

Living Out Our True Identity

Godly Character



Galatians 5:16-26
11 April to 27 June 2021

Dear Friends,

When we set off into Ephesians in January 2020 who could have predicted the events that have shaken and shaped so much of our world? I am so grateful that God led us into a series on understanding our identity at precisely the time when so many things that we associated with our identity were denied to us by the global pandemic. As our lives were changed we were driven to our knees and we were drawn back to the truth that we are already seated with Christ in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion; safe in Christ.

As we finished Ephesians we continued on the theme of identity and switched our focus to living out our identity, first, with the LICC Frontline series where we were challenged to recognise that God has placed each of us on a frontline for his Kingdom, be that at work, at the social club, in our homes or wherever. And then, second, we moved on in January this year to consider some of the ethics of our faith, how being seated in Christ leads us to be “ready to” live for other people.

This series continues that theme as we look at what being “in Christ” means for our characters; what does a Christian look like? We are doing that by studying the fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22. Notice “the fruit” not fruits, there is only one fruit but it has many segments; that is why I have chosen a tangerine for the cover photo to remind us that there is only one fruit. We need to allow God to develop the segments equally in our lives or we will be lopsided. My prayer is that God will grow that fruit richly and abundantly in our lives as we continue to abide in him.

Grace and peace,



Neil Douglas

Using these notes

Although the notes are written in a format for small group use in a bible study, they are also just as usable for self-study so please don't be put off by the format. For example discussion questions can be used for self-reflection.

The notes are designed to be used whether you have heard the sermon or not.

The preacher may not read these notes when preparing the sermon; they will always bring what they feel God wants to say to us.

We do expect God will speak to us through the sermon though so I would encourage you to listen to it on the website if you missed it, and that is why the first question is always about the sermon.

The rest of the questions provide a way of engaging with the topic each week regardless of whether you have had an opportunity to hear the sermon or not, but please do try to listen to the sermon as it should enrich your study of the topic.

There are weeks where there are no notes, these are weeks where the preacher / topic is not part of this set. Please feel free to use these weeks creatively, or you may wish to devote them to extended prayer for the life of Ebenezer, our other communities, and God's vision for our future.

Date: 11 April
Theme: Bearing fruit
Key Readings: John 15:1-11

Additional

Readings: John 6:56; 1 John 2:6-11; 1 John 2:17;
Galatians 5:16-26

Question from the sermon

What did God say to you through the sermon, and what caught your attention?

Questions

1. What pre-requisites for bearing fruit can you find in the passage?
2. What does it mean biblically to remain (abide)?
3. What can we learn about abiding in Christ from John 6:56
4. 1 John 2:6-11 moves us from a passive reading of John 6:56 to an active challenge. What do you read from the passage?
5. What promise does 1 John 2:17 bring? Dwell on it for a while, what are your thoughts about it?
6. V8, what is the Father's will regarding fruit in our lives?
7. Read Galatians 5:16-26 and share with each other what you notice about yourselves from this passage. Encourage each other too with the positives that you see in each other.
8. Inevitably we will all notice areas of weakness, or maybe rather "work in progress", in our lives. Take some time to thank God for what he has done in each other's life, and to pray into those "work in progress" areas, submitting them to the care of the Father who loves you just as you are.

Leader's Notes

Each of the nine aspects of the fruit of the Spirit have a relational dynamic to them, they all are outward oriented and describe how we as God's people relate to those around us. The fruit is how we can do what Phillipians 2:3-4 says "in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."

The fruit of the Spirit isn't a special gift or a manifestation of the Spirit, rather it represents the sanctifying work of the Spirit in our lives. Like apples and pears, Spirit fruit grows as a result of life. As the Spirit filled life Bible puts it "being filled with the Spirit calls us as much to character as it does to charismatic activity. The Holy Spirit's fruit is to be grown in our lives every bit as much as His gifts may be shown through us.¹"

1. V3 being clean, v4 remaining (or abiding) in Christ
2. The primary Greek word translated "abide" (meno) has the idea of staying in place with someone, remaining steadfast or especially near to someone. The model is that of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit who, "descending from heaven like a dove ... remained [meno] upon Him" (John 1:32)²

¹ *Spirit-Filled Life Bible* (Nashville, TN:Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991), 1780, "Kingdom Dynamics: A Call to Character.

² Hayford, J. W., & Matsdorf, G. (1993). *People of the Spirit: gifts, fruit and fullness of the Holy Spirit*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Date: 18 April

Theme: Love

Key Readings: 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

Additional

Readings: Galatians 5:16-26; 1 John 4:8; 1 Peter 4:8;
Luke 6:27-28; Acts 15:36-41; Romans 12:14-21

Question from the sermon

What did God say to you through the sermon, and what caught your attention?

Questions

1. Why is love so important? How does 1 John 4:8 affect your answer?
2. At the top of the Leader's Notes is a description of a loving Christian, compare it with 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a. Do you agree or disagree with it? What does it and the Bible passage provoke in you as you look at your own life?
3. What boundaries on the command to love do 1 Peter 4:8 and Luke 6:27-28 provide? How do you feel about this?
4. V4,5 say that love is not easily angered. Acts 15:36-41 is an illustration of what can happen when provoked. What are the practical difficulties of this verse, how might we overcome them?
5. Romans 12:14-21 offers some practical steps for living out the description of love in 1 Corinthians 13. What do you notice in the Romans passage, what challenges you, what inspires you?
6. Who do you need to biblically love with undefeatable benevolence and unconquerable goodwill?
7. Spend some time praying for each other, particularly where there are hurts, difficulties and challenges arising from this study.

Leader's Notes

LOVE. Love is pre-eminent in my life. I see all people through the eyes of Christ. I have a deep compassion for the lost, the lonely, the weak and the poor. I am magnanimous towards those who “get in my hair.” I keep no record of wrongs. I give selflessly, sometimes till it hurts. I go the extra mile. I would rather forgive 20 injuries than avenge one. God always comes first³.

Love, *agape*. A word to which Christianity gave new meaning. Outside of the New Testament, it rarely occurs in existing Greek manuscripts of the period. *Agape* denotes an undefeatable benevolence and unconquerable goodwill that always seeks the highest good of the other person, no matter what he does. It is the self-giving love that gives freely without asking anything in return, and does not consider the worth of its object. *Agape* ... refers to the will rather than the emotion. *Agape* describes the unconditional love God has for the world.

There are two other major words in koine Greek for “love”—*eros* and *philos*. *Eros* is used basically for passionate love which desires another for oneself and seeks to transport one beyond rationality, often through intoxication. We get our English “erotic” from it. *Philos* is an inclination toward or solicitous love of gods for men or friends for friends, although in the New Testament the distinction between *agape* and *philos* sometimes blurs. For example, John sometimes uses *philos* and *agape* interchangeably to describe God's love for Jesus (John 3:35; 5:20) and for His children (John 3:16; 16:27)⁴.

³ <http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Bible/Galatians/Galatians-5-16-26-All.pdf>

⁴ Hayford, J. W., & Matsdorf, G. (1993). *People of the Spirit: gifts, fruit and fullness of the Holy Spirit*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Date: 25 April

Theme: Joy

Key Readings: 1 Peter 1:8

Additional

Readings: Galatians 5:16-26; Hebrews 12:2; James 1:2-5;
Colossians 1:11; Romans 8:28

Question from the sermon

What did God say to you through the sermon, and what caught your attention?

Questions

1. At the top of the Leader's Notes is a description of a joy filled Christian. Do you agree or disagree with it? What does it provoke in you as you look at your own life?
2. 1 Peter 1:8, what is the one thing that brings about inexpressible joy?
3. What role does Hebrews 12:2 tell us joy played in Jesus' crucifixion? How does that challenge you to think about events in your life?
4. Does James 1:2-5 change your thoughts about the last question? What else do you notice?
5. Does what we have studied so far help you to make sense of endurance and patience being associated with joy in Colossians 1:11? Why?
6. Romans 8:28 is possibly the best description of the confidence we can have in biblical joy, what does it say to you?
7. Can you identify anything that's robbing you of your joy?
8. Biblical joy is fine in theory, but it can be hard in practice. Spend some time praying for each other having heard the answers you've each given to the questions.

Leader's Notes

JOY. People know me for my joyful disposition even when there is a cause to grieve. There is a contagious radiance about me because “the joy of the Lord is my strength.” I remain strong and positive when things go wrong because I trust in God. I am quick to see the brighter side of things. I know that for my shattered plans, God has better plans. My contentment springs from the knowledge that God is sovereign and Jesus is coming, again⁵.

Q2. Joy, *chara*. In the New Testament *chara* is found only in a relationship with Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:11). It is the assurance that we are members of God's family regardless of what positives or negatives life brings (Luke 10:17–20; Rom. 8:38, 39). It is closely aligned with hope, which is the confident assurance that God is ultimately in control and will someday right all wrongs with the return of Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13).

Q7. Joy, then, is that ever-deepening awareness that our lives are hidden in Christ and that we can be led by the Spirit through anything. Afflictions, trials, pressures or frustrations may come, but they cannot destroy us; so we experience joy. We may genuinely hurt (2 Cor. 1:8), we may weep (John 11:33–35), we may be tempted (Heb. 2:18), we may not understand what God is allowing to come our way (James 1:2–5); but none of this causes us to lose God's focus in our life. We can even look beyond our own circumstances during difficulties and minister to the needs of others. “We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28). This is biblical joy⁶.

⁵ <http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Bible/Galatians/Galatians-5-16-26-All.pdf>

⁶ Hayford, J. W., & Matsdorf, G. (1993). *People of the Spirit: gifts, fruit and fullness of the Holy Spirit*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Date: 2 May

Theme: Peace

Key Readings: John 14:27

Additional

Readings: Galatians 5:16-26; Colossians 1:20; Romans 12:18; 1 Corinthians 7:15, 14:33; Romans 12:18; Matthew 5:9

Question from the sermon

What did God say to you through the sermon, and what caught your attention?

Questions

1. At the top of the Leader's Notes is a description of a peace filled Christian. Do you agree or disagree with it? What does it provoke in you as you look at your own life?
2. Who is the source of our peace and why can we have confidence in it? (John 14:27)?
3. Peace is defined in the Leader's notes. Spend some time discussing the different aspects of its definition and what strikes you as you think about it. As you do this have in mind Colossians 1:20.
4. What do Romans 12:18 and 1 Corinthians 7:15, 14:33 tell us about where God wants peace to be found?
5. What does Romans 12:18 tell us is our responsibility for ensuring peace? What does that mean in practical terms for day to day life amongst Christians and outside of the faith bearing in mind what we've studied so far?
6. What prize does Jesus promise in Matthew 5:9?
7. Would you say your life is characterised by peace (personal wholeness and beneficial relationships) or chaos?
8. Spend some time praying *eirene* into each other's lives.

Leader's Notes

PEACE. The peace of God rules my heart and mind. I stay calm in disturbing situations because my eyes are fixed on Jesus. With few exceptions (and I'm working on these) I enjoy wholesome and beautiful relationships all round. Whenever relationships are strained or fractured I take the initiative in moving toward healing and restoration. I can see the dark spots in my own life and am quick to confess them. I am willing always to pay the price of being a peace-maker in a world of bruised relationships⁷.

Q3. Peace, *eirene*. A state of rest, quietness, and calmness; an absence of strife; tranquility. It generally denotes a perfect well-being. *Eirene* includes harmonious relationships between God and men, men and men, nations, and families. Jesus as Prince of Peace gives peace to those who call upon Him for personal salvation.

Q8. *Eirene* in the New Testament has its roots in the Old Testament *shalom* which has as its root meaning the idea "well-being" in all areas of life—health, wealth, success, and security. Although the degree to which some of the particulars of *shalom* comprise part of a New Testament life of *eirene* is subject to much debate, one thing is clear linguistically—the New Testament writers inherited a basic Jewish meaning of *eirene*; we do well to remember this as we study the New Testament⁸.

⁷ <http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Bible/Galatians/Galatians-5-16-26-All.pdf>

⁸ Hayford, J. W., & Matsdorf, G. (1993). *People of the Spirit: gifts, fruit and fullness of the Holy Spirit*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Date: 9 May

Theme: Patience

Key Readings: Ephesians 4:1-3

Additional

Readings: Galatians 5:16-26; Romans 9:21-24; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 1:15-16; 2 Corinthians 6:3-10; 2 Timothy 3:10-11; Hebrews 6:12

Question from the sermon

What did God say to you through the sermon, and what caught your attention?

Questions

1. The Leader's Notes has a description of a patience filled Christian. Do you agree or disagree with it? What does it provoke in you as you look at your own life?
2. What does Romans 9:21-24 and 2 Peter 3:9 tell us about God's patience? How ought we to react to that?
3. Paul wrote words to Timothy that apply to all of us, 1 Timothy 1:15-16. What does this say about the role of patience to God and therefore to us?
4. How does the definition of patience in the Leader's notes help you understand Ephesians 4:1-3?
5. According to 2 Corinthians 6:3-10 and 2 Timothy 3:10, 11, in what life circumstance are we likely to find an understanding of what it means to be patient?
6. Are you waiting for God to fulfil a special promise in your life? How does Hebrews 6:12 help you?
7. What situations do you find the patience Paul describes in Ephesians 4:1-3 difficult? Are there any particular situations you need prayer support in?
8. Spend some time prayerfully agreeing with God that he can develop patience in your lives.

Leader's Notes

PATIENCE. I never make hasty judgements or speak hasty words. I am not quick at jumping to conclusions. I am patient with people when they fail or fall. I face opposition and discouragement with composure. I never give up. I keep cool while others are hot. I am not irritable or easily angered. My “tolerance level” is extremely high. I can put up with a lot. I accept people for who they are—and not for how they perform. When I confront others, they feel I do so because I care!⁹

Q4. Patience, *makrothumia*. From *makros*, “long,” and *thumos*, “temper.” The word denotes lenience, forbearance, fortitude, patient endurance, longsuffering. Also included in *makrothumia* is the ability to endure persecution and ill-treatment. It describes a person who has the power to exercise revenge but instead exercises restraint. It characterizes true, godly love, for “love suffers long” (1 Cor. 13:4)¹⁰.

Q7 and 8. We can conclude that the patience the Spirit wants to develop in us is the same patience repeatedly seen in God. The way in which God extended and still extends Himself to us in Christ is how we are to extend ourselves to each other in Him. It's inseparable from love (Eph. 4:2), and it knows how to balance “justice and mercy.” In short, it's a work of the Spirit whereby we long to gain insight into another's actions and respond with that insight in mind rather than responding hastily in judgment.

⁹ <http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Bible/Galatians/Galatians-5-16-26-All.pdf>

¹⁰ Hayford, J. W., & Matsdorf, G. (1993). *People of the Spirit: gifts, fruit and fullness of the Holy Spirit*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Date: 30 May

Theme: Kindness

Key Readings: Ephesians 4:32

Additional

Readings: Galatians 5:16-26; Romans 11:22; Titus 3:4-7;
Romans 3:12; Colossians 3:12-13; Luke 6:35

Question from the sermon

What did God say to you through the sermon, and what caught your attention?

Questions

1. The Leader's Notes has a description of what kindness in a Christian is like. Do you agree or disagree with it? What does it provoke in you as you look at your own life?
2. Read the definition of kindness, what strikes you about it?
3. According to Romans 11:22, who receives God's kindness?
4. How does Paul explain to Titus a way in which God's kindness is expressed (Titus 3:4-7)?
5. Romans 3:12 talking about unredeemed humanity is hard to read? What does it tell us?
6. By contrast what does Ephesians 4:32 say about how we, Christians, redeemed people of God are to behave (also Colossians 3:12-13)?
7. Coming full circle from Romans 11:22, and bearing in mind that we were once those described in Romans 3:12, what do you take from Luke 6:35?
8. In what situations do you need to develop kindness in dealing with others? Are there any particular situations you need prayer support in?
9. Spend some time praying into each other's lives.

Leader's Notes

KINDNESS. People feel “love's touch” when they're around me. I am blessed with a M- I-L-D disposition (though, occasionally, I do turn that “M” upside down). I let God deal with the bitterness, anger and malice in my heart. A deep respect and consideration for others, coupled with a forgiving spirit, makes relating to people such a pleasure! The kindness of Jesus is seen in me¹¹.

Q2: Kindness, *chrestotes*. Goodness in action, sweetness of disposition, gentleness in dealing with others, benevolence, kindness, affability. The word describes the ability to act for the welfare of those taxing your patience. The Holy Spirit removes abrasive qualities from the character of one under His control¹².

¹¹ <http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Bible/Galatians/Galatians-5-16-26-All.pdf>

¹² Hayford, J. W., & Matsdorf, G. (1993). *People of the Spirit: gifts, fruit and fullness of the Holy Spirit*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Date: 6 June

Theme: Goodness

Key Readings: Ephesians 2:10

Additional

Readings: Galatians 5:16-26; Matthew 19:16-17; 1
Chronicles 16:34; Psalm 107; Romans
7:18,24-25; Matthew 5:16; 2 Thessalonians
1:11

Question from the sermon

What did God say to you through the sermon, and what caught your attention?

Questions

1. The Leader's Notes has a description of what goodness in a Christian is like. Do you agree or disagree with it? What does it provoke in you as you look at your own life?
2. Read the definition of goodness, what strikes you?
3. For all our attempts to be good, where does Jesus tell us goodness comes from (Matthew 19:16-17)?
4. What does 1 Chronicles 16:34 tell us about God's nature?
5. What does Psalm 107 tell us about how God's goodness is expressed?
6. Romans 7:18, 24-25 is a source of great encouragement in our struggle to live out the Christian life, what do you take from it? How does it encourage you?
7. What does Ephesians 2:10 teach us?
8. What, according to Jesus in Matthew 5:16, is the result of our co-operation with the Spirit to allow the development of goodness in our lives?
9. Being honest, where do you struggle with goodness? Use 2 Thessalonians 1:11 as part of your prayer to encourage each other, and commit afresh to support each other.

Leader's Notes

GOODNESS. The goodness of God touches my life and then overflows into the lives of others. I am a caring person, a friend and neighbour to many. A genuine benevolence characterises my life. When I see a need, I respond to it in the compassion of Christ. I am sensitive to the evil and suffering around, and seek to be an instrument of God's liberating touch. Uplifting the quality of people's lives is a major concern to me.¹³

Q2: Goodness, *agathosune*. Compare "Agatha" and possibly "agate." Beneficence, kindness in actual manifestation, virtue equipped for action, a bountiful propensity both to will and to do what is good, intrinsic goodness producing a generosity and a Godlike state or being. *Agathosune* is a rare word that combines being good and doing good¹⁴.

Q5: God's goodness isn't passive, something simply to be admired like a beautiful rose, rather it is active and it leads to him doing good works. That is important to bear in mind as we work through the rest of the questions.

¹³ <http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Bible/Galatians/Galatians-5-16-26-All.pdf>

¹⁴ Hayford, J. W., & Matsdorf, G. (1993). *People of the Spirit: gifts, fruit and fullness of the Holy Spirit*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Date: 13 June

Theme: Faithfulness

Key Readings: Matthew 25:23

Additional

Readings: Galatians 5:16-26; 1 Corinthians 1:9, 10:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; 1 John 1:9; Revelation 2:10

Question from the sermon

What did God say to you through the sermon, and what caught your attention?

Questions

1. The Leader's Notes has a description of what faithfulness in a Christian is like. Do you agree or disagree with it? What does it provoke in you as you look at your own life?
2. Read the definition of faithfulness, what strikes you?
3. 1 Corinthians 1:9, 10:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; 1 John 1:9 describe attributes of God's faithfulness; what do you notice from each passage?
4. What does Matthew 25:33 tell us about how God expects us to behave? You may find it helpful to read the whole parable and discuss it.
5. What limits does God set on faithfulness in Revelation 2:10
6. Discuss with each other areas where you succeed in being faithful, and areas where you struggle. Where do you sense God is calling you to a deeper faithfulness?
7. Ultimately we can only be faithful because God is faithful, and it is the Holy Spirit who develops faithfulness in each of us. Take some time to pray for each other, particularly praying that the Holy Spirit would deepen your reliability and faithfulness, that you would increasingly become somebody who is ever more consistently faithful.

Leader's Notes

FAITHFULNESS. I make promises—and keep them. I am a man of my word. People can count on me. There is no gap in what I say and what I do. Fidelity is the hallmark of my marriage and other commitments. I do not flirt with the world—or with anyone. I am true to the Lord, to my spouse, to people, and to causes that God entrusts to me. They are all sacred to me!¹⁵

Q2: Faithfulness, *pistis*. *Pistis* has a wide range of meanings. It can refer to a body of truth which we believe; the basic trust which one has in God for salvation; or the dynamic power which realises the energy contained in the promises of God. It can be translated conviction, confidence, trust, belief, faith, reliance, trustworthiness, faithfulness, or persuasion. Thus, the idea of “faithfulness” reflects a fullness and steadfastness of such trust and trustworthiness as a character trait of the believer.

Q7: In lists of practical ethical responsibilities, as in this text, the focus is on one's reliability. Because God is faithfully dependable, the Holy Spirit is able to develop dependability in God's people. The statement regarding the early apostles and their colleagues undoubtedly holds true for all Christians: “It is required in stewards that one be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2).¹⁶

¹⁵ <http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Bible/Galatians/Galatians-5-16-26-All.pdf>

¹⁶ Hayford, J. W., & Matsdorf, G. (1993). *People of the Spirit: gifts, fruit and fullness of the Holy Spirit*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Date: 20 June
Theme: Gentleness

Key Readings: Matthew 5:5

Additional

Readings: Galatians 5:16-26; Exodus 32:15-20; 1 Peter 3:3-4; 1 Peter 3:15-16; Galatians 6:1

Question from the sermon

What did God say to you through the sermon, and what caught your attention?

Questions

1. The Leader's Notes has a description of what gentleness in a Christian is like. Do you agree or disagree with it? What does it provoke in you as you look at your own life?
2. Read the definition of gentleness, what strikes you? How does biblical gentleness differ from how the world might describe it? Moses' response in Exodus 32:15-20 may help.
3. What does Matthew 5:5 tell us is the quality expected of all Christians if we are to take our places at the end of time fulfilling the creation mandate?
4. According to Peter (1 Peter 3:3-4) what is true beauty?
5. What does 1 Peter 3:15-16 say should characterise our witness? What does that mean for how we live our day to day lives?
6. How does Galatians 6:1 guide our shared lives as believers called to be living stones built together in Ebe?
7. Gentleness is not a personality type, rather it is a heart attitude that directs how we behave toward others. Share with each other where you find this easy, and where you struggle. Then spend some time praying for each other.

Leader's Notes

Gentleness. I am willing “to go under” any yoke that God wants me to—to be SUBMISSIVE to God—and to one another out of our mutual reverence for Christ. I freely and willingly accept all that God, in His providence, gives or withholds from me. I am willing to step “under the yoke” with Christ and my co-workers in kingdom service. I am willing to step aside when it is time to do so. I bring myself under the authority of Christ and His Church. I can “glory in my infirmities so that the power of God may be made manifest in me.” I bear provocation without being inflamed by it. I give a soft answer when angry words are spoken. I respect my own rights and the rights of others, willing to give up mine if the Lord so guides me. I am a pro-actor not a reactor. I relate to others as one among sinners—never arrogantly¹⁷.

Q2: Gentleness, *praotes*. A disposition that is even-tempered, tranquil, balanced in spirit, unpretentious, and that has the passions under control. The word is best translated “meekness,” not as an indication of weakness, but of power and strength under control. The person who possesses this quality pardons injuries, corrects faults, and rules his own spirit well.

Praotes is derived from an ancient Gothic root meaning “to love.” A social virtue of high value, it was popular in ancient Greek culture and philosophy. Aristotle saw *praotes* as that happy medium between passion and no feeling at all¹⁸.

¹⁷ <http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Bible/Galatians/Galatians-5-16-26-All.pdf>

¹⁸ Hayford, J. W., & Matsdorf, G. (1993). *People of the Spirit: gifts, fruit and fullness of the Holy Spirit*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Date: 27 June

Theme: Self Control

Key Readings: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Additional

Readings: Galatians 5:16-26; Colossians 2:16-23

Question from the sermon

What did God say to you through the sermon, and what caught your attention?

Questions

1. The Leader's Notes has a description of what self-control in a Christian is like. Do you agree or disagree with it? What does it provoke in you as you look at your own life?
2. Read the definition of self-control, what strikes you? What is the difference between self-control for Christians and non-Christians? How do you react to that?
3. What does 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 say about the place of self-control in our lives as those who are seated in Christ?
4. God made us and he gave us our passions, there is nothing wrong with being passionate, yet Galatians 5:16-19 shows what happens when passions are under the control of the flesh or the devil rather than self-controlled in submission to God. What difficulties do you find in being self-controlled; when do you find yourself doing things you wish you hadn't?
5. A major stumbling block to the integrity of biblical self-control is the religious tendency to associate it with false asceticism or pharisaical righteousness. How does Paul address this in Colossians 2:16–23, and what does he propose as the proper route to biblical self-control?
6. The key to godly character, the fruit of the Spirit, is submission to the Spirit. Spend some time encouraging and praying for each other.

Leader's Notes

SELF-CONTROL. The key to my life is self-mastery. I am temperate in my thoughts, words, and actions. I live a disciplined life-in private and in public. I have complete mastery of my body, my mind, my emotions and will, my time, my possessions, my desires and appetites. I never lose control. I don't eat too much, drink too much, work too much, play too much, or sleep too much: no excesses whatever! Jesus is Lord over every area of my life!¹⁹

Q2: Self-control, *enkrateia*. Enkrateia was used by the ancient Stoics to define the person who's able to morally restrain himself when tempted by evil pleasures, so as to maintain his ethical freedom. In the New Testament it refers to allowing the Holy Spirit to empower a person so that he/she is able to voluntarily abstain from anything (especially out-of-control sexual passion) which might hinder ultimately fulfilling his/her divinely appointed task. It stands in Galatians 5:23 in contrast to the gross sins of verses 19–21²⁰.

¹⁹ <http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Bible/Galatians/Galatians-5-16-26-All.pdf>

²⁰ Hayford, J. W., & Matsdorf, G. (1993). *People of the Spirit: gifts, fruit and fullness of the Holy Spirit*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

eben[†]ezer baptist church
rockofhelp.org.uk

Columbus Ravine
Scarborough, YO12 7QZ
Registered Charity No. 1148674