

Peeled

LOVE | JOY | PEACE | PATIENCE | KINDNESS | GOODNESS | FAITHFULNESS | GENTLENESS | SELF-CONTROL

GETTING UNDER THE SKIN



Self-control
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OPENING

We're in a series about the Fruit of the Spirit as defined for us in **Galatians 5:22-23a**: "But the Fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." Each of these characteristics flows out of our relationship with God when we surrender our lives to Him. This week we are looking at **self-control**. The Greek definition of this word is "The virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, especially his sensual appetites." Remember that Fruit of the Spirit is NOT self-improvement – it is Spirit empowerment. It is NOT behavior modification – it is the result of keeping in step with the Holy Spirit. Our basis of truth is God's Word – it is the Bible that teaches us how to live and how to submit to the Lordship of Jesus.

SCRIPTURE¹

Proverbs 25:28 Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.

Genesis 39:6b-16 Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he refused. "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her. One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house. When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run out of the house, she called her household servants. "Look," she said to them, "this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to sleep with me, but I screamed. When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house." She kept his cloak beside her until his master came home.

Genesis 39:20b-21 But while Joseph was there in the prison, the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.

¹ All scripture is NIV translation unless otherwise indicated.

Romans 8:5 Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

1 Corinthians 6 Flee from sexual immorality.

John 15:5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

John 14:16-17a And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever – the Spirit of truth.

OBSERVATION

Joseph is such a wonderful man of the Old Testament who is a model of self-control – after he got over bragging about his “coat of many colors,” of course, and suffered from his jealous brothers’ lack of control! The result of that episode in his life was his being sold into slavery in Egypt at age seventeen. Scripture tells us that his wonderful character traits earned him positions of status there until his boss’s wife tried to seduce him and he ended up in prison, but God delivered and restored him. The neat part of Joseph’s story is that he kept faith with God through many challenges and he finally realized that his people, the Israelites, were saved from famine because God positioned him in a place of power in Egypt. The future of the Israelite nation depended on this event. God planned the life of Joseph so that an evil plot was transformed into a miraculous outcome for God’s people. We are reminded of the many ways He choreographs events in our lives for good, also.

QUESTION: Tell us about a time when God changed a bad situation into a good one for you.

QUESTION: When have you been recently been tempted to make a bad decision? How did you react?

APPLICATION

When it comes to self-control it is not by our own willpower – the Holy Spirit is given to us to be a battle partner in our war with temptation. Self-control is empowered by the Spirit and guided by God’s Word, to bring our lives into submission to the Lordship of Jesus. **1) Self-control is giving up something we want, for something we want more.** Lack of control is ultimately caused by trying to fill an emptiness or to find fulfillment in something or someone. **2) It is not a matter of the will - it’s a matter of the heart.** As we reflect on our lives, we remember times when self-control failed us - when we’ve had a fit of rage; or we said something that ruined a relationship; or when we’ve been tempted into sexual sin; or when we’ve reverted back to destructive habits or addictions. These were times when we were not led by the Holy Spirit, but instead by our sinful desires. **Desire plus opportunity plus weakness equals susceptibility.** If we are tempted to sin, but have no opportunity we are protected, and when we have the opportunity to sin, but no desire to, we are safe. But if we have both desire and opportunity and add a weak moment to that equation – we’re in trouble! We may not be able to control a desire or know we are in a season of weakness, but we can control the opportunity to sin.

QUESTION: When are you most vulnerable to weakness?

QUESTION: In what areas of your life are you tempted to choose a destructive path?

QUESTION: What are you struggling with today? Where are you going for help in resisting it?

The Bible teaches us how to live and avoid those times of weakness. It urges us to submit to Jesus as we are being transformed into His image. It teaches us how to develop habits and behaviors by closing the doors of opportunities when we are weak. We can turn off the television that tempts us with sexual sin; we can decide not to spend time with people who live ungodly lifestyles; we can instead spend time in devotions and reading God's Word; we can pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance every day. And most importantly, we can surrender, submit and humble ourselves to Jesus. If we want joy, peace, patience that only happens through a relationship with Him.

QUESTION: During this study, which of the Fruit of the Spirit characteristics have especially touched your heart?

QUESTION: What protections against sinning in the future have you been encouraged to put in place today?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, there are so many temptations to sin in our culture today. So many things that were taboo a few years ago are now commonly accepted by our society and government. Please help us to persevere in our faith even when others mock us for believing in You, the one true God as we reach out for righteousness and purity. May our lives model the Fruit of Your Spirit to the end. In His name. Amen.

QUESTIONS

QUESTION: Tell us about a time when God changed a bad situation into a good one for you.

QUESTION: When have you been recently been tempted to make a bad decision? How did you react?

QUESTION: When are you most vulnerable to weakness?

QUESTION: In what areas of your life are you tempted to choose a destructive path?

QUESTION: What are you struggling with today? Where are you going for help in resisting it?

QUESTION: During this study, which of the Fruit of the Spirit characteristics have especially touched your heart?

QUESTION: What protections against sinning in the future have you been encouraged to put in place today?