

session 7 study guide

the fight for control

message

Self-control is not an easy trait to possess, and the lack of it can have a profound impact on us. Though some people may innately possess more self-control than others, for most of us, it is a quality that takes work, perseverance and, most importantly, God. Read the following passage in Romans 8:5-8,12-14. As you read, consider the following: (1) What is the result of living by our sinful nature? (2) How do we break free from our sinful nature?

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. . . . Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

dig

1. Define “self-control.”

2. What is the “sinful nature” this passage talks about?

3. According to this passage, is it possible to follow the sinful nature and God?

4. We cannot follow two paths at the same time. Jesus says that no one “can serve two masters” (Luke 16:13). And our actions often speak louder than our words. Are your words and actions matching up? What are the consequences of letting the sinful nature gain control of your life?

5. What does “led by the Spirit” mean (verse 14)?

6. Do you think that most teenagers are in control of their drinking and/or drug use?

7. Read Galatians 5:16-18. Notice that this verse does not say, “If you try really hard to have a lot of self-control, you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” It also doesn’t say, “If you generally are a good person, you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” According to these verses, what is the only way to avoid fulfilling the desires of the sinful nature?

8. Later in Galatians, self-control is listed as one of the fruits of the Spirit: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and *self-control*. Against such things there is no law” (5:22-23, emphasis added). The only way to truly win the battle over our sinful nature is by living by the Spirit, and the Spirit will give us the tools and traits that we need to be victorious in times of temptation. Read the following verses. Why should self-control be an important aspect of our faith?

2 Corinthians 5:9-11

1 Thessalonians 5:7-9

1 Peter 1:13-15

2 Peter 1:5-9

apply

1. Suppose you believe you have pretty strong self-control. Tonight you plan to go to a party, where you'll just have one drink and then stop. How can using drugs or alcohol affect the amount of self-control you have?

2. Though some instances like driving a car too fast or eating candy and soda every day provide clear feedback to your senses that things aren't right, drugs or alcohol are substances that dull your receptors and slow down your thinking and reasoning processes. So, how would a person know if he or she had passed the point of being in control?

3. What is your impact on non-Christians when they see you lose self-control in regard to using drugs and alcohol?

4. You may be tempted to believe it is okay to use drugs or alcohol with your Christian friends because those friends know the “real” you. They know the “real” you doesn’t normally act like that or say those kinds of things, and deep down they know you still love Jesus. So, what is the harm of using drugs or alcohol with your Christian friends?

5. Read Galatians 6:1-10. What does this passage say about drug and alcohol use within a group of Christian friends?

6. “Just Say No” was a slogan for the government’s anti-drug campaign from 1980 to 1990, but its message is still relevant and still clear today: If someone offers you drugs or alcohol, just say no. It really can be that simple. But sometimes it can help to have other techniques (humor, distractions, alternatives) to turn down offers of drugs and alcohol. Read through the following situations, and then write down one or two realistic short refusals for each specific circumstance.

Situation 1: *Your sister and her friend pick you up from a party, and her friend offers you a cold beer for the trip home. (One possible answer could be, “You don’t want to give me an open bottle in a moving car. I’m a total klutz and will spill it everywhere.”)*

Situation 2: *At the skate park, a friend pulls out some bottles of cough syrup. She promises that if you drink one, you will feel as though you are in another world.*

Situation 3: *You miss the bus and an attractive senior offers you a ride home in her car. She takes a bag of white powder and stashes it in the glove compartment. She says she has nothing to do that afternoon and asks if you are interested in trying some of the new crack she just bought.*

Situation 4: *Your parents take you out to a nice dinner at a local club. Your dad orders everyone something to drink and tells you that it's okay for you to have one.*

Situation 5: *Between classes, you head to the bathroom. Someone from your soccer team walks in, lights up a joint and asks if you want a hit.*

Situation 6: *At a party, the gang gets into the parents' liquor cabinet. Everyone starts drinking out of a bottle of vodka and passing it around the room. Suddenly the bottle is in front of you.*

reflect

1. What is your personal philosophy and guidelines for drug and alcohol use? Are your philosophy and guidelines consistent with your faith?

2. Should you attend a party where you know drugs and drinking will be prevalent? Why or why not?

3. Self-control can affect all areas of our lives—from what we eat and say to how we act and respond. In what areas of your life is it hardest to maintain self-control?

4. Should a Christian drink socially? Where would you draw the line?

5. Do you want to have self-control? Do you want to keep your sinful nature from ruling your life? Why or why not?

6. What are some techniques that you use for maintaining your self-control?

7. Have you ever lost your self-control? What were the consequences? How did you feel?

8. A Japanese proverb states, "First the man takes a drink; then the drink takes a drink; then the drink takes the man." Write your own wisdom about avoiding the control of drugs and alcohol.

meditation



Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around
like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.
Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know
that your brothers throughout the world are
undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

1 PETER 5:8-9

Note

1. Larry A. Dunn, *Ideas Number Thirty-Seven* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, Youth Specialties, 1985), pp. 30-31. Used by permission.