

WEEK 5: PAUL, SELF-CONTROL

No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. (1 Corinthians 9:27)

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Just as perfecting a sport or a skill takes hard work and training, so does perfecting self-control. Self-control is one of the hardest Fruit of the Spirit to put into practice. Self-control may not come as easily as love, joy or the others because it requires discipline and sacrifice – giving something up in order to be more like Christ.

Paul realized that it was important to exercise self-control if he was to be an effective servant of God. He had to make sacrifices and discipline himself in order to carry out the plan God had for him.

Sometimes following Christ means giving up certain habits and freedoms that the world allows in order to be a better example of Christianity. As Paul says, we have to make ourselves “slaves to everyone, in order to win as many as possible” (1 Corinthians 9:24). This means holding ourselves to a higher standard than the rest of the world does and being careful to control our thoughts, words, and actions in order to win more people for Christ.

Paul disciplined himself to become the type of person God wanted him to be. We can do this, too, by taking time to stop and pray when we feel angry or tempted. God wants us to succeed and he will give us the power to control our actions. Self-control is not easy, but by the grace and power of God in our lives, we are able to overcome temptation and carry out his plan for us.

Questions to think about:

1. In what areas of your life is it hard to exercise self-control?
2. Is there an area of your life you've been trying to hide because you know you should have self-control in that area?
3. What is a practical step you can take to have more self-control in this area?
4. Who is someone you can tell about your step to help keep you accountable?