



## Fruit of the Spirit: Self-Control

Galatians 5:22-23

Just because you *can* do something doesn't mean you *should*. Even though Jesus had all of God's power at His fingertips, He chose to control that power time and time again. We bring glory to God when we learn to control ourselves.



## Day #1: Wild Life

Have you ever been to the zoo? What is your favorite animal to visit at the zoo? Why are they fun to watch? Is it exciting to be that close to a wild animal?

Why do you think there are bars or thick glass between the animals and the people? A wild animal has wild instincts. It has two very strong urges: it wants to eat, and to protect itself. If a wild animal, such as a tiger, meets a person he will most likely attack the person because of these urges. The tiger might be afraid or he might be hungry!

Wild animals are just that – they are wild. They cannot control their urge to attack. That's why it is not safe for us to be near them unless there is a strong barrier between us.

God created people to be different from wild animals. Even though we have urges that seem natural to us (such as hitting when we are angry, or grabbing a toy from someone else) we are designed to control them. If your teacher has to separate you from a classmate because you can't get along, that that is very much like the bars at the zoo. If your mom has to hide the controller for the video game because you play it too much, that is similar to the thick glass at the zoo.

God wisely gives us parents to help guide us and train us in behavior that is good for us (Proverbs 13:24). But as you grow older, and as God's Spirit works in your heart, your parents should need to control your behavior less and less (Proverbs 15:5).

\* What is something that your parents used to have to control for you that now you are able to control for yourself? Is there an area in which you have trouble controlling yourself? Ask God to increase your self-control.

† (God's grace) teaches us to say no to godless ways and sinful longings. We must control ourselves. We must do what is right. We must lead godly lives in today's world. – Titus 2:12

## Day #2: City Without Walls

Long ago, cities used to have big, stone walls around them. Those walls protected the townspeople from enemies who wanted to attack them. The walls were thick and strong. Armed guards could stand on top of the wall to watch out for enemies. The enemy would be kept outside of the city because they could not come through the wall. Almost every ancient city had a wall around it for protection.

What would happen if a city's walls were weak or falling down? An enemy could come through those weak spots. The enemy could capture the people in the city and carry away all of their treasures. A city without walls was in great danger! Listen to what God's word says about this:

† A man who can't control himself is like a city whose walls are broken down. – Proverbs 25:28

When we do not have self-control, when we do anything that we want at any time, we open ourselves up to danger. As believers, our enemy is not a foreign army; it is the devil (1 Peter 5:8). He constantly tempts us to sin. He knows that when we are trapped in sin, we are not free to live the blessed life that God wants us to live.

When we learn to have self-control, we learn to say no to sin. Then the devil has lost his battle. Then we are like a strong, growing, joyful city that has many blessings and is not threatened by an enemy.

\* Can you practice having self-control? Here's an idea: Start with something you can easily see. For example, clean your room, and then keep it clean. When something is out of place, train yourself to put it where it belongs. This will take self-control. When you can control something you can see, it will help you learn to have self-control over things you can't see, like anger or jealousy.

## Day #3: Hold Your Tongue

Part of self-control is controlling what we say. We should not speak every thought that crosses our mind. We should not say things that are unkind or judgmental. Our words should build up and encourage others (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

For many people, the most difficult speech to control is gossip. This is speaking unkindly about one person to another person. We say we are speaking "behind that person's back."

### Day #3 continued:



*A gossip goes around telling secrets, so don't hang around with chatterers. – Proverbs 20:19*

God hates gossip! He puts it on the list with sin, greed, hate, envy, and murder (Romans 1:29).

Gossip has been described like this: Take a bag of feathers. Go stand on a street corner on a windy day and shake out all the feathers. Wait about an hour. Then go collect all of the feathers. It's impossible! You see, when we tell secrets about another person, the person we told will tell another person. Then that person will tell another person, and so on. There is no end to how far that secret will spread.

Can you imagine going into school, knowing that everyone has talked about you behind your back? That would be terrible! You would want to run and hide. Don't do this to another person – not a friend, not a teacher, not a new kid, not a mean kid, no one. **Whether what you say is true or untrue, it is still gossip when you tell unkind things about another person.**

Control yourself from speaking gossip! You have absolutely no control over where it goes once it leaves your mouth! If you are old enough to use email or Facebook, this goes for electronic messages too! It only takes a few clicks to send your message to an unlimited number of people.



What can you do if you are tempted to speak gossip? (Pray for help; walk away from the person you want to tell.) Proverbs 17:4 says, "Wrongdoers eagerly *listen* to gossip." What can you do if someone wants to tell you gossip? (Walk away; ask them not to tell you.) You might gently say something like, "That's between you and him. I'd rather not hear about it," or "It's not nice to talk about other people."

## Day #4: Don't Over-Do It

What is your favorite food the entire world? What is your favorite thing to do? We all have favorite things. But the Bible warns us against having too much of a good thing.



*If you find honey, eat just enough. If you eat too much of it, you will throw up. – Proverbs 25:16*

It takes self-control not to over-do something – even a good thing. God created so many good things for us to enjoy, but they are not to be over-done. What are some things that are good in small amounts, but bad in really large amounts? How is chocolate good in small amounts, but bad in large amounts? What about television? Can even sleep be over-done?

Proverbs 23:21 says that people who always over-do because they lack self-control will become poor. They might sleep too much and never work. They might

### Day #4 continued:

spend all of their money on what they **want** and then they won't have money to buy what they **need**.



List some of your favorite things to do. Do you over-do it, or do you do it in the right amount? Thank God for some of your favorite things. Ask Him for the wisdom to know how much is too much, so you can live a well-balanced, self-controlled life.

One wonderful thing that you can never do too much is spending time with God! You can talk to Him and listen to Him while you are at school, playing softball, and eating dinner. You can never over-do your time with your heavenly Father! He is always with you and He can be a part of everything you do.

## Day #5: God's Orchard

We have spent several weeks learning about the fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23. Can you name them? (Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control) This is the fruit of whose Spirit? It is the fruit of God's Spirit. This fruit grows in our lives when we put our trust in Jesus and God's Holy Spirit comes to live inside of us (Acts 2:38).

When you put your trust in Jesus, He makes you into a new person (2 Corinthians 5:17). You have a new heart – one that wants to do the right things, one that wants to know God, one that wants to produce good fruit.



*A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart... – Luke 6:45 NLT*

What do you expect to see growing on an apple tree? What do you think you would find on the ground next to an apple tree? You expect to see apples! Apple trees produce apples. A healthy, mature tree produces hundreds of apples every year.

In the same way, a person who has been given a new heart from God will produce the good fruit of God. And that fruit will land all around you. When people look at you, they will see peace and joy. The people around you will feel loved. The people you see every day will be touched by your kind actions and gentle words. You will be an example to others because your self-control and patience.



You are a tree and the people around you are the orchard in which God has planted you. The good fruit you produce shows others how loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled our God is.

*In their righteousness, they will be like great oaks that the Lord has planted for His own glory. – Isaiah 61:3b NLT*