

- none, some have a little, some have a lot).
- may exist in one area of your life and not in another (cf. 1 Cor. 9:25), e.g., you may have self-control in your sex life and giving but not in your prayer life and service (use of spiritual gifts).
- is God's provision to help you obey the difficult commands of Scripture.
- is a God-given ability to say No! to your desires in order to obey the hard things (e.g., Matt. 5:28, 41, 44; Rom. 12:19; Phil 4:4; 1 Thess. 5:17).
- is self-denial to accomplish a higher goal (1 Cor. 7:8–9; cf. 7:32–35; 9:24–25).
- is necessary for victory over sin.
- is one of the qualities that makes you a useful and fruitful Christian (2 Peter 1:8).
- the more self-control you have, the more useful and fruitful you will be. Who wants to be useless to God?
- is a prerequisite for endurance and steadfastness: you'll never endure suffering nor stand firm in times of danger without self-control (2 Peter 1:6).
- you'll never be content, give thanks in everything, and rejoice in suffering unless you develop self-control.
- a lack of self-control contributes to spiritual myopia or nearsightedness (2 Peter 1:9). To be nearsighted in the ancient world was to be clumsy, inefficient, disabled—of limited usefulness because they had no glasses or contact lens.
- will help keep you from stumbling and hurting yourself spiritually (2 Peter 1:10). A lack of self-control is often a source of pain to Christians.
- is one of the qualifications of an elder or overseer (Titus 1:8).
- is necessary to win an imperishable crown (1 Cor. 9:24–25).
- should be mentioned in witnessing to unbelievers (Acts 24:25). The lost know

they are “indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind” (Eph. 2:3). The Holy Spirit can use their lack of self-control to convict them of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8).

Examples of Divine Self-Control

- shown by Jesus in the garden: “Not My will, but Thine be done” (Luke 22:42).
- shown by Jesus when, “while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats” (1 Peter 2:23).



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Self- Control



By making every effort,
 start adding moral excellence
 to your faith,
 and to your moral excellence
 start adding knowledge,
 and to your knowledge
 start adding self-control,
 and to your self-control
 start adding steadfastness,
 and to your steadfastness
 start adding godliness,
 and to your godliness
 start adding brotherly-love,
 and to your brotherly-love
 start adding love.
 ~2 Peter 1:5–7~

Self-control is the possession of inner strength. It's possessing enough strength to force yourself to abstain from things pleasurable or to carry out things unpleasurable. To have self-control is to be the master of your desires. It exists in the soul and can be seen by others. We must make a distinction, however, between human and divine self-control. Human self-control is the kind of self-control everyone has. It's innate and may be strengthened later in life. Divine self-control, on the other hand, is supernatural. It's produced by a combination of human effort and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Human Self-Control

- is possessing and exercising mental power over yourself—over your soul, emotions, fears, tongue, pleasures, and natural bodily desires for food, water, wine, sleep, sex, comfort, and ease.
- is not giving in to your passions and desires.
- is self-denial to accomplish a higher goal, e.g., to deny yourself sleep to cram for a test.
- is being faithful to principles, resolutions, and commands—even at the cost of suffering and death.
- is the result of a successful battle between your will and your desires.
- comes from practice, as was common among the Pythagoreans.

“The Pythagoreans trained themselves in the exercise of self-control in the following manner. They would have prepared for them everything which is served up at the most brilliant banquets, and would gaze upon it for a considerable time; then, after through mere gazing they

had aroused their natural desires with a view to their gratification, they would command the slaves to clear away the tables and would at once depart without having tasted of what had been served” (Diodorus of Sicily 10.5.2).

- the alternative is to be a slave of your pleasures.
- helps keep your priorities straight.
- usually pays off in better health, greater performance, and increased productivity.
- often prevents death, destruction, civil strife, and wars.

Divine Self-Control

- is the ability to exercise power over the desires of the eyes and the desires of the flesh (cf. Gal. 5:16–17; 1 John 2:16).
- is a supernatural willingness to make sacrifices in showing love to others and to God.
- is not something you're born with.
- is not received at the point of salvation like imputed righteousness.
- is something God wants you to have: all believers are commanded to start adding self-control to their lives (2 Peter 1:5–7).
- is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23).
- is produced by the Holy Spirit.
- is a quality you can't develop apart from the Holy Spirit's work in your life.
- will not be produced if you grieve and quench the Spirit.
- comes from the teaching ministry of the Spirit.
- comes from a knowledge of the Bible (2 Peter 1:6).
- is motivated by a fear of punishment, a love for God, a desire to obey and to please Him, a longing to be useful and

productive, and a desire to earn rewards. Knowing, for instance, that God wants you to pray without ceasing may lead to a battle in your mind between your desire to please God and your desire to use the time for other things. If, after a struggle, you decide to set aside more time for prayer, you've acquired self-control in your prayer life.

- comes from sustained human effort (“by making every effort” in 2 Peter 1:5). Our role is to make every effort to learn the Bible through hearing, study, and meditation. You can't just sit back and pray for self-control.
- comes from practice. Fasting, for instance, is practice in self-denial—to train yourself to make even greater sacrifices for God.
- is found only in believers.
- is not found in the unregenerate (any self-control an unbeliever has or can develop is not divine self-control).
- is foolishness to the unsaved—why do things that work to your disadvantage?
- is produced in the soul.
- is inner strength (seen from the etymology of the verb *egkrateuomai* “having strength within”).
- is beautiful and desirable: people see it and want it for themselves.
- is not hard to acquire (the easiest virtues to acquire are mentioned first in 2 Peter 1:5–7; the easiest to acquire are mentioned last in Galatians 5:22–23. Self-control is found near the beginning of the list in 2 Peter and at the end of the list in Galatians.)
- increases as your knowledge of the Bible increases.
- takes time to develop (new believers don't have much divine self-control).
- is not acquired all at once, but grows slowly to maturity (2 Peter 1:8).
- is present in different amounts (some have