

Home group / study notes: Fruit of the Spirit – Self control

Feel free to use as much or as little as you wish. As we study the fruit of the Spirit, the aim is to encourage us to become better disciples by being more aware of God's nature being reflected by us and developed within us.

At the home group leaders' meeting last week we discussed ways in which we can get to know one another a little better. It is good to allow for this regularly so that our groups remain accessible to new people and so that we also continue to grow in fellowship.

If you are able to contact people, suggest they bring along an object which says something about them (or a picture of it if it is too large!) and share these. Or, at the start, try asking:

- talk about your name – how you feel about it, where it comes from; what you might have prefer to have been named

Read Rom 7:18-20 What are the *real* controlling influences in your life? Can you relate to Paul's thoughts here? Read verses 21-23. The human dilemma. Christianity alone among religions addresses this realistically, rather than pretending that by more and more stringent rules and inducing guilt, human nature can be changed.

*As with the other flavours of the fruit of the Spirit, an act of will is required to exercise self-control; however it is only **fruitful** when seen as liberating because God knows our true humanity and has taken the necessary steps himself to rescue us despite them.*

Think of some aspects of self-control. Can you think of any ways in which it is positive (not just in outcome but in exercising it)? Compare self-control with its opposite, self-indulgence. Is self-indulgence always positive?

Read Hebrews 12:1 How are we to exert self-control here? In what ways does it take self control to 'lay down' or 'throw off' things which hinder us from doing what God may want now? Notice that the implication is that of putting down a great weight so that you can run better. What might God be asking you to let go of? Worries? Fears for the unknown future for yourself, your family, your elderly relatives, your job? Have you got the self control to allow God to do that releasing?

Notice that many of the things which weigh us down are not evil; but God just doesn't want us to be carrying them at the moment.

Notice that the word 'exercise' is often put in front of self-control. What does this imply?

Here are one person's examples of self control:

Turn the cold tap of criticism down and turn the hot tap of encouraging right up full.

Turn the cold tap of manipulating down and turn the hot tap of loving right up full.

What might yours be?

Read 2 Tim 1:6-7 Not the same Greek word for self-discipline', but close in meaning. Notice the three qualities God promises. Can you describe a time when self-control was 'empowering' for you? How could we promote it as a positive thing to self-preoccupied generations? In **Acts 24:25** the Roman governor was clearly affected by Paul's testimony.

Read 2 Peter 1:1-8 (one of Sunday's readings). Pray for those you have thought about, and for and increase of God's blessings on each other. Finish with Romans 7:25.

Review the fruit of the Spirit in **Gal 5:23**. Which areas does God want you to work on at the moment?

Please note that next week (beginning Mon 2nd April) will be Holy Week. I suggest that groups aim to come to the Maundy Thursday service, so there won't be any study notes. However any groups that do meet could review the 'Fruit of the Spirit' series and re-visit any areas where issues were raised.