

One Step to Freedom
Chapter 6: The Fruit of the Spirit

Lesson 8
Self-Control

“The fruit of the Spirit is ... self-control” (Galatians 5:23).

One of the most challenging things a Christian experiences is trying to exercise self-control over their old, sinful nature. God has empowered all true believers with His Holy Spirit so that we can have victory and self-control over that sinful nature we were born with. This means submitting our will unto the will of the Holy Spirit. There are many great stories in the Bible of believers showing self-control over their sinful nature. There are also many tragic examples of those who did not show self-control.

The Bible says in 1 John 2:16 that man is tempted in three areas—the desire of his eyes, the desire of his flesh, and the pride of his heart. The following examples from the Bible apply to all three.

1. Lust for wealth and riches.

Read Genesis 14:14 through 15:1. Abraham exhibited self-control in turning down the riches of Sodom and Gomorrah. He was concerned about stumbling others through receiving the riches, and not giving God glory. God blessed Abraham and told him that his reward was his relationship with God Himself!

Read Joshua 6:18-19, 7:1-5, 7:20-21, and 7:25-26. Achan’s lack of self-control resulted in robbing God of His tithe—the death of 36 innocent Jews and his own death by stoning.

2. Lust for sexual sin.

Read Genesis 39:1-21, 41:38-43. Joseph’s reverence for God’s honor and his desire to be obedient gave him self-control over the desires of his flesh. God rewarded him by filling him with His Spirit, giving him wisdom and discernment above all men and making him ruler over Egypt.

Read Judges 16:1-6, 16:20-21 and 16:25-30. Samson’s lack of self-control cost him his honor, his fellowship with God, his freedom, his eyesight and his life.

3. The pride of life (desire for prominence and worship).

Read Luke 23:32-43. Jesus was willing to die to give us eternal life. He showed self-control in submitting to His Father’s plan of redemption for us. His reward is being seated at the right hand of the Father, as Ruler and Judge over the universe and us!

Read John 11:45-53. The Pharisees’ lack of self-control over their pride is evident. They were willing to kill to keep their place of prominence among men. They wanted Jesus crucified. The cost of their lack of self-control surely was the destruction of the temple and the death of many people by the Romans in 70 AD (Matthew 23:29-36).

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For every Christian, self-control over their sinful nature is mandatory. We need to receive God's love and respond to it by showing self-control as we walk according to the Spirit and not the flesh.

1. If the temptation to steal should come, how would remembering the example of Achan in Joshua 7:19-26 be helpful in maintaining self-control?
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2. How can the Holy Spirit help you avoid sin?
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3. What was Joseph's response in Genesis 39:7-9? How would this example help you if you were ever tempted in a similar way? See 1 Corinthians 10:13.
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4. What if the temptation were not to sexual sin, but to alcohol or drugs? Would 1 Corinthians 10:13 still apply?
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5. What does the Bible say in Proverbs 16:18 about pride?
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6. Read Isaiah 14:12-19 and Ezekiel 28:11-19. These verses allude to Satan's pride, actually the first sin in the Bible. Does pride seem like a small sin to you?
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7. In Judges 16:20-21, what happened to Samson because of his lack of self-control?
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8. In Matthew 4:8-10, what did Jesus do when He was offered all the kingdoms of the world?
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9. Would you say that it is difficult to exercise self-control over pride? Can a lack of self-control lead to murder?
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