

WEEK 9: 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 of the Fruits of the Spirit to put into practice. **Self-control** does 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 Christian 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. What will you do next time you are tempted in one of these areas?
3. How can self-control help you accomplish God’s purpose for your life?