



October 30 & 31: Unnatural Self-Control Leader's Guide

Series Overview

We are in this world to make an impact and love others. If we are going to truly impact our world, we must display the life of Christ in our own lives. *Galatians 5:22-23* says, ²²*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.* This kind of life will make a difference in our world and in the lives of the people around us.



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Sermon Highlights

The last characteristic mentioned in *Galatians 5:22-23* is self-control. Why is it last? We need God to cultivate each of these qualities in us, but I do think self-control might be mentioned last because it takes resolve to maintain self-control over any temptation so that you can show love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and gentleness.

In *Genesis 4* we have the story of Cain and Abel. Hopefully we can learn some valuable lessons from the mistakes that Cain made.

Genesis 4:3-5, ³*In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. ⁴But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, ⁵but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.*

When Cain knew God was displeased with him, he got angry with God.

Lesson 1: Stay alert! *Genesis 4:6*

Pay attention to signs that warn you that you're getting off course. We each have weak areas, so we need to pay attention.

1 Peter 5:8, Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Lesson 2: Search your heart! *Genesis 4:7*

Most people think they lose self-control because they didn't try hard enough to do right, but it's really a heart issue.

Jeremiah 17:9, The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

Lesson 3: Obey God's warnings. *Genesis 4:7-9*

It is time to realize how much danger you're in because of a lack of self-control. God is trying to give you a quick and easy lesson rather than the painful and difficult way.

Proverbs 25:28, Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control.

Lesson 4: Consider the consequences! *Genesis 4:10-12*

Don't just consider the *negative* consequences of a lack of self-control, think about the *positive* results of God-honoring self-control.

On self-control...

- Self-control is the exercise of inner strength under the direction of sound judgment that enables us to do, think and say the things that are pleasing to God. –Jerry Bridges
- *For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. –2 Peter 1:5-7*



Take it home ... Practical Applications

Is there an area of your life where you struggle to practice self-control? This week ask God to help you to be aware of the negative effect this lack of self-control has on you and on others. Pray that He will help you to see the positive effect you could be by living a life that controls your own impulses so that you are able to serve others.



Take it to the source ... Bible Study

Introductory question: Is there a particular food that causes you to lose all sense of self-control? Why?

Opening Thought

We often think of self-control, or a lack of it, in regard to habits or things that we really enjoy. Self-control is also about how we manage our own actions and reactions so that we are of the most benefit to God and to others. Use this question to get your group thinking about the basic concept of self-control, but then help them move on from there so that you can consider how to practice self-control in a way that will bring growth and development—the fruit of the Spirit—in all areas of your spiritual life.

Read Genesis 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8 and James 1:19.

1. Can you relate to the imagery that compares sin and the devil to an animal that is crouching, ready to pounce on your life and circumstances? Why or why not?
2. On a scale of 1 to 10, how alert to the workings of the devil are you in your spiritual life? Why?
3. If you were asked by an unbeliever, how would you describe the devil and his activity in the world today?
4. How can self-control and being spiritually alert help you to defeat Satan and the sin that can wreck your life?
5. What are some areas where you need to practice greater self-control in your life?

Key Point

We begin to realize the need for self-control when we understand that sin and the devil are real and can cause great disaster in our lives. The choices and decisions that mark our lives for good or bad don't just *happen*. They are the result of a series of choices or actions that take us down paths that bring blessing or sorrow to our lives. It is up to each one of us to be alert to the things that are going on in our lives and in the lives of those around us. In this way, we can learn to stop a disaster before it happens. Help your group to see that this is one key area where they can be of help to each other.

Read Genesis 4:7-9 and James 1:22-25.

1. Do you listen to the warnings of others or do you keep going your own way until you hit a wall? What effect has this attitude had on your life and spiritual development?
2. How often do you look in a spiritual mirror and check your own spiritual condition and development? Why is regular consideration of your own spiritual condition a vital part of personal growth?
3. What is one warning that you took away from this sermon series on the fruit of the Spirit? How does it apply to your own life?
4. What practical things can you do to ensure that you don't quickly forget God's warnings and continue on in ways that are spiritually harmful?
5. Without turning into a spiritual police force, how can your small group help each other in these things?

Key Point

One of the primary ways that we can learn self-control is to pay attention to the warnings or advice that we receive from the Bible and from other people. It's very easy to hear something someone says and then completely forget it the next time we're in a tough situation. God's warnings help us to remember the reality of the consequences of our actions and decisions.

Read *Genesis 4:9-12* and *Galatians 6:7-10*.

1. Have you experienced the reality of the law of sowing and reaping? How has it been shown in your life when you did something positive? How has it been evident when the consequences were negative?
2. Do you think our society encourages people to consider consequences before they act? Why or why not?
3. Do you find that you sometimes question God when you are faced with the consequences of some action or attitude? What would you say is the best attitude to take when you realize you are in a negative situation that is of your own making?
4. If you were to begin sowing a lifestyle of self-control today, who would benefit from that decision besides you? How and why?
5. How can self-control help you to develop greater spiritual maturity in every area of your life as you work to display more and more of the fruit of the Spirit?

Key Point

What we sow in this life is what we are going to reap. It is a standard principle of nature and of the spiritual world, but everyone usually thinks it applies to everyone else but not them. Self-control is a primary way of showing that you believe in consequences. A life of self-control means that you are doing everything you can to keep all aspects of your life in balance and under God's authority. Sowing and reaping works positively as well as negatively. If we make every effort to be obedient to God's principles and work to develop a living relationship with Him, the fruit of His Spirit will become increasingly evident in our lives.

Notes...



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All Bible references are from the New International Version unless otherwise stated.

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