

SMALL GROUPS

Leader Conversation Guide

Main Idea:

Self-control isn't willpower. It's the **Spirit-empowered ability** to master our desires, emotions, and impulses so we can live in the freedom God intends. Scripture shows that a lack of self-control leaves our lives unprotected—like a city with broken-down walls—while Spirit-produced self-control builds strength, peace, and transformation from the inside out. This fruit grows as we repent, fall deeper in love with Jesus, commit to daily discipleship, and guard ourselves from drifting back into old patterns.

Make It Practical:

- **Self-control is transformation, not rule-keeping.** The law can't make us change—only the Spirit can.
- **Lack of self-control leads to misery.** Scripture calls it being “like a city without walls” (Prov. 25:28).
- **Paul understood the struggle.** Romans 7 shows the internal war we all feel—but Romans 8 gives the solution: *Jesus breaks the cycle*.
- **Four ways self-control grows:**
 1. **Repent** — Agree with God, change your mind, and let Him change your direction.
 2. **Fall in love with Jesus** — Love fuels obedience; grace teaches us to say “no.”
 3. **Commit to the lifestyle of a disciple** — Daily walking with the Spirit (peripateo).
 4. **Guard against going back** — Put real accountability and safeguards in place.
- **Self-control brings freedom, clarity, and life.** God wants transformation that lasts.

Key Scripture:

Galatians 5:22–23 NIV — “But the fruit of the Spirit is... self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

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

Romans 7:15–24 NLT — Paul describes the internal struggle between desire and obedience.

Romans 8:1–4 NLT — “The power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you...”

John 14:15 NIV — “If you love me, you will obey what I command.”

Titus 2:11–12 NIV — Grace teaches us to say “no” to ungodliness.

Galatians 5:16 NIV — “Walk by the Spirit...”

2 Peter 1:3–8 NIV — Add to your faith... self-control, perseverance, godliness.

2 Corinthians 7:1 NIV — “Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates...”

Talk About It:

1. What part of this message most connected with an area where you struggle with self-control?
2. Where do you identify with Paul in Romans 7—wanting to do right but feeling pulled in the opposite direction?
3. How have you seen **condemnation** and **conviction** operate differently in your life?
4. In what area do you need to pray, "God, You are right, and I am wrong"?
5. What would falling more in love with Jesus practically look like for you this week?
6. Which discipleship habit (prayer, worship, Bible reading, community, serving) needs strengthening in your rhythm of walking with the Spirit?
7. What's one practical safeguard—filter, accountability partner, habit change—you can put in place to keep from going back?
8. Where do you need the Holy Spirit to empower self-control so you can experience real freedom?

Prayer:

Lord, thank You for giving us Your Spirit so we are no longer slaves to our impulses or our past. Teach us to walk in Your freedom daily. Help us repent quickly, love You deeply, and follow You closely. Strengthen us to choose truth over feelings, discipline over temptation, and freedom over bondage. Empower us to walk in self-control that honors You and impacts those around us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Leader Tips:

- **Model honesty.** Share an area where God has helped you develop self-control—it gives your group permission to be real.
- **Help identify “next steps.”** Every member should leave with one practical safeguard they will put in place.
- **Reinforce grace.** Remind people: conviction leads to freedom; condemnation leads to shame. Lead with hope, not heaviness.
- **Celebrate small wins.** Growth in self-control often happens gradually—highlight progress.
- **Encourage daily discipleship rhythms.** Suggest a simple daily prayer: “Jesus, today You are right; help me walk in Your Spirit.”