

In a Word – Self-Control – 1 Corinthians 9:27

Introduction

- Perhaps one of the most difficult challenges for the Christian is the developing self-control
 - Self-control is a character trait that can be learned and developed
 - The art of self-control can be used in all aspects of life (family, education, work, sports)
 - Naturally, we don't like self-denial, we want what we want
- Self-control (temperance), a fruit of the Spirit

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

- As Paul discusses the art of self-denial in 1 Corinthians 9, he concludes with the following...
 - Let's look at the word "self-control"

I. Controlling Our Desires

- a. What motivates us to do something?
 - i. Commands, fear, desire for pleasure, those things that please our senses
 - ii. Why do we desire to have a fun activity planned for the weekend?
- b. When Jesus was tempted, He was tempted with the desires of the flesh (physical)
 - i. Matthew 4:1-11 – Bread, pride, possessions

(15) Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (16) For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. (1 John 2:15–16)

- c. One way to control our desire is to discipline our eyes...

(28) But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (29) If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. (Matthew 5:28–29)

- i. Our children sing "O be careful little eyes what you see" – mature Christians will do the same. We must limit the intake of unwholesome images that enter our minds.

(22) "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. (23) But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! (Matthew 6:22–23)

- d. Christians have put to death their evil passions and desires.

And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (Galatians 5:24)

- e. Fleshly desires are to be a thing of the past.

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. (Colossians 3:5)

- f. In order to develop self-control we must discipline our desires. We discipline our desires by not letting them develop, limit the unwholesome information we allow into our minds.

II. Controlling Our Actions

- a. Without self-control we will act on our desires and impulses and the bible has much to say about our actions.
 - i. The failure to control our desire will lead to sin.

(14) But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. (15) Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. (James 1:14–15)

- b. Controlling our speech
 - i. The things that are in the heart come out of our mouths...

Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. (Matthew 12:34)

- ii. "O be careful little mouth what you say."

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. (Ephesians 4:29)

- iii. Foolish talking, coarse jesting, (crude or vulgar joking) are not fitting. (Ephesians 5:4)
- iv. Get rid of filthy language (Colossians 3:8)
- v. Gossip – saying things we ought not to say. (1 Timothy 5:13)
- vi. We should always be developing control and discretion in our speech.

- c. Controlling our temper.
 - i. Yes, there is righteous indignation, Jesus became angry at the hard hearts of the scribes and Pharisees. (Mark 3:5)

"Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath... (Ephesians 4:26)

- ii. Uncontrolled anger and wrath is sinful and should be put out of the Christian's character
 - 1. It is listed among sins to be removed (put away) (Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:8)
 - 2. Outburst of wrath is listed among the sins of the flesh. (Galatians 5:19-21)

3. Anger can hinder our worship, offering, and service to the Lord (Matt. 5:21-24)

d. Controlling our habits

- i. How many bad, unhealthy, or unwise habits do I have?
- ii. Just as self-control can defeat a bad habit, it can also maintain a good habit.
- iii. Habitual behavior and addiction to things that are unwholesome must be controlled.
- iv. The same power that draws us to habitual sin, can make us stronger spiritually.
- v. As Paul discusses the art of self-denial in 1 Corinthians 9, he concludes with the following...

But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. (1 Corinthians 9:27)

III. Controlling Our Influence

- a. Until we control of actions, we cannot control our influence.

That you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, (12) that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing. (1 Thessalonians 4:11–12)

- b. Our example and influence can't be underestimated...

Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. (Colossians 4:5)

- c. Like the old saying, "We may be the only bible some read." How will we lead anyone to Christ if we live a life without self-control?

IV. Help in Developing Self-Control

- a. We don't have to do it alone, with God's help...

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

- i. Through prayer

And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. (Matthew 6:13)

- ii. With each other's help...
 1. Support and accountability

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works... (Hebrews 10:24)

Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength, and not just please ourselves. (Romans 15:1)

b. We can develop self-control by weighing (counting) the cost

(24) Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. (25) For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. (26) For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:24–26)

V. Conclusion

Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. (Proverbs 4:23)