

Week 12 Day 1 | *Fruit of the Spirit: Self-Control*

Ever heard the expression “The best offense is a good defense?” Athletes say it all the time. Take basketball, for example. A team with a quick-handed point guard might be able to steal the ball and score. Taller teams generally block more shots, which can also lead to points. Teams that position themselves better for rebounds can more easily make long passes downcourt for easier baskets.

We see this in football, hockey, soccer, and a host of other sports. In each case, a team’s strong defense can lead to points.

“The best offense is a good defense” can be applied to other areas too, like business, politics, and certainly military combat. A strong defense is imperative for victory.

It used to be that cities were literally surrounded by walls, with few ways to enter. These walls were a city’s primary defense, especially when actively engaged in war.

For instance, the walls of Jericho were thought to be 5 feet thick and up to 17 feet tall. The walls of Jerusalem were even more impressive, at up to 8 feet thick and nearly 40 feet tall. With walls this tall and thick, the defense had a great advantage when under attack. A city with such a wall had a better vantage point, and the reinforced walls were hard to penetrate, assuming the walls were intact. If the integrity of the wall was compromised with holes or gaps, however, it was a great liability. Suddenly, the city was at a disadvantage because the citizens were boxed in if the enemy invaded.

Take a look at this proverb:

“A person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls.”—Proverbs 25:28 (NLT)

In other words, without self-control, our defense diminishes greatly. We give the enemy openings to climb through, rubble to walk over, and a path to victory.

I like how the Amplified Bible puts that same verse: “He who has no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls.” The problem is we are very poor rulers of ourselves. We let our emotions dictate our actions. Feelings precede facts. Flesh governs over truth.

We’d be far better off if we didn’t lead our daily lives. This is where living a Spirit-filled life gets really exciting: we don’t have to. In fact, we’re not even supposed to! We are not called to be in control of our own spirit. Rather, we are to allow the Holy Spirit to bear the fruit of self-control in us. That’s His role, not ours. We can’t do it on our own, but He can, He wants to, and He will.

When temptation to skip a workout looms, we rely on the Holy Spirit to bear His fruit of self-control in us. We can then make the right choice. When desire hits to continue making poor choices with our nutrition, we rely on the Holy Spirit. He can stir in us the resolve to choose the healthy options and the right quantities. When we think we’d be better off spending another hour watching TV, we rely on the Holy Spirit. He’ll remind us how beneficial sleep is and we can feel empowered to hit the remote and head to bed. The Holy Spirit’s nudging to make healthy choices will prevail, if we are willing to listen and follow through in obedience.

The problem of having self-discipline is not usually an awareness issue; it’s an obedience issue. When we feel his leading and then follow in obedience, He responds by fortifying our faith and accomplishing His will.

That’s the promise of the Holy Spirit at work within us. When He bears the fruit . . . He builds the wall . . . He defends our city.

Prayer

Father, thank You for the fruit of self-control. Will You forgive me when I ignore Your whisper? I know that I cannot do this on my own. I know that You will do this through me, for You. Amen.

Meditation

Self-control is the Holy Spirit’s fruit, not mine.

Daily Spiritual Exercise

Today you will focus on the fruit of self-control. Remember, these are not “fruits of ourselves.” These are the outcomes of the Holy Spirit working in and through our lives.

As you are focusing on the fruit of self-control, pray for wisdom. You may need help in discerning whether you’re working out of your own efforts or allowing the Holy Spirit to work.

Also, be sure to be teachable. Sometimes we are being taught a lesson we don’t want to learn. If we are truly open to the Lord working in our lives, however, we need to humbly receive all He wants to teach us.