

Biblical Counseling Center publishes eCounselor's Weekly guide, to encourage counselors and all believers in discipleship and daily growth.

Self-Control - Do you practice it?

by Dr Ron Allchin

Many people struggle today with a lack of "self-control." Many are ambivalent in their ideas about it. Those that practice it tend to be successful, those that do not often flounder in many areas of their lives. We need to understand this because the end times are going to be characterized by persons lacking self-control. "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come. For men will be lovers of themselves, ...without self-control." (2 Timothy 3:1-3)



Self-control by its literal meaning seems to describe an activity where a person controls "himself" in a certain area of life. After all, self-control must be developed, present and active in order for a person to be disciplined, consistent and growing in any area of his Christian life. But is control in our lives developed by our own "self and grunt work as a command to follow" or is it the "fruit of the Spirit?"

It is a fruit of the Spirit

Galatians 5:22-23 lists self-control as a Fruit of the Spirit. **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.** However, some have a wrong attitude and think that if it is a fruit of the Spirit, then let the Holy Spirit bring it to them. "If I am to have the fruit of self-control in my life then, Holy Spirit, bring it on! I am waiting for you to develop it in me."

It is a command to obey

2 Peter 1:5-6 mentions self-control also as a command to follow. It is something a person must obediently and diligently work at developing "...giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control..."

It is both

Yes, to understand self-control we define it as exercising the controlling powers of your will in obedience to the Holy Spirit's power and the Word of God. The reality is we show the presence or lack of self-control in many areas of our lives every day. Consider the self-control you show when:

- You are driving behind a police car and you are in a hurry. Do you pass him?
- Your pastor visits in the midst of a family argument. Do you keep fighting?
- Nature calls while on an interstate with no close rest areas. What do you do?
- The bed feels so good, but you'll be late if you don't get up. Do you get up?

Paul best described it in athletic terms. He wrote in I Corinthians 9:25, "And everyone who competes for the prize exercises self-control in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown." Every successful athlete must practice rigid self-control if he really desires to gain the prize. Likewise, every serious believer must put the same self-controlled exercise into his spiritual life as he does in his athletic pursuits if he is to succeed.

Self-Control: Bringing my "self" (body, mind, and heart) under the Holy Spirit's control, living a disciplined, obedient lifestyle.

To develop self-control will you live out the principles of God's Word in your daily life to God's glory? What changes will you make today to develop the fruit of the spirit?

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