

The Fruit of the Spirit: Self-Control

Lesson Ten



radiate

This is only for your information...don't make a big deal of who is missing to the members who are present.

Settling In: About 10-20 minutes

- 1) Make a note to yourself who, if anyone, is missing from your home group this week:
- 2) Spend some time finding out how everyone is doing: make a note for prayer requests.
- 3) Introduce a time of conversational prayer. Make it clear that group members are not required to participate if they are not comfortable.
or
- 4) After a more brief time of prayer...
 - a) Listen to a recording of Paul Oakley's praise song: "Because of You."
 - b) Lead into a time of thanksgiving prayer based on the words of this song.

Conversational prayer means each member taking turns praying for various concerns with reasonably short and to the point prayers.

Opener: About 10 minutes

- 1) Have you ever trained for an athletic event?
- 2) Did you have to give up anything in order to be able to compete?
- 3) How did your commitment to training affect the outcome of the contest?

Mini-teach: About 10 minutes

Heading

- 1) "The Great Wall of China, we are told, was a gigantic and powerful structure built at an immense cost of human labour and material. When it was finished it seemed as though it would provide security to China forever. But within a few years of its completion, it was breached three times by the enemy. The irony of it was that the invaders did not accomplish their entrance by breaching the Great Wall, but by bribing the gatekeepers. The structure was not at fault; the human element failed. The collapse was not in the Wall itself, but in the character of those who were entrusted with its safety and care."
Rabbi Bernard L. Berzon
 - a) The problem was not with the Great Wall itself, but with the choices of the human gatekeepers.
 - b) In the same way, we have all the resources we need to resist wrong choices; if we fail it is down to our own lack of self-control.
- 2) We need to exercise the muscles of self-control.
 - a) God gives us his Holy Spirit to help us make the right choices.
 - b) The gift of the Holy Spirit does not make self-control unnecessary; the HS makes self-control possible.

Discussion 1: About 15 minutes

Proverbs 25:28

"Like a city breached, without walls, is one who lacks self-control."

- 1) What does the "city" represent? What does the "wall" represent?
- 2) What are some of the consequences of a life without self-control?

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- a) From your experience, what does it look like when a person lacks self-control?
 - b) What are some key areas of life where lack of self-control is typically an issue?
 - c) Is a life without self-control a happy or fulfilled life?
 - d) If not, then what is the attraction? Why do so many people seem to live without much self-control?
- 3) Who would like to “breach” the walls of our mind or our souls?
 - a) From whom are we in danger?
 - b) What is the nature of the danger?
 - 4) What are some ways to build the “wall” in our lives?
 - a) How does someone without self-discipline begin to build self-discipline into their lives?
 - b) As self-discipline is a part of the fruit of the Spirit, how does the Holy Spirit work in us to grow a disciplined life?
 - c) How does the Holy Spirit work through the Bible to help us to grow?
 - d) How does the Holy Spirit work within us to change our desires?

Some of the answers might include: Satan, the world, advertisers, pornographers, drug dealers, etc.

Dallas Willard in *Renovation of the Heart* says that the three essential elements of spiritual transformation are easy to remember by the acronym, VIM:

- Vision – a direct revelation from God leading to changed belief.
- Intention – an effective decision to act on our changed beliefs.
- Means – to possess the power (via the HS) and the pattern (via the teachings of scripture).

Discussion 2: About 15 minutes

1Cor. 9:24-27

- 1) Even at Paul's level of spiritual maturity he recognised the need to consciously exercise self-control...to say “no” to some of his impulses.
 - a) What does Paul mean when he says, “Run in such a way as to win the prize”?
 - b) Is he implying that there are some who lose? If so, what does it mean to lose this race?
 - c) What is required to win the race?
- 2) According to Paul, in what areas do athletes exercise self-control?
 - a) In vs. 26, Paul specifically says he does not run a certain way...how does he *not* run? What would it mean to “run aimlessly” in the spiritual life?
 - b) This would seem to imply that there should be a goal and a plan to the spiritual life. Do you have a goal and plan?
 - c) Would you share a few details of your goal and plan for your spiritual life?
- 3) In the second half of vs. 26, Paul changes metaphors. He switches from running to _____.
 - a) What do you think he means when he says “nor do I box as though

Paul was not “playing at”

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beating the air”?

- b) Instead, Paul says that he “beats his body and enslaves it”. Should we take this literally or figuratively? What do you think he means?
- 4) Many temptations are related to our physical bodies. Can you think of some examples?
- a) Read Gal 5:19-21. Give a definition to each of the deeds of the flesh.
 - b) According to these verses, what is the fate of those who do these kinds of things? How high are the stakes?
 - c) Go back and read the second half of 1 Cor 9:27. Does Paul consider himself exempt from the danger of indulging the flesh? Should we consider ourselves exempt?
- 5) In Gal 5:1 and 13, Paul characterises the nature of the Spirit-led and self-controlled life as “freedom”.
- a) Read Gal 5:13, is Paul talking about unqualified freedom? Through the Holy Spirit, what are we now free to do? What are we not free to do?
 - b) How is the life in the Spirit different than the life lived in the flesh?
- 6) Read Gal 5:16, 17. How can we achieve this kind of freedom?
- a) What does it mean to “live by the Spirit”? How would self-control be a part of “living by the Spirit”?
 - b) Is our focus primarily to be on resisting the works of the flesh or living by the Spirit?
 - c) The Spirit-led life is mainly a positive embracing of the power of the Holy Spirit to, among other things, to grow the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. At the same time, we need to have the power to say “no” to the deeds of the flesh, so alongside of love, joy, and peace, the Spirit grows in us self-control.

living the disciplined life.

Many people are into various kinds of alternative spirituality but curiously, they rarely call for any kind of self-discipline or sacrifice.

Sloth, gluttony, lust, greed are some sins related to the misuse of the body.

The flesh (σάρξ) is sometimes translated “sinful nature”. It refers to the sin principle that is at work in all of us primarily using our bodily needs and desires to draw us away from God.

In the flesh, we were only free to indulge our desires, we were not free to sacrificially love one another.

We must daily make the choice to surrender our lives to the Lordship of Jesus and invite the Holy Spirit to come into us and fill us with his power and presence.

A holy life is not simply the subtract of the deeds of the flesh, but it is much more the addition of the Holy Spirit who changes our desires from the inside out.

Closer:

- As this is the end of the series on the Fruit of the Spirit, it might be helpful to take stock of what God has been doing in our lives during this term.
- How have you been challenged to grow this term?
- What area of the Fruit of the Spirit has God been working on most actively in you?
- Share the most important thing you have learned this term through this study of the Fruit of the Spirit.