

Nine Secrets of Healthy Relationships

Self-Control – Part Ten

Galatians 5:22-23 (KJV) ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NLT) ²² But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law.

- Today, we're going to conclude our series by talking about "Self-Control." It's no accident that this facet of the Fruit of the Spirit is listed last, or that love is listed first. All of these Spirit-produced traits have their beginning in love and ultimately result in self-control.
- Billy Graham wisely points out, "There are men who can command armies but cannot command themselves. There are men who by their burning words can sway vast multitudes but who cannot keep silence under provocation or wrong. The highest mark of nobility is self-control. It is more kingly than regal crown and purple robe."
- Multitudes of people have self-control in one area but are falling apart in another. Only the Holy Ghost can help us in all areas! He can empower us in such a way that we are able to voluntarily abstain from anything that might hinder the work of God in our lives.
- The Greek word translated "self-control" or "temperance" is a combination of two words: EN KRATOS. En means "in" and kratos means "strength, power, might, dominion." Kratos has been passed on to our English language in words like "democratic" (rule by the people), "theocratic" (rule by God), and "autocratic" (rule by self). **A person with EN KRATOS is a person RULED FROM WITHIN.** (not our power, but God's power)
- The sinful nature is part of each one of us, and the ONLY way to control it is to live by the Spirit.
- **Galatians 5:16** This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.
- Many people think that it's easier to yield to your urges than to have your desires under control. But when you look at the consequences over time, the foolishness of that idea becomes painfully obvious.

- **Proverbs 25:28 (NLT)** A person without self-control is as defenseless as a city with broken-down walls.
- Anything uncontrolled can harm you and your relationships:
 - Uncontrolled anger
Ephesians 4:26-27 (NLT) ²⁶ And don't sin by letting anger gain control over you. Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ for anger gives a mighty foothold to the Devil.
 - Uncontrolled lust
Proverbs 6:26 (CEV) A woman who sells her love can be bought for as little as the price of a meal. But making love to another man's wife will cost you everything.
 - Uncontrolled spending
Proverbs 21:20 (NLT) The wise have wealth and luxury, but fools spend whatever they get.
 - Uncontrolled drinking
Proverbs 23:29-30 (CEV) ²⁹ Who is always in trouble? Who argues and fights? Who has cuts and bruises? Whose eyes are red? ³⁰ Everyone who stays up late, having just one more drink.
 - Uncontrolled ambition
1 Timothy 6:9 (CEV) People who want to be rich fall into all sorts of temptations and traps. They are caught by foolish and harmful desires that drag them down and destroy them.
 - Uncontrolled tongue
James 3:5-6 (NLT) ⁵ So also, the tongue is a small thing, but what enormous damage it can do. A tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. ⁶ And the tongue is a flame of fire. It is full of wickedness that can ruin your whole life. It can turn the entire course of your life into a blazing flame of destruction, for it is set on fire by hell itself.
- There is a growing body of scientific evidence along with medical studies that confirm that those who attend church regularly and are consistent with their faith are better off both physically and mentally. Though he is not a professing Christian, Harvard professor Herbert Benson admits that humans are "engineered for religious faith ... wired for God ... our genetic blueprint has made believing in an Infinite Absolute part of our nature." Consider the following:
 - A study of the factors that contribute to healthy families found that 84 percent of strong families identified religion as an important contributor to their strength.
 - Alcohol abuse is highest among those with little or no religious commitment. One study found that nearly 89 percent of alcoholics lost interest in religion during their youth.

- Numerous studies have found an inverse correlation between religious commitment and drug abuse. Among young people, the importance of religion is the single best predictor of substance abuse patterns. Joseph Califano, head of Columbia University's Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, stated "Every individual I have met who successfully came off drugs or alcohol has given religion as the key to rehabilitation."
- Several studies have found that high levels of religious commitment correlate with lower levels of depression and stress. In one Gallup poll, respondents with strong religious commitment were twice as likely to describe themselves as "very happy." Armand Nicholi, professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, says Christians are far less likely to experience mental disorders than their secular counterparts. Why? Because the one essential feature of all types of depression is a feeling of hopelessness, and Christians are never without hope!
- People who do not attend church are four times more likely to commit suicide than those who frequently attend. Lack of church attendance correlates more strongly with suicide rates than any other risk factor.
- Heart surgery patients with strong religious beliefs are much more likely to survive surgery. Elderly men and women who attend worship services are less depressed and physically healthier than their peers with no religious faith.
- One study found that church attendance predicted marital satisfaction better than any other single variable. The National Marriage Project undertaken by Rutgers University found that "living together before marriage increases the risk of breaking up after marriage." It also reported that cohabiting women are twice as likely as married women to be physically abused and are three times as likely to be depressed.

- **Self-control is not only a GOOD idea; it is GOD'S idea!**
- **Self-control is not self-improvement** (that is just a current fad!). It is not an attempt to make thing better for the Christian, but rather our expression of appreciation to God for His great salvation! And God expects it of every Christian!
- **2 Peter 1:3-4 (CEV)** ³We have everything we need to live a life that pleases God. It was all given to us by God's own power, when we learned that he had invited us to share in his wonderful goodness.
⁴ God made great and marvelous promises, so that his nature would become part of us. Then we could escape our evil desires and the corrupt influences of this world.

- There are two principles from the Word of God that will help us to understand and practice self-control:

1. Feelings Can Be Ignored.

- Emotions can certainly add spice to life, but many people depend on their feelings to determine what kind of day they are going to have! **To become more self-controlled we must be able to rule our feelings!**
- Society constantly bombards us with the idea of following our feelings, in everything from sex to spending. Advertisers aim at our emotions, convincing us that we need something new to be happy.
- People fall in and out of love, have good and bad days, and decide to work or goof off because they just "can't get into it" emotionally. Studies consistently show that how people EXPECT to feel affects how they DO feel.
- We will have improper feelings from time to time that urge us to do something that is physically, mentally or spiritually harmful. **TEMPTATION FEEDS ON OUR FEELINGS!** That is where we must win the battle against sin and behavior that can push our lives out of control.
- **Titus 2:11-12 (NIV)** The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.
- God's Spirit helps us to say, "No! I will not do that! I don't care how I feel about it; I'm going to be self-controlled."
- The Fruit of the Spirit is hidden deep within us. It is unseen, like the soup carried in a tureen high over a waiter's head. No one knows what's inside – unless the waiter is bumped! People don't know what's inside us until we've been bumped. But if Christ is living inside, what spills out is the Fruit of the Spirit!

2. Ditches Can Be Avoided.

- Personal freedom is like a highway with a ditch on each side. Theologians would call one ditch "legalism" and the other "licentiousness" – the rest of us would say "law" and "loose living." Legalism restricts freedom to the point of bondage, while licentiousness celebrates freedom to the point of bondage (eventually destroying the very thing it celebrates!).

- Self-control is the line running up the center of the highway – it is BALANCED between the two extremes. Self-control means ...
 - I say NO to all that God forbids
 - I say YES to all that God commands
 - I say NO to all that is a hindrance, even when it is not forbidden
 - I say YES to all that is a blessing, even when it is not commanded
- **Galatians 5:13** For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.
- In 1 Corinthians, Paul gives us several principles to help us make decisions in the “questionable” areas of life ...
- **ALL THINGS ARE LAWFUL, BUT ...**
- Will they lead to freedom or slavery?

1 Corinthians 6:12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.
- Will they make me a stumbling block or a stepping-stone?

1 Corinthians 8:9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.
- Will they build me up or tear me down?

1 Corinthians 10:23 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.
- Will they only please me, or will they glorify Christ?

1 Corinthians 10:31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.
- Will they help to win the lost to Christ or turn them away?

1 Corinthians 10:33 Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.
- **The way we use our personal freedom shows if we truly have the Holy Ghost living inside!**
- Just before he lists the Fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23, Paul lists the Works of the Flesh, fifteen acts of the sinful nature that hurt our relationships and kill our spiritual life ...
- **Galatians 5:19-21 (NLT)** ¹⁹ When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure,²⁰ idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group,²¹ envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.
- **BUT THIS IS THE WAY TODAY'S SOCIETY BASICALLY LIVES!** The only way to escape sin and its punishment is to allow the Lord to fill your life by the power of the Holy Ghost!
- If you still have any of these “works of the flesh” operating in your life, you need a fresh work of the Holy Ghost in your heart!
- **Galatians 5:16** This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.