

Self-Control vs. Self-Indulgence: How to Get What You Really Want

Companion Reflection Guide

Growing in Biblical Self-Control

“Whoever rules his spirit is better than one who takes a city.” — Proverbs 16:32

This reflection guide is designed to help you prayerfully examine how self-control is developing in your life and where the Holy Spirit may be inviting you to grow. Take your time. Answer honestly. Invite God into each response.

Section 1: Understanding Biblical Self-Control

Read: Galatians 5:22–23; 2 Timothy 1:7

1. Before reading the blog, how did you typically think about *self-control*?
 - As restriction?
 - As willpower?
 - As something negative or burdensome?
2. How does the biblical definition of self-control—as *Spirit-empowered mastery*—challenge or reshape your understanding?
3. Which of the three Greek concepts resonated with you most?
 - ***Enkrateia*** – mastery from within
 - ***Sōphronismos*** – sound judgment and balanced thinking
 - ***Nephō*** – spiritual alertness and sobriety

Why do you think that one stood out to you?

Prayer Prompt:

Ask the Holy Spirit to renew your understanding of self-control—not as deprivation, but as freedom under His rule.

Section 2: Identifying Areas of Struggle (*Akrasia*)

Read: Proverbs 25:28; 1 Corinthians 7:5

The Bible does not shy away from naming the danger of *akrasia*—a lack of self-control.

4. In what areas of life do you feel most *reactive* rather than *regulated*?
 - Emotions (anger, anxiety, frustration)
 - Speech (words, tone, sarcasm)
 - Appetites (food, media, spending, rest)
 - Time (busyness, distraction, procrastination)
5. When you feel out of control in these areas, what usually triggers it?
 - Stress?
 - Fatigue?
 - Fear?
 - Unmet expectations?
6. How does Proverbs 25:28 describe the spiritual vulnerability that comes from a lack of self-control? Where do you see that vulnerability showing up in your life right now?

Reflection Thought:

A lack of self-control does not mean you are failing—it means God is inviting you to build stronger spiritual “walls.”

Section 3: Self-Control and the Inner Life

Read: 1 Peter 1:13; 1 Peter 5:8

7. Peter connects self-control with *mental preparedness* and *spiritual alertness*. What does it look like for your mind to be “ready for action”?

8. Are there habits, influences, or distractions that dull your spiritual alertness?
 - What competes most for your attention?
 - What drains your clarity or discernment?
9. How might practicing greater self-control help you become more watchful, prayerful, and responsive to God?

Prayer Prompt:

Ask God to help you recognize anything that is numbing your spiritual sensitivity and to replace it with clarity and alertness.

Section 4: Practicing Self-Control This Week

Self-control grows through *intentional practice*, not vague intentions.

Choose ONE area to focus on this week:

- Words and reactions
- Use of time
- Media or technology
- Eating, rest, or health habits
- Emotional responses
- Spiritual disciplines (Word, prayer)

10. What specific, small step can you take this week to practice Spirit-led self-control in this area?

Examples:

- Pause and pray before responding when irritated
- Set a time boundary around phone or media use
- Replace impulsive spending with a moment of gratitude
- Create a consistent time for Scripture and prayer

11. What Scripture can you keep before you this week to anchor your practice of self-control?

Section 5: Freedom Through the Spirit

Read: Romans 8:5–6; Titus 2:11–12

12. According to these passages, how is self-control connected to grace rather than legalism?

13. In what ways does the Spirit empower you to say *no* to destructive desires—and yes to life-giving obedience?

14. How might growing in self-control actually increase your joy, peace, and freedom?

Closing Prayer:

“Holy Spirit, I surrender my desires, habits, and reactions to You. Teach me to rule my spirit, not in my own strength, but through Your power. Build strong walls where I am weak. Lead me into freedom that reflects Your character. Amen.”

Optional Group Discussion Questions

- Why do you think self-control is listed last in the fruit of the Spirit?
- How does our culture’s definition of freedom conflict with Scripture’s?
- What has helped you grow in self-control in the past?
- How can we encourage one another without condemnation as we grow in this area?