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God knows that we need self-control because we are prone to stray outside the boundaries He has intended for us.

James 1:14 but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.

Galatians 5:16-17 ¹⁶So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

Self-control defined: “the ability to control oneself, in particular one's emotions and desires or the expression of them in one's behavior, especially in difficult situations.”¹

1. WHAT IS BIBLICAL SELF-CONTROL?

Galatians 5:22-23 ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

- It's only accomplished in us through the power of the Holy Spirit. **(God's part)**
- It's abiding in Christ in order to hear the voice of God, thus enabling us to choose God's will over our own emotions and desires. **(our part)**

“Self-control is a discipline that God grows in us when we continually choose to die to our flesh and [abide] in Him.”²

- There is a difference between human-led self-discipline and Spirit-led self-control.
 - Self-discipline is accomplished by human determination. It can be used to accomplish great things.
 - It can also have a negative side which can produce intensity, high expectations on others, vanity, emptiness and depression.

2. WHY IS BIBLICAL SELF-CONTROL SO IMPORTANT?

- It empowers us to live a yielded, obedient life that produces the character of Christ in us.
- It empowers us to say *yes* to the most important things.
- It empowers us to say *no* to the lesser things—the things that can distract or even harm us.
- It fosters healthy relationships and prevents us from destroying relationships.
- **The most important reason is because It's the will of God for our lives.**

Jesus is the master and model of self-control!

1 Peter 2:23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

Jesus tells us we must “die to self.”

Matthew 16:24 Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

- This only happens through the power of the Holy Spirit and practicing the discipline of self-control.
- Self-control is essential for being a disciple of Christ! *Without it, we get in trouble.*

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

- Strong walls are necessary for safety.

“Self-control is the ability the Holy Spirit gives you to choose the important thing over the urgent thing.”³

- The *urgent thing* is often gratifying our sinful nature and worldly desires that feed our flesh.
- The *important thing* is doing the will of God. It's disciplined and intentional.

3. HOW CAN WE GROW IN SELF-CONTROL?

Titus 2:11-13 ¹¹For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. ¹²It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

- o The only way to grow in the fruit is to abide in the reality of the gospel.
- o Yield your *thoughts, emotions* and *desires* to the Lord.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 ⁴The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

- o You have a choice. When you surrender to the Holy Spirit, He grows more of His fruit in you.
- o Practice denying your fleshly appetites, your impulse to spend money, your opinions and your offenses.

Ephesians 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

- o Lose the unwholesome talk. God wants you to say something uplifting!

4. PRACTICAL STEPS

- Ask yourself where the holes are in your wall of self-control—your thought life, debt, broken relationships, lifestyle problem, impulsivity, sex?
 - Stop and ask if the things you want are actual needs, or are they just wants?
 - Choose to obey when the Holy Spirit is talking to you, at the very moment He speaks!
 - Ask those who are close to you where you lack self-control?
 - If you are caught in addiction, ask for help. Get into a recovery group!
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QUESTIONS TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

Passages to consider: Titus 2:11-14, Proverbs 16:32, Proverbs 25:28

Icebreaker: Are you a more of a planner or an adapter? Or, How do you deal with urgent things and important things?

1. Share what was meaningful to you from the sermon.
2. Choose a passage used in the sermon. Read it twice. What is the passage saying about God’s way of life and self control? A) How does this truth impact decisions and choices in everyday life?
3. What is the difference between will-power and the Spirit-produced fruit of self-control?
4. Read Titus 2:11-14. Think about how God’s grace appeared to you. Share some ways you experience grace and salvation. A) How does the future return of Jesus impact your thinking on a regular basis? B) How would this awareness affect your approach to self-control?
5. Which fruit is the Spirit of God seeking to produce in your life at this time? (*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*) A) What is your part in that process? B) Think of your relationships—your walk with God, your family and friends, your fellow believers and church leaders, your neighborhood and co-workers. How does that fruit impact those areas? (choose one or two to focus on)
6. From this sermon series, Cultivate!, what have you been challenged to think, pursue, address, or act on?

Try it! Practice saying “no” to yourself this week. Two or three times this week, tell yourself no—not to do something or to do something, to not eat or spend just because you can say no to your own desires.

Passages to prepare for next week, where we’ll focus on Missions.

This week, read Genesis 18:18; Psalm 9:11; Psalm 46:10; Matthew 28:18-20; Revelation 15:3-4

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¹This definition of *self-control* taken from the Oxford Dictionary.

²Unable to determine the singular origin of this widely used quote. ☺

³Keller, Tim. *Galatians for You*. (2013)