

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS SELF-CONTROL

1 SELF-CONTROL DEFINED IN SCRIPTURE

Self-control does not mean to do without—this is abstinence. Self-control is moderation. The two are as different as slavery and freedom. To have too little or too much is slavery. To have enough is freedom. Freedom is to enjoy all God’s provision in moderation.

Self-control is to have control over one’s natural appetite. In the context of Galatians 5, it is to control the works of the flesh described in vs.19-21. In other words, when we are led by the Spirit, we have control over alcohol, ambition, anger, discord, food, impurity, jealousy, and sex. 2 Peter 1:3-6 says, “God’s power gives us everything we need for life and godliness... so make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control.”

This brings us to a working definition of self-control. *The fruit of the Spirit called self-control is the power to control our mental, emotional, and physical life by the Spirit rather than by the flesh.* When we do this, our life will be hallmarked by abstinence in all things bad and moderation in all things good.

2 SELF-CONTROL DISPLAYED IN JESUS

While he was here, Jesus *showed how his mental, emotional, and physical life was controlled by the Spirit rather than by the flesh.* During his temptations, Jesus displayed abstinence, but at other times, he ate and drank moderately. Jesus fulfilled 1 Corinthians 10:31 when it says, “Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”

Jesus spent time in prayer, but he didn’t become a recluse. He knew when to stop praying and when to start work. He knew when to sleep and when to rise. In his teaching, before his accusers, and even on the cross, Jesus was in control. Jesus displayed self-control when he walked through the crowds in Nazareth. He displayed self-control when he spoke to Nicodemus. He displayed self-control with the woman at the well and with the woman caught in adultery. He displayed self-control when people tried to divert him from his calling.

For us to display self-control, we need to be led by the Spirit of self-control. We need to walk in the Spirit of self-control and keep in step with the Spirit of self-control. We need to sow into the Spirit of self-control. Galatians 5:16 says, “When we walk in the Spirit, we will not carry out the desires of the flesh.” This is...

3 SELF CONTROL DEPLOYED IN US

When the Spirit of Jesus lives in us, we have power to control our mental, emotional, and physical life. Romans 8:12-13 says in the Spirit of Jesus we have an obligation, not to live according to the flesh—for then we die; but if by the Spirit we put to death the misdeeds of the body, we live.” This is self-control deployed in us.

To ensure this happens, we need to take care of our body. We should try to exercise moderately. We should control when we eat, what we eat, and how we eat. Some of us look after our homes and our cars better than we do our bodies. We need to control our anger. If we are angry because of what has happened to us, then our anger is probably misdirected. When we are angry about idolatry, immorality, and injustice, however, there is a good chance that our anger is righteous. Much of what is said about self-control is mind-control. 1 Peter 1:13 says, "Prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled."

Many struggle to share our faith in a world that seems to be indifferent to what we believe. We need to remember, however, it is not about sharing a formula of faith; it is about displaying a life of faith. It is about displaying love, joy, and peace; patience, kindness, and goodness; faithfulness, meekness, and self-control. Galatians 5:23 says, "Against such things, there is no law."

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

The fruit of the Spirit called love is the loving, merciful, and gracious nature of God that comes to us through Jesus by his Spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit called joy is a positive spiritual experience that wells up inside as we reflect on God and his ways. This joy finds its expression in a life of worship.

The fruit of the Spirit called peace is an inner sense of well-being (the peace of God) that comes as we reflect on the peace with God that we have in Jesus.

The fruit of the Spirit called patience is an assurance that a patient God is present in every situation, and we can trust him to work out things according to his purpose.

The fruit of the Spirit called kindness is a spiritual disposition of a servant that is based on God's steadfast love, and is friendly, considerate, and generous towards others.

The fruit of the Spirit called goodness is a moral excellence in the whole of life that is beautiful to behold.

The fruit of the Spirit called faithfulness is a growing faith in God that overflows to others so that they too can trust in him and be faithful.

The fruit of the spirit called meekness is a God-given strength that is tempered by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and faithfulness. This is then harnessed by God for his service.

The fruit of the spirit called self-control is the power to control our mental, emotional, and physical life by the Spirit rather than by the flesh.