shopping or gossiping or alcohol or pornography. What recurring sin do you most need to practice self-control against? What do you need to die to in order to follow Jesus? Once you identify that sin in your life ask yourself what you are willing to do to go to war against that thing? Make no mistake: practicing self-control is a battle. In fact, Proverbs addresses self control this way...

**:: Proverbs 25:28**

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

Cities and nations have walls to protect them from hostile outside forces. When the wall of a city is breached it's left defenseless. Solomon tells us that when we don't practice self-control we are going to not only come under attack by our own evil desires and by our enemies, but we are going to succumb to the temptations and crumble under the weight of sin.

But Jesus doesn't want us to flounder in our faith and be destroyed by sin, so He gives us the gift of self-control. If you look at the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 you will find that self-control is the final gift that the Holy Spirit gives us as a tool to deepen our fellowship and obedience to God. Where you are struggling to walk in purity with God, ask the Holy Spirit to give you self-control. Then take the gift He has given you and learn to exercise that gift, working it out to strengthen it so you rebuild the walls that were broken down in previous attacks. Self-control acts as a defense for you against the temptations that life throws at you.

I want you to hear this today: self-control is not just learning to say "no" to temptations. If you grew up in the early 90s like I did you may have been part of something at school called D.A.R.E. Do you remember that? It was an government sponsored program that helped teach kids to say no to drugs and alcohol. I saw a yearbook photo on facebook this week of a D.A.R.E. group with the caption under their photo reading, "Just Say No!" and on the front row of the group is a kid wearing a black shirt with the word "YES!" in giant letters! He chose the wrong thing to wear to school that day!

Another ad campaign I remember growing up was for potato chips. Do you remember the chips who had the slogan, "Bet ya can't eat just one!"?

Illustration: In fact, let's test that theory out this morning. I need a volunteer- or maybe two- who can come up with me. I have some potato chips this morning and I want to see what kind of self-control you have. I want you to reach into this bag and pull out a single chip. I bet you can't eat just one!

(Once the chip is eaten, offer a second one. When the person declines act surprised they were able to practice that kind of restraint and self-control.)

Say: How were you able to eat just one? The company bet you couldn't do it!

We can say no to temptation. But the Christian way of self-control is not “just say no.” Listen again to how John Piper describes the way we practice self-control against temptation and sin:

**“You say no in a certain way: You say no by faith in the superior power and pleasure of Christ. The difference between worldly self-control and godly self-control is crucial. Who will get glory for victory? That’s the issue. Will we get glory? Or will Christ get glory? If we exercise self-control by faith in Christ’s superior power and pleasure, Christ will get the glory. Godly self-control says no by faith in the superior power and pleasure of Christ.”**

- John Piper

In other words, we don’t practice self-control and restraint against sin in order to show how great we are. When we are faced with temptations either from our own internal desires or from external forces, we say no through the power of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God because of the pleasure we have found in a relationship with Jesus!

Let’s close our time together this morning looking at 5 ways to add self-control to our faith.

### **How Do I Add Self-Control to my Faith?**

- 1. Ask the Holy Spirit for self-control and work with Him to develop it.**
- 2. Identify and remove your triggers that cause you to stumble.**
  - a. Celebrate wins when you overcome temptations and reestablish walls against sin.
  - b. In your Life Group this week you will be talking about Joseph and how he went to certain measures to fight against temptations to sin.
- 3. Be honest in accountability relationships about places you need to develop self-control.**
- 4. Long for the glory of Jesus to be evident in your life.**
- 5. Remember the gospel when you fail.**  
**:: Hebrews 4:16**  
**Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.**

As we learn to add godly characteristics to our faith we need to remember that the goal is not just having these things in part, but Peter tells us to add self-control in increasing measure. This needs to be a growing element of your faith

journey. Why? So that you will never be ineffective or unproductive in your knowledge, or intimacy, with Jesus Christ. We haven't arrived- but we can daily add to our faith!

- Pray