



Service Devotional Guide

August 2, 2020

Start by praying and asking God to meet you in this passage, the sermon, and the reading and prayers. Then read the following passage several times.

Galatians 5: 16-25

¹⁶ I advise you to obey only the Holy Spirit's instructions. He will tell you where to go and what to do, and then you won't always be doing the wrong things your evil nature wants you to. ¹⁷ For we naturally love to do evil things that are just the opposite from the things that the Holy Spirit tells us to do; and the good things we want to do when the Spirit has his way with us are just the opposite of our natural desires. These two forces within us are constantly fighting each other to win control over us, and our wishes are never free from their pressures. ¹⁸ When you are guided by the Holy Spirit, you need no longer force yourself to obey Jewish laws.

¹⁹ But when you follow your own wrong inclinations, your lives will produce these evil results: impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, ²⁰ idolatry, spiritism (that is, encouraging the activity of demons), hatred and fighting, jealousy and anger, constant effort to get the best for yourself, complaints and criticisms, the feeling that everyone else is wrong except those in your own little group—and there will be wrong doctrine, ²¹ envy, murder, drunkenness, wild parties, and all that sort of thing. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

²² But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control; and here there is no conflict with Jewish laws.

²⁴ Those who belong to Christ have nailed their natural evil desires to his cross and crucified them there.

²⁵ If we are living now by the Holy Spirit's power, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.

Questions to Ponder

1. “We all need help with self-control: Self-control in our thoughts, actions, attitudes, & relationships” Our struggles with self-control are often personal and private matters. If you are comfortable sharing, how do you struggle with self-control? What recent headlines have highlighted the lack of self control in our culture?
2. “When we lose control or succumb to temptation, it doesn’t just affect us, but those we love as well.” What kind of collateral damage occurs when we lose self-control? Can you think of any notable stories of how many people suffered because of one person’s lack of control?
3. “Self control is like a seatbelt: it’s there to protect us; from harm, from bad decisions.” Can you think of a time when you demonstrated self control and (in retrospect) it saved you from a lot of grief or harm? What strategies have worked for you to gain control of your life?
4. “We all need good friends. A healthy church is a church of friends, people who can help us in our struggle with self-control” Do you have good friends to encourage you and hold you accountable as you seek to live a self-controlled life? How has your church community been a source of strength for you?
5. “If you want self-control, you must give up control!” What is the relationship between “giving God control” and “gaining self-control?” Have you ever experienced the Holy Spirit giving you power over temptation?

Closing Prayer

Loving God, open our ears to hear your word and draw us closer to you, that the whole world may be one with you as you are one with us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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