



# fruit

but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,  
goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and **self-control**



A close-up photograph of an orange and a dark green leaf. The orange is on the left, showing its textured, bumpy skin. The leaf is on the right, partially overlapping the orange. The text "Self Control" is overlaid in the center in a white, serif font.

Self Control

"Lord give me  
chastity and  
self control -  
but not yet."

St. Augustine

# Invisible

Self control is not really a celebrated attribute. When we're able to see the results of someone's discipline we might admire or envy them, but many of the hardest-won victories are invisible. People notice when things go wrong more often than when things go right.

When the fight is internal, when no one will know when the right or wrong choice is made, what exactly is the point of staying strong? When you don't seem to be hurting anything but your own pride, what does it matter?

Virtues aren't worthless when they go unnoticed; they are not the means to an end. If we only value self control when we reap its benefits, then it is our mindset that has to change.

*I do not understand what I do.  
For what I want to do I do not  
do, but I hate what I do.*

ROMANS 7:15

- Where are you fighting between what you want and how you act?
- Have you ever said, "I could do that if I wanted to?" What happens when you try?
- What motivates you to do good when no one is watching?
- Is it harder for you to battle exterior influences, or interior?
- Who do you know is an example of self control? How do you see it in their lives?

*"No man knows how  
bad he is till he has  
tried very hard to be  
good."*

*C.S. Lewis*



# Change

So many people have been hurt and misled by the misconception that Christianity is a list of things you shouldn't do. Grace and forgiveness and love are very real parts of faith that shouldn't be ignored, but swinging too far in that direction and ignoring the very real changes God asks of us isn't the solution. We're called to be forgiven, but also called to be new creations and that includes changing our behavior.

It is easy to be resentful at a perfect, holy God who throws down commandments from heaven. But God is not a distant, angry king who makes arbitrary rules. Jesus came to earth as a man, and fully participated in the frustrations and temptations we all experience. He does not ask us to do anything he was not willing to do himself. And he does not ask us to do anything unreasonable, even when the reason isn't obvious to us.



*Repent, then, and turn to God,  
so that your sins may be wiped  
out, that times of refreshing  
may come from the Lord.*

ACTS 3:19

- Why does God ask us to change our behavior?
- What are we meant to turn away from?
- How can you balance grace with self control?
- Is 'not doing bad things' good enough?
- Does thinking about Jesus' experience as a man who was tempted in every way change your perspective?

*"God creates out of nothing.  
Wonderful you say. Yes, to be  
sure, but he does what is still  
more wonderful: he makes  
saints out of sinners."*

*Soren Kierkegaard*



# Obedience

Obeying and submitting to God is good, not just because of the immediate benefits or because of long-term consequences. It is good solely because it is good to do whatever God wants you to do.

The supernatural, spirit-filled power of self control is not as small as something that enables you to go to the gym in the morning because you want to get in shape. It is the incredible strength to be weeping alone at night and not give in to despair, to feel anger and resentment rushing through your body when someone you love wounds you and still speak in gentleness. To sacrifice and obey when the results are invisible is when you find the joy in obedience.

Self-Control is the ability to be obedient, which means sacrificing the immediate things you want to for the eternal things you want.

Obedience is its own joy.

*By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.*

*1 JOHN 5:2-3*

- What does it mean to obey God?
- What does he ask us to do?
- Have you ever felt joy in obedience?
- What are some examples of 'invisible results' of self control?
- How can you separate your actions from their consequences?

*"I think He made one law of that kind in order that there might be obedience. In all these other matters what you call obeying Him is but doing what seems good in your eyes also. Is love content with that?"*

*C.S. Lewis*

Unsettled Collective exists to create bold, and at times subversive, discipleship content that will encourage people in faith while also provoking them into action. We create artistic devotional material for individuals, groups, and teams that spark discussion and challenge our perception of what Christianity is, what a church should look like, and who is welcome at the table.

Learn more at [unsettledcollective.com](https://unsettledcollective.com)

