

knowledge and then supplement that knowledge with self-control (2 Peter 1:5-7).

**Wisdom.** You must be able to use the knowledge you gain accurately in the various circumstances you will find yourself in throughout your life. This is called “wisdom.” As you put God’s wisdom into practice throughout your life, it will keep you from the ways of evil (Proverbs 2:11-15). Therefore, you must be actively looking to put God’s righteous ways into application in every area of your life (Psalm 119:59-60).

**Commitment to righteousness.** If you are just casually interested in doing what is right, you may find yourself practicing self-control in some areas of your life and then compromising God’s standards in others. However, Jesus wants His followers to hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matthew 5:6). So, you must eagerly desire to live for God and do His will (John 4:34; Psalm 42:1-2), seeking it first in your life (Matthew 6:33)!

**Sacrifice.** You must embrace that your new life in Christ is one that is sacrificial in nature (Luke 9:23-26; Romans 12:1-2)! This means that you will submit (yield) what you could do and how you could live to the desires of Jesus Christ, who you now recognize as Lord (Master) of your life (James 4:7)! However, this sacrifice is made easier when you appreciate the sacrifice Jesus made for you and your opportunity to be part of His kingdom (Matthew 13:44; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Galatians 2:20).

**Accountability.** Living a disciplined life for Christ is not easy and should not be attempted alone. Thankfully, Jesus does not expect us to do it alone. Rather, He has created His church so that you can be helped, encouraged, and corrected by other Christians (Galatians 6:2; Hebrews 3:12-13; James 5:19-20). But, all of this means that you must give other people access to your life so they can help hold you accountable in living for the Lord!

### Conclusion

To develop Christian character, you must develop self-control. To develop self-control, you must put off anything that works against it, renew your mind to develop a spirit of self-control, and then put on the actions that will help you demonstrate self-control in your life. So, get to work developing self-control in your life so that you will be pleasing to God!



God’s people must be transformed (Ephesians 4:22-24). There is a three-step process involved in this transformation (put off the old self who is corrupted by deceitful desires, be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self who is created according to God’s likeness). One of the characteristics God wants His people to develop is self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Self-control involves being able to properly govern yourself and exercise restraint over your own desires, emotions, impulses, and actions. Particularly, the kind of self-control God approves is that which will govern yourself so that you live to please God.

The purpose of this lesson is to learn how to develop self-control by learning some characteristics to put off, some truths that should renew the mind, and some characteristics to put on.

### Put Off

**Selfishness.** Selfishness is focused more on what you want in life than anything or anyone else (making self an idol). Therefore, there is no desire to control yourself so as to do, think, or say anything different than what you want to do, think, and say! Yet, selfishness must be put off as it relates to putting yourself above the desires of God (Romans 2:8; James 3:16). Then, selfishness must be put off as it relates to putting yourself above others (Philippians 2:3-4; Romans 15:2-3).

**Fleshly desires.** While God has provided a proper place for fulfilling some fleshly desires (i.e. food, sex), He has not given us physical bodies so that we would pursue those desires in an undisciplined way (1 Corinthians 6:12-13, 18-20). So, you must work diligently to put off the pursuit of any fleshly desire that goes against the will of God (Matthew 5:29-30; Titus

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2:12). In fact, you should work to crucify the fleshly desires that pull against the will of God (Galatians 2:20; Galatians 5:24).

**Arrogance.** Thinking you know better than Jesus will lead you to a selfish pursuit of your fleshly desires or whatever kind of life you believe is best, with little or no concern about the standard Jesus has required of your life. However, such arrogance never leads to the disciplined life that pleases God. Instead, it leads to your own destruction (Proverbs 14:12). And, arrogance will prevent you from seeing yourself as truly broken and in need of the salvation Jesus Christ offers (Luke 18:9). Consequently, you will never see the need to control yourself!

**Rebellion.** A spirit of rebellion is one that is always trying to push the limits that God has set for your life and desires to break the rules so as to demonstrate your own freedom and independence. Yet, this spirit works against developing self-control because you will not be willing to subject your life to any rules that are different from your own ideas and does not please God (Proverbs 17:11). Instead of viewing Jesus's rule over our lives as oppressive, you should view Jesus as being a much better Master than sin and as offering the way to true freedom spiritually (Romans 6:16-18, 22-23)!

**Evil companions.** Perhaps you struggle to exercise the proper self-control when you are around others who are not practicing self-restraint to live for God (1 Corinthians 15:33). This danger is pictured in Proverbs 1. Even a person who has been taught wisdom's way can be persuaded by others who look like they are having fun by not exercising the restraint wisdom would demand (1:8-9, 10-13). Therefore, you should not put yourself in situations to be negatively influenced by those who refuse to properly restrain themselves.

## Renew

**Accept responsibility for yourself.** If you believe you cannot control your own actions, impulses, desires, and emotions, you will offer excuses for why you do what you do that will prevent you from changing! However, the Bible clearly teaches that each person must take personal responsibility for himself/herself and the decisions that are made, including for the consequences that result (Proverbs 1:29-33; Galatians 6:4-8). For, God will hold you accountable for your actions on Judgment Day (Philippians 2:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

**View yourself as a soldier in a war.** It can be easy to get caught up in the ways of this world so as to live for yourself and not be as disciplined

as God desires from your life. But, the sinful desires that appeal to your flesh go against the will of God and wage war against your soul (1 Peter 2:11-12). Therefore, while you are living among many people on this earth who are freely engaging in whatever they may desire that pleases themselves, you must view yourself as a soldier who is fighting for Christ in this world, and not be distracted by the concerns of civilian life (2 Timothy 2:3-4), as sin will destroy you if you let it (James 1:14-15)!

**Embrace the standard of right and wrong.** You will never reach the practice of self-control in a way that pleases God unless you embrace that He has given you a standard of right and wrong. Being set free from sin requires bringing your life into submission to the truth (John 8:31-32). In fact, you must embrace that your standard of living is dependent on God's standard of holiness (1 Peter 1:15-16). So, you must set God's word as the standard for what gets to control your thoughts, words, actions, feelings, desires, impulses, etc.

**Focus on the end.** There is almost always something that is more appealing to you in the moment than what is best for you long-term (both physically and spiritually). So, rather than making decisions based on what seems best in the moment, you must start with the end you desire as the focus (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). Just like an athlete chooses to deny himself/herself of things that are more appealing in the moment because of the prize for winning, Christians must control themselves because of the focus on the eternal prize of Heaven (and to avoid Hell, Matthew 5:29-30). In fact, your prize is much greater than an athlete's (Hebrews 12:1-2)!

**Recognize the two areas of self-control needed.** Both of these can also be demonstrated from 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. Just like an athlete must deny himself/herself of things he/she would otherwise desire (i.e. unhealthy food, a day off from training, etc.), you must deny yourself of things that go against God's laws. Then, like an athlete must do things he/she would not desire to do (i.e. training longer/harder), you must discipline yourself to do things God wants you to do.

## Put On

**Knowledge of the truth.** Since self-control requires you to recognize a standard of right and wrong conduct, you must commit to knowing what that standard is. If you don't, you may possess the necessary qualities to practice self-control, but won't know how to control yourself. Interestingly, God inspired Peter to write that you should grow in