

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. *Enjoy discovering more about Him!*

## "SELF CONTROL AND DESIRES" | PROVERBS | PASTOR BRIAN BELL

### WARM-UP QUESTION:

- What is the one food that makes self-control hard for you?

### *"Desire Isn't the Enemy- Unchecked Desire Is" Proverbs 25:28, Proverbs 16:32, Proverbs 29:11*

God created desire, but when it masters us, it is dangerous.

- What are areas self control is important for believers?
- What are ways a lack of self control exposes someone to danger and temptation?

### *"Is Self-Control a Holy Habit or A Fruit of the Spirit?" Philippians 2: 12-13*

Self control is something the Holy Spirit empowers believers to have, and it is something believers are to practice regularly.

- What examples of people getting the power to have self control from God?
- What are ways Christ followers can practice self-control regularly?

### *"The Gospel Flip" Titus*

Believers are to live knowing their identity in Jesus and then acting in way that aligns with that identity. Identity before action.

- How is it different to "remember who you are in Jesus" than to "try harder to have self-control"?

### *Christ Connection: Jesus and Temptation" Matthew 4*

Jesus experienced real temptation and never surrendered to it.

- How does knowing Jesus understands the struggle with temptation impact how we pray for help with self-control?

### REFLECTION AND APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

God gives people the power to have self-control in all situations. Christ followers build their identity in Him first and their habits that increase their self-control, so they live for Jesus.

- Have you been trying harder or reminding yourself of your identity in Jesus lately?
- What is one holy habit you could focus on to strengthen your inner life.
- Pray God would remind you who are so you can follow his lead in developing self-control.

## 9 - Self-Control and Desires

### I. Announce:

- A. Welcome to those watching online 2nd.
- B. Slide1-4 Kel: Starting Point. Fresh Faith. Crosswalk. Church Campout.
- C. Slide5 Missions Prayer: today at 1:30pm in the Agape Room.
- D. Slide6a Prayer: God you often do big things through small habits. *Holy Habits*.

### II. Slide6b Intro: 9 - Self-Control and Desires

- A. 1 more week of Proverbs (10 - Wisdom vs. Folly). Then Easter. Then starting the book of **Philippians** after that. (Wednesday after Easter we'll start **Ezra**).
- B. Illust: **Walter Mischel** a psychologist at Stanford University in the late 1960s, did a famous experiment with children. They sat a child in a room, put a **marshmallow** in front of them, and said: *You can eat this now or if you wait 15 minutes you'll get 2.* Then they left the room - Here's what happened: some kids ate it immediately. some smelled it, poked it. some covered their eyes. some sat on their hands. **But some kids waited.**
  1. **Years later**, researchers followed up. Those who learned to **delay gratification** tended to have: *Better life outcomes. Stronger relationships. And greater success in multiple areas.*
  2. The difference *wasn't* intelligence. It *wasn't* opportunity. It was **self-control**. (pause) and **Proverbs** told us that ... 3000 years earlier!
- C. Slide7 **Big Idea**: The strongest person in Proverbs is the one who *controls themselves*.
  1. Derek Prime (Scottish evangelical minister) said, "**Self is one of the toughest weeds that grows in the garden of our lives.**" - Be honest, who do you have the most trouble with in your entire life → **YOU!**
  2. We are caught up in *self-centeredness, self deception, self importance, or in self-pity*.
- D. When we think of Strength, we usually think of **Power over others**. **Proverbs** defines Strength as **Power over yourself**.

E. Slide8 Here's a well-rounded list of *Where We Need Self-Control*:

1. **Internal Life**: Thoughts. Worry and Anxiety. Pride.
  - a) *Not everything that enters your mind should be allowed to stay.*
2. **Words**: Anger, Gossip, Over-talking, Sarcasm that cuts.
3. **Emotions**: Impulse reactions. Bitterness. Jealousy, comparison.
4. **Appetites**: Food & drink. Sexual desire. Comfort (always choosing easy over right)
5. **Habits & Time**: Phone / screen time. Scrolling / distraction.  
Procrastination. Busyness (can't slow down).
6. **Resources**: Spending (impulse buying). Debt lifestyle. Greed vs generosity.
7. **Relationships**: Interrupting. Needing the last word. Control over others.  
Withholding forgiveness.
8. **Spiritual Life**: Neglecting time with God. Giving in to temptation.  
Inconsistency in disciplines.
  - a) \*Please hear this: Self-control isn't about *one area of life* - it's about **Every Area** ... where *desire tries to take the lead*.

F. God knows that his children are tempted to *overindulge*. Tempted to *live outside the boundaries* that He has established for our good, for our protection, for our well-being, for our good and for His glory. And He knows that there is *a perversion within each of us* that somehow or another is always prepared to step *beyond* that boundary.

1. Our enemy constantly *nudges us* to enjoy, *not just bad things, but the good things* - either at the wrong time, or in the wrong quantity, or with the wrong person.

III. Slide9a 1 **DESIRE ISN'T THE ENEMY - UNCHECKED DESIRE IS** (pos or neg?)

- A. God created desire: hunger (food). attraction (marriage). ambition (purpose).
- B. Desire is not sinful. But, Desire becomes *dangerous* when it becomes **the boss**.
  1. Desire is a gift but it's a terrible master. So we need to keep it in check.

- C. **Slide9b** Proverbs 25:28 A man **without self-control** is like a city broken into and left without walls. [or more contemporary: *A person **without self-control** is like a house with its **doors and windows** knocked out. msg]*
- D. Ancient cities depended on walls for: *Protection. Security. Identity.*
1. No walls = open to attack.
  2. Without walls: *anything could come in & everything valuable could go out.*
  3. So **w/o self-control**, your life is wide open to anything that wants to enter.
- E. In God's eyes, *the strongest person in the room is not the loudest - it's the most self-controlled.*

#### IV. **Slide10a 2 IS SELF-CONTROL A HOLY HABIT or A FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT?**

##### A. **Holy Habit**

B. **Holy habits** (aka Rules of Life) are repeated, intentional spiritual disciplines - that align a person's life with God's grace and foster Christian growth. These practices are not meant to earn salvation, but to develop a joyous, Christlike lifestyle!

C. **Core Holy Habits** (*what are your holy habits?*)

D. **Slide10b** Here are some *key holy habits*:

1. **Prayer**: Consistent, daily communication with God.
2. **Biblical Teaching & Study**: Reading, meditating on, & studying Scripture.
3. **Fellowship**: Meeting with other believers for encouragement.
4. **Breaking of Bread**: Sharing meals and Communion.
5. **Serving/Stewardship**: Sacrificial service to others, including generous giving.
6. **Worship**: a lifestyle of glorifying God, both privately and in community.
7. **Making Disciples**: teaching others to follow Jesus, be changed by Jesus, and committed to the mission of Jesus.
8. **Sharing our Faith**: sharing the gospel with others.
9. **Fasting**: Abstaining from things to focus on spiritual needs.
10. **Gladness and Generosity**: Living with joy and a generous spirit.

## E. Developing Holy Habits

### F. Let me show you something powerful in Scripture.

1. **Jesus** went to the synagogue regularly *as was His custom*.
2. **Daniel** prayed 3 times a day.
3. **David** said *evening, morning, and noon* I cry out to God.
4. **The Bereans** examined the Scriptures daily.
5. **The early church** devoted themselves to *teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayer*.
6. **Nehemiah** shot up *quick prayers* in the middle of conversations (2:4).
  - a) *Do you see it?* - None of those feel *dramatic*. None of those feel like big, spotlight moments. **But** those habits produced: *deep faith, spiritual strength, and lives that God used in powerful ways*.

### G. Here's what we tend to do - we want the **lion's den** moment. We want the **platform** moment. We want the **breakthrough** moment. [but we skip the **daily** moments]

1. And Scripture shows us something different: God builds great lives through **small, faithful habits**. **Jesus** had rhythms. **Daniel** had rhythms. **David** had rhythms. [and if *they* needed them... we definitely do!]

## H. Slide11a FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

- I. **Self-control** is simply that *important, impressive, and nearly impossible* practice of learning to *maintain control of the beast of one's own sinful passions*.
- J. The very concept of *self-control* implies **a battle** between a divided self.
  1. It implies that our **self** produces **desires** we should *not satisfy but instead control*. [*It's deny ourselves, take up our cross daily, & follow him*]
  2. Slide11b Daily our **self** produces desires that should be denied or controlled.
- K. **The movie Jurassic Park** is based on this theme. It was an awesome world of great wonder - *until* the control system was lost - *then* it became **a nightmare**.

1. The Christian life can be a world of *wondrous beauty*, but then it can turn ugly if *our control-system/self-control* - is lost.
2. **History** is filled with examples of the beautiful Bride of Christ, becoming an ugly partner because she *lost self-control*.
3. There have been periods of history when *the fruit of the Spirit* dried up, and **the Church** looked more like *the bride of Frankenstein*.

L. **The Fruit of Self-Control** is ~ Alistair Begg definition. *The Spirit enabled and Word guided ability, to avoid excesses, and to stay within the God-given boundaries. Then we cultivate the skill over our lifetime a skill of living thoughtful and careful lives, doing what is right despite our desires, because we are reminded of the desires that have been placed within us at our new birth.*

1. Solomon picked up on this in Proverbs, when he told his son, “**Guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life.**” - The biblical *heart* meant: your mind, your emotions, the epicenter of your being/life. He says, *you guard that!* (pause) because every sin - is an **inside job**.

M. **So Is Self-Control a Holy Habit or a Fruit of the Spirit?**

N. **Slide 1c** Self-control is produced by the Spirit **AND** practiced through habits. Not either/or, but both/and.

1. **Gods Part:** *The fruit of the Spirit is self-control.* It's something the Spirit produces, not something we manufacture.
  - a) **So:** We don't *grit our teeth* into transformation. *God grows it in us.*
2. **Our Part:** “*Make every effort. Train yourself for godliness. Put to death. Discipline your body.*”
  - a) That means: *We are not passive* in the process.

O. **How they Fit Together:** **The Spirit** provides the power. **We** provide the practice.

1. **Or,** *God grows the fruit. We cultivate the environment.*
2. Paul weaves it together this way. Phil.2:12,13 *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling* (our part), *for it is God who works in you,*

*both to will and to work for his good pleasure* (His part). Both are true at the same time.

a) Slide11d “You can’t produce the fruit, but you can prune your life.”

## V. Slide12a 3 CHRIST CONNECTION: JESUS AND TEMPTATION

A. Jesus experienced **real** temptation. (Mt.4)

1. **Hunger** (turn stones to bread). **Power** (kingdoms of the world). **Identity** (prove yourself). [and He resisted every time]
2. Jesus felt the full force of temptation - and never surrendered to it.
  - a) **That means:** He understands our struggle. He models self-control. He empowers us through the Spirit.
  - b) Jesus didn’t *remove* desire - He **ruled over it**.

B. Slide12b Jesus didn’t *just teach* self-control, He **embodied** it.

1. **Tempted in the wilderness** (He resisted). **Reviled on the cross** (He restrained). **Fully powerful** (yet fully controlled).

C. **That’s the ultimate picture of strength.**

1. You **don’t** pursue self-control **to become like Jesus**.  
You pursue self-control because **you belong to Jesus**.
2. We don’t fight **for** self-control - we fight **from** a new identity.

D. The strongest person in Proverbs is the one who **controls themselves**, but the only way to control yourself is to **first know who you are**.

## VI. Slide13a 4 THE GOSPEL FLIP (Imperatives & Indicatives)

A. Self-control is **not behavior modification first** - **It’s identity lived out**.

1. That’s the **indicative** → **imperative flow** of the NT.  
**Show in Titus ...** [indicative (indicates truth). imperative (command)]
  - a) **Be Self-Controlled:** (1:8 to Elders. 2:2 to older men. 2:5 to older women for younger women. 2:6 to younger men) **Imperatives**.

b) *For the grace of God has appeared*: (read 2:11,12). **Indicative**.

- (1) **Slide13b Key**: the **indicative** tells us who we are in Christ. The **imperative** tells us how to live because of it. [indicative → imperative → flow]
- (2) **Indicative** → Imperative. **Identity** → Action. **Grace** → Obedience.
  - (a) **Eg.** You are light in the Lord (ind.) Walk as children of light (imp.).
  - (b) You have been raised w/Christ (ind) Set your minds on things above (imp)

c) **Why This Matters**: *If you flip it, you get legalism*: **Imperative** before indicative = **earn it**.  
**Indicative** before imperative = **live from it**.

B. **Most people hear Proverbs on self-control like this**: “Control your anger.”  
 “Watch your appetites.” “Don’t be impulsive.”

1. **And what do we feel?** - Pressure. Try harder. Do better.
2. That’s imperative without indicative. (How many christians live this way!)

C. **But the Gospel Flips it**:

D. You are **not** a slave to your impulses. You are **not** ruled by your desires. You have the Spirit of God in you. (that’s the **indicative**)

1. **So Now...** Rule your spirit. Restrain your anger. Exercise self-control (that’s the **imperative**)

E. **Slide13c** Proverbs 16:32 *Better to be patient than powerful; better to have self-control than to conquer a city*.

1. The world says strength is conquering others. God says strength is ruling yourself.
  - a) **But how do you rule yourself?** Not by trying harder, **but** by remembering *who you are becoming in God*.

F. **Slide13d** Proverbs 25:28 *A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls*.

1. **Without self-control** → life is exposed, vulnerable, chaotic.
2. **With self-control** → there is protection, strength, stability.

a) But walls aren't built in a moment, they're built through *small, consistent habits*. **Brick by brick**. (Like Daniel)

G. Slide 13e Proverbs 29:11 *Fools vent their anger, but the wise quietly hold it back.*

1. A fool reacts. A wise person restrains. **Why?** Because wisdom flows from a deeper internal reality.

H. **WRAP UP**.

I. **Practice** - Don't try to fix everything this week. *Identify one impulse.*

1. Examples: Anger Reaction. Social media habit. Spending. Food. Words. Lust. Impatience.

J. **Then: Name it. Pause before acting. Pray** in the moment. **Replace it with something better.**

K. Don't just **Say:** Control your anger this week. **Say:** *Remember who you are when anger rises.*

1. **Pause** and **pray** before *reacting*. **Build one small habit** that strengthens your inner life.
2. **Because:** *God often does big things through small habits.*

L. **Prayer:**

M. **Keywords:** Self-Control, Desire, Fruit.