

"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."



My prayer is that our daughters' roots will go as deep in Christ as this tree's roots go into the soil.

When I think about self control, I think about the many areas where I lack it. I also think about the fact that many of the other fruit of the Spirit exercise some amount of self control. When we show patience with others--that is an act of self control. Choosing to show gentleness rather than anger is an act of self control. As families, I am sure we can point to several instances each day where self control is missing from each family member. I am finding that it is a very hard choice to teach to children. In the moment of heated emotions, to choose godly actions rather than fleshly actions is extremely hard for a 5 year old. Can it be done? Yes. It may take a lot of prayer, quoting scripture, repetition and training, but it is possible. Let us not forget that "all things are possible with God."

My hope is that this week of lessons will give families some tools to use for teaching and modeling self control.

DAY ONE: What is self control?

DAY TWO: Did Jesus show self control?

DAY THREE: The new "self" vs the old "self"

- The activity for this day is quite involved and requires role play on the part of every family member. Parents, read through the entire activity and decide how you want to act it out. Also, make sure the kids have the appropriate clothing, and props. Also, if you have older kids or teens have them take part and give input.

DAY FOUR: In Your Anger Do Not Sin

DAY FIVE: Wrapping it all Up!

FRUIT OF THE WEEK: Have each family member pick their favorite and enjoy them throughout the week in different ways. Another tool would be to eat the fruit instead of the sweets in the house--to exercise self control and eat the fruit instead!

DAY ONE: What is Self Control?

Verse of the Day: 2 Peter 1:5-6: "For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness."

Begin your session with prayer.

Ask your children:

- "What does it mean to have self control?"
- "Why is it an important part of showing Christ in us?"
- "How can our self control point others to Christ?"

ACTIVITY: Go around and have each family talk about the areas of life where he/she lacks self control. It is so good to have these kinds of conversations as families. Children need to see that their parents aren't perfect, and are sinners in need of grace. So, moms and dads you start and share yours first. Here are some ideas to get it started:

- Watching TV shows, movies that don't honor God
- Spending too much time on Facebook and not in the Word
- Eating habits
- Not choosing your words carefully when upset

Here are some ideas for kids:

- Putting yourself first

- Whining or complaining
- Bickering with siblings
- Getting upset quickly or becoming easily angered

Talk about the consequences that have resulted in those times you and your children didn't demonstrate self control. What does a lack of self control usually lead to? Next, talk about times when you or your children did demonstrate self control. What were the results of that choice?

This activity will probably take some time--don't rush it and have an authentic heart-to-heart with your family. Conclude with prayer.

Some other verses on self control:

2 Timothy 3:3

Proverbs 25:28

1 Timothy 3:4 and 4:7

2 Timothy 1:7

DAY TWO: Did Jesus Show Self Control?

Verse for the Day: Is. 53:7 "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth;

he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth."

- Begin with prayer and praise Christ for being our ultimate example in demonstrating self control
- Read **Isaiah 53: 1-10 AND/OR John 18:1-10; Matthew 26:57-67** (verse 53 is also good!)
- Ask your kids, "How is Jesus demonstrating self control in these passages?"
- "When some one falsely accuses you of something, do you remain silent and calm?"
- "How was Jesus able to maintain gentleness?" Remember, He was fully God and fully man. He was tempted in every way we are yet did not sin.
- A question for your teens: "Do you think that if we truly believed who we are in Christ that we would have less self control issues?" Jesus knew who He was and He submitted Himself fully to God the Father. If we did the same how would our lives look different?"
- When we demonstrate self control with the people who challenge us or get on our nerves, we are reflecting our Savior.

- Go back and talk about your family discussion from the previous day. Talk about how those situations could be changed when we submit to our Heavenly Father.
- "What if Jesus had called down the legions of angels as he mentioned in Matt. 26:53? What if He had come down off the cross and given into what he was feeling emotionally? What would have been the consequence of that choice?" Take a moment and let your kids think and answer. We would be lost in our sin. We would be condemned to spend eternity separated from God.
- "Is it worth it for us to show self control?" "What is at stake if we do not change our sinful habits?"

DAY THREE: The New "Self" vs. The Old "Self"

Verse for the Day: 2 Peter 1:3 "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness, through our knowledge of Him who has called us by His own glory and goodness."

I think sometimes as Christians, we forget that we are **new** creations. Paul speaks of this in his epistles. (2 Corinthians 5:17) It is very important that we instill this truth in the hearts of our children. Once you have been regenerated (made new) by the Holy Spirit and He resides in you, you now have the power to make godly choices. 2 Peter 1:3 tells us that we have the power to live our lives free from sin. Do we do this 24/7/365? No. Why? Because we give into our own desires and temptations instead of trusting God and walking in His power (James writes about this in the first chapter of his letter). I strongly believe that 2 Peter 1:3 should be memorized by every believer. In this world, we too easily toss off our sins and say things like, "I just couldn't help it." This kind of thinking is just what the enemy wants! Jesus Christ came and died to set us free from the power of sin and death. He paid a very high price and we shouldn't take it lightly--and neither should our kids.

- Ask your kids, "So does this verse say that God's power gives us only some things we need?" No! God's power gives us EVERYTHING we need for life and godliness!
- Also make the point that it is "through our knowledge of Him." It isn't about behavioral Christianity-- it is about knowing Him and experiencing God.
- Before we go into that, read the following scriptures with your kids. Make sure your older kids actually open their Bibles and look up these verses to read out loud to the family
- 2 Corinthians 5:17
- Galatians 2:20
- Romans 6:6
- Ephesians 4:22
- Colossians 3:9
- For older kids and teens, read through Galatians chapter 5. Talk about the "acts of the flesh" vs. the "acts of the Spirit".

- Read Galatians 5:22 again and note that self control is a part of being a new creature!

ACTIVITY: Using God's Power

- Today's activity is going to require some role play--so have fun!
- Your kids are going to have two sets of clothing: Set # 1 is a set of nice clean clothes. Have them put on their Sunday best. Set #2 is dirty old clothes. All kids have them right?? Have them put those clothes on over the first set.
- Talk about how this represents the "old self" with all its sinful acts. Have the kids lay down--pretending to be dead.
- Have either a parent or the oldest sibling represent Jesus. Dress him in white to make the point. As Jesus goes around to each family member, he removes the old dirty clothes from them and takes them onto himself in some way.
- What remains is the nice clean clothes.
- As each child is transformed, have them stand up. (If you want to, have "Jesus" give each child a cross, or a play sword, or a Bible--this represents one of God's divine weapons).
- Now, have another parent or sibling pretend to be Satan--the tempter. Dress in black, of course! Have this person go to each child and hold up one of the following words:
 - jealousy
 - anger
 - bickering, discord
 - fits
 - whining
- If it is a parent doing the role-playing you might present each child with the sin that he/she really struggles with.
- When "Satan" approaches and tempts the child, have the child take their "weapon" and say no! It is like they are using God's power to exercise self control.
- You can totally organize this activity to work best for your own family dynamic--this is just a guideline. But this kind of activity will REALLY stick with your kids. They will remember it and you can refer back to it when you are disciplining and guiding them to use self control.

DAY FOUR: In Your Anger Do Not Sin

Verse of the Day: Ephesians 4:26: "In your anger do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your anger."

In our family, showing self control when we are angry is the biggest challenge. Angry words (rather than gentle answers) are so quick to pour out of our mouths. Remember that anger is a heart issue. As parents, are we standing in judgement over our children? Do we think we are less of a sinner than

they? Are we embarrassed and angry when our child misbehaves in public because we don't want to be perceived as bad parents? Ouch. Are your kids constantly bickering, or responding to one another in a snippy, sarcastic way? We all need God to come in and clean up that area of our hearts--parents included (me included)!

Read through each of these verses and talk about them as a family. What do these verses say about anger and its effect? Is it really worth it?

- *Proverbs 15:1
- Proverbs 27:4
- Proverbs 29:8
- *Proverbs 29:11
- Proverbs 30:33
- *Ecclesiastes 7:9
- *Ephesians 4:26 & 31
- Colossians 3:8
- *James 1:19-20

Before you finish with prayer, have each family member talk about what "triggers" his/her anger and how this shows a heart condition. For example a dad might say: "When you guys misbehave in public and directly disobey me, I am angered because of what people might think of me as a parent. I am relying upon the opinions of other people more than my identity in Christ."

After each family member has confessed their sin, pray together and confess this to God. Ask for his help in having self control in this area.

Optional Activity: I read on another blog recently about an activity that one family used to help curb snippy, sarcastic words spoken in anger. Each family member wore a rubber band. When that person responded in an angry way, they would have to snap the rubber band. It was just a simple reminder that helped that family to realize how many times they resorted to harsh words rather than gentle ones. They were able to readily confess their sin and to eventually turn from it.

DAY FIVE: All for YOUR Splendor, LORD!

Verse of the Day: Galatians 5:22

Can you believe it! We have completed our 9 week study on the Fruit of the Spirit!

- Begin with prayer

- Read Galatians 5:22 together as a family
- Now go through each "fruit" and have family members talk about what they remembered the most from each week.
 - Favorite verse
 - Favorite activities
 - Favorite songs
 - Favorite recipes
- Let each child share about what really stuck with them the most.
- Parents you share too!
- Make sure everyone talks about "why" that particular verse, song, or activity meant something to them.
- Ask your kids: "How do we want to move forward as a family? What do you want to take with us into everyday life?"
- Ask each child to share which "fruit" they struggle with the most. Have them write it on a piece of paper that is cut out to look like a fruit. Parents, do this too! Then, attach the pieces of paper to the fridge (or if you are really creative attach them to a tree cutout or something of that nature).
- Help each other, encourage, gently correct, and pray for one another in these areas of need.

A great song to finish with is one by Christy Nockles entitled: "For Your Splendor"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DC_QCKCuAM8

Talk about this song after you listen. What does it mean? What does it mean to have roots that dig deep? Why do we have to have good roots before the fruit will bloom?

Finish with prayer. Have each family member utter a sentence prayer of praise to God.

In Conclusion...

As I type this I am grinning from ear to ear. I am praying that many families will grow closer to Christ through this 9 week unit. It has been so much fun to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and to see how He imparts wisdom and knowledge. He is love. He is joy. He is patient. He is kind. He is good. He is faithful. He is gentle. He is self control. Oh how I love Him. My prayer is that you love Him more deeply too.

Kristin