

3 Ways to Grow Your Self-Discipline

Author Les Parrot tells the following story that inspired me about self-control recently:

“In a small group I participated in some time ago, my friend who was leading gave some materials to a bad-tempered group member.

As he did so, he politely thanked the man with a sour disposition for being there. The man, however, did not even acknowledge it.

Afterward, I asked my friend about it. “A sullen fellow, isn’t he?” I commented as we walked away.

“Oh, he’s that way every time we meet,” shrugged my friend.

“Then why do you continue being so polite to him?” I asked.

My friend replied, “Why should I let him control how I’m going to act?”

Too often, we allow external circumstances or people to control how we are going to act. This is true even in our weight-loss journey.

But if you are tired of being uprooted by your outward circumstances, then you need to know what it takes to grow the fruit of self-control.

In that way, you can stay rooted no matter your outward circumstances or what other people do.

The key to developing self-control is to create an environment that can nurture its growth. Self-control is a fruit of God’s Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).

As a believer in Christ, you have the seed of self-control already on the inside of you. However, the crop yielded from that seed will depend upon the quality of the soil in which it is planted.

Imagine you take two quality seeds and plant each of them into different environments. You planted one seed into rich earth, full of nutrients and well-watered. It gets plenty of sunshine as well.

In contrast, you plant the other seed in a parched place with tons of rocks, shallow earth and weeds, and it rarely gets any sun.

Which seed do you think will flourish?

The first one, of course! You see, it wasn't the quality of the seed that was the problem. The problem was the quality of the soil.

The soil's quality determined if the seed would reach its fullest potential.

The good news is that God has given each of us the power to change the quality of the soil in which His seed is planted.

Here are three ways you can improve the quality of the soil and grow your self-control. In this case, the soil is your heart:

1. Prayer. Prayer is simply maintaining a constant awareness of God's presence and communicating with Him throughout the day. You speak with Him and allow Him to speak with you. Your communication with Him should be a constant flow, a source of continual nourishment and refreshing.

As 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 says, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

Prayer is as vital to your spiritual life as the blood flowing in your body is to your physical life. The minute the blood stops flowing, death starts to occur.

It's the same with a plant. If the sap stops flowing through a plant, then that plant starts to die too.

Without prayer, rejoicing and thankfulness, you are planting God's Word in parched ground. It will never reach its fullest potential and neither will your self-control.

2. Vision. Do you have a vision of what you will look like with self-control fully grown? How will you act? How will you speak as a person of self-control?

Take a moment to think about some common situations you deal with every day. If you were a person of self-control, what would be different in how you respond?

Creating this picture serves the same function as a picture on a packet of seeds. Seed sellers don't put a picture of the seeds on the packet; they put a picture of the fully-grown plant and its fruit!

So if you are buying tomato seeds, there will be a picture of the tomato plant with plenty of tomatoes.

If you lack self-control, then one of the reasons is because you don't have a clear enough picture of what self-control looks like in your life. It is a vague concept in your mind with no connection to reality.

The way to resolve this is to think about situations that test your self-control and write down a picture of how self-control fully grown looks like in that situation. What thoughts would you think?

What would you see in your imagination? This is not a vain imagination, but one with a purpose. It is showing you the person you could be with God's help.

If you ever get discouraged by how slow your self-control is growing, then take a look at the picture on your “seed packet.”

3. Weeding. Assess your ground regularly and remove anything that interferes with your self-control’s growth. For example, if you have foods in your environment that test you, then remove them. That’s weeding in action.

The reason? Why waste energy fighting unnecessary food fights? If you control those things you can control, then you will have energy and strength available for those unexpected events that test you—and be able to use them to overcome. That’s a prime principle we cover in the Take Back Your Temple program.

Here’s another point about why it is important to weed. In Luke 17:21, Jesus said,

“For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.”

What is the kingdom of God? Romans 14:17 says, “For the kingdom of God does not mean eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

Your new identity is as the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:21), so weed out any thoughts that try to tell you anything different.

Cultivate thoughts that lead to peace and joy, weeding out thoughts that lead to dis-ease and depression. You want to maximize your experience of God’s kingdom and create an environment that is friendly to spiritual growth.

If you pay attention every day to prayer, vision, and weeding, then your self-control will grow. After all, it is planted in good ground!

Meditate upon Jesus’ wise words today:

“He said, ‘The kingdom of God is like a man who scatters seed

on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he does not know how. For the earth bears fruit by itself: first the blade, then the head, then the full seed in the head. But when the grain is ripe, immediately he applies the sickle because the harvest has come" (Mark 4:26-29).

When you submit to the growing process, you will gain the prize!

Be blessed in health, healing and wholeness.

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