

# LESSON NINE



**SELF-CONTROL**

**BIBLE READING(S):***1 Corinthians 9:24-27**Hebrews 12:1-3**1 Corinthians 10:13***ELEMENTARY LESSON**

The Fruit of the Holy Spirit is also self-control. It is the very last part of the Fruit of the Spirit that Paul lists in Galatians 5:22-23, and it is fitting to list it last because practicing self-control helps us in the other eight parts of the Fruit of the Spirit, which, as we learned, are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and gentleness. All eight of these qualities, in one way or another, are helped along by self-control.

Self-control means exactly what it sounds like: controlling ourselves. It means mastering our bodies, emotions, and actions. We need lots of self-control because we are sinful. Because of the Fall and our decision to go our own way instead of God's way, there are moments everyday when we need to demonstrate self-control. Self-control might sound like it is keeping us from things we like, but did you know that when we are self-controlled, we are actually free? That's because when we are not in control of ourselves, we are being controlled and commanded by other things, like our emotions and the words of others. Therefore, we are free when we are self-controlled.

God understands that this is not easy for us to be self-controlled and sends the Holy Spirit to be our helper. Paul talks about self-control a lot in 1 Corinthians. Let's see what he says.

**— Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27**

Paul uses the example of an athlete to help us understand self-control. Take professional basketball players, for example. Do you think they are good at what they do naturally? Probably not. Basketball players need to get up early to practice and spend long hours perfecting their form and skill. They need to control themselves, and not sleep in late, be lazy, and skip practice. They control their diets and choose not to eat certain foods to keep their bodies strong. They do this because they want to win. When Paul talks about athletes winning a wreath, which is what they won in Paul's day, we can imagine that they're



working hard to win a trophy.

Paul is comparing this athlete's trophy to the "prize" we get from exhibiting self-control and the other Fruit of the Spirit: more and more closeness with Jesus. The more we are allowing the Holy Spirit to fill us and direct us, the more we will understand and love Jesus.

Being in control of our emotions and words does not mean we push them down inside us or hide them. It means that we control them so that they don't hurt others and ourselves. Paul encourages us later in 1 Corinthians by saying this:

— **Read 1 Corinthians 10:13**

God promises to help us have self-control. Because God's Son, Jesus, came down to earth to be human just like us, He understands the difficult things that happen to us and can help us. In fact, the Bible gives us the best example of self-control in Jesus, and even uses the same example of an athlete to explain what Jesus did for us. It says this in the book of Hebrews:

— **Read Hebrews 12:1-3**

This passage says that Jesus went through so much, controlling Himself to endure it, so that He could receive the "joy that was set before Him." We could say that this joy was His trophy, His prize. And what was Jesus' prize? When He controlled Himself as He was being tortured and killed, when He allowed Himself to be arrested even though He could've called down a powerful angel army? What could be so worth it to Him that He would go through that pain?

You.

His people were the prize. Jesus loves us so dearly, so passionately, that He controlled Himself all the way to the cross. When we were supposed to die and be apart from God because of our sin, Jesus did it instead. He died and was separate from His Father, calling out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" He did all this so that we never have to be separate from God.

None of these nine parts of the Fruit of the Spirit are possible to do on our own, and none of them will get God to love us. Just as Jesus looked to His prize, which was His people, the



Bible tells us to be loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled by looking right at Jesus. The Holy Spirit lives in our hearts and helps us do that. When we are having trouble, we can pray to Him and say, "Holy Spirit, point me to Jesus. Help me be more like Him."

## **OBJECT LESSON**

**You'll need: two 2-liter bottles of Diet Coke, a roll of mentos.**

A few hours before your object lesson, open up one of the Diet Coke bottles to allow it to go flat. Set the two next to each other on an easy-to-clean outdoor surface. Say, "Let's pretend these two Diet Cokes represent two people. One has the Holy Spirit [the one you let go flat], one does not. Let's see what happens when I introduce things that might make these people mad, like plans changing, or losing something good." Add a couple of Mentos to the flat Diet Coke. Say, "Whew! It looks like this person was able to control their anger. Let's see what happens to the person who doesn't have the help of the Holy Spirit." Add a considerable amount of Mentos (just one won't be enough) to the second bottle of Diet Coke and stand back for the explosion. Say, "Yikes! Looks like this person's anger makes a huge explosion and mess for everyone around. That's what it's like when we aren't self-controlled."

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

Dear God, thank you for helping us have self-control. Most of all, thank you for Jesus, who unlike us, has perfect self-control, so much so that He went to the cross and died in our place. Thank you that we don't have to be perfect to earn your love. Help us to have more self-control in our lives. Amen.

## **SELF-CONTROL CHALLENGE**

Ask a parent to help you. Grab something yummy, like fruit snacks. Time yourself to see how long you can sit in front of them without grabbing them to eat them.

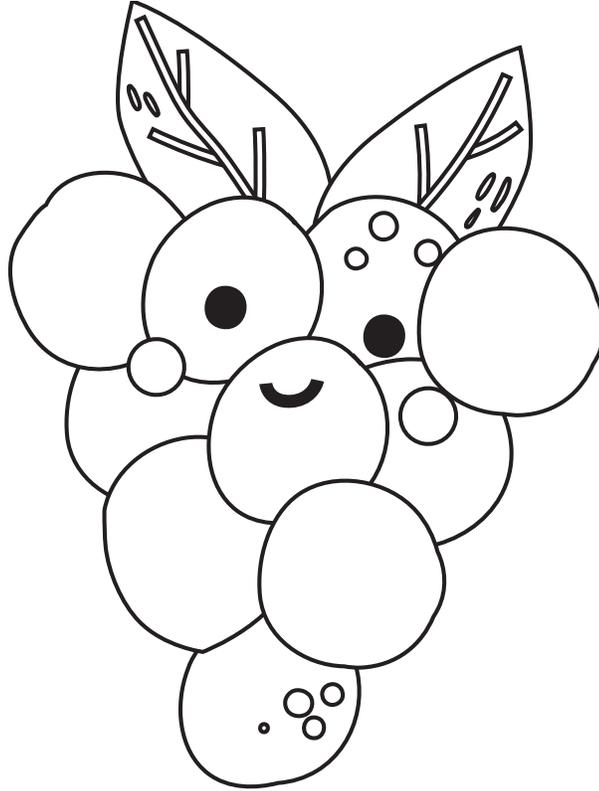


## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What example does the Bible use when talking about self-control? [*Athletes running a race*]
- What are some ways you are challenged to have self-control in your life?
- What was the prize Jesus was looking to when He “ran the race set before Him?”

## **SONG RECOMMENDATIONS**

- “I Will Run” by Misty Edwards
- “In Control” by Hillsong Worship
- “Fix Your Eyes on Jesus” by Helen Howarth Lemmel



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