

11:36 p.m.

I'm so tired, Lord. So tired.

I get up, go to school, come home, study, go to bed, get up, go to school, come home... On and on goes this endless cycle of a school year.

When will it end? I hate Science so much. My teacher always swears. My mom called me irresponsible for putting her carving knife in the dishwasher, instead of washing it by hand. I wish I were 20. Or else, I wish I were 5.

I hate being 17. It's too "inbetween-ish." There's too much to think about. If I pull the covers over my head, will life go away?

6:45 a.m.

Good morning, Lord!

I love You. I'm so glad You'll be going with me to school today. I really need You. And by the way, thanks for listening to me even when I act like such a crab.

Pathway

PERSONAL CHRISTIAN GROWTH SERIES

Set aside a special time each day to go through a Pathway study. Even if you miss a day or two, don't skip those studies. Begin again where you left off! Each daily study is designed to take only 10-12 minutes, or longer ... it's up to you! Be honest with yourself. This is a private time just between you and God.

Introduction — *Self-Control*

Take a few seconds to think. When do you most often lose control? Perhaps your biggest problem with self-control lies in the area of anger, poor study habits, relationships, or family situations. Do you ever feel like you're the only one who can't handle life? God understands what you're going through. He promises to help you get control of those out-of-control areas in your life? This Pathway study tells you how.

DAY ONE — Self-Control

SPEND TIME IN PRAYER: Ask God to help you see where you need help in controlling your life. Thank Him for the victories He's promised to give. Praise Him for His love and power.

VERSE TO THINK ABOUT: *Seek the Lord, and His strength: seek His face evermore (Psalm 105:4).*

Me ... Have a Problem?

"Now, Kim," the Drama teacher said. "You must put more feeling into your character. Let the anger build until you lose total control and scream at your mother."

"I'll try ..." Kim moaned in frustration. "But it doesn't come very naturally."

Just then, Jenny, Kim's best friend, interrupted: "Go ahead, Kim, yell just like you yell at your own mother, and you'll be great!"

As the rest of the cast laughed, nobody noticed the hurt look in Kim's eyes. Kim thought of the old saying, "The truth always hurts." In this case, the truth hurt very deep.

Life was going great for Kim until her dad and mom were divorced. Then, classes at school suddenly seemed to get more difficult. Mom started expecting her to help more at home. And, no matter what Kim said or did, or no matter what she wore, her mother complained.

With all the pressures and problems building up inside - and no one to talk to - Kim felt like she would explode. And that's exactly what was happening time and time again. Kim thought she had a right to express her anger. *After all*, she reasoned, *I didn't ask for all these bad things to happen. It's not my fault!*

Maybe you've never experienced problems like Kim's. Then again, maybe you have. Think about the areas of your life in which you lose control most often and write them here.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Perhaps your problem with self-control lies in the area of anger, poor study habits, boyfriend/girlfriend relationships, or family situations. Do you ever feel like you're the only one who has these problems? Well, believe it or not, you're not alone!

A Look in the Book: Losing self-control is as old as the Bible itself. Let's take a look at the disciple, Peter. Peter experienced the loss of self-control when he was accused of being friends with Christ.

Read John 18:15-18, 25-27 to see what happened. And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spoke unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, "Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?" He saith, "I am not." And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself. ... And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, "Art not thou also one of His disciples?" He denied it, and said, "I am not." One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, "Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?" Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.

Poor Peter! He wanted to do right, but so often lost control of the situation. He even seemed to forget everything Christ had just recently taught him.

Have you ever felt like Peter — embarrassed, scared, and feeling as though you can't handle life? Write about a time when you felt this way.

Peter struggled, lost control, and then struggled some more. Yet Christ was always ready and willing to forgive Peter and give him a fresh start. Peter had denied Christ. But look at what the angel told the women at the grave after Christ had risen from the dead. "... *But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter ...*" (Mark 16:7).

Isn't that great! The angel specifically said to tell Peter that Christ was now alive. Even though Peter had denied the Lord, Christ still loved him and was his friend!

Think for a minute. Would you honestly like to gain control of difficult situations you're experiencing? God's Word promises that it can be done! During the next several days, you'll learn more about how to gain control of out-of-control areas in your life!

DAY TWO — Self-Control

SPEND TIME IN PRAYER: Ask God to show you areas in which you can be more responsible. Ask Him to help you become like Daniel.

VERSE TO THINK ABOUT: *Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful (1 Cor. 4:2).*

You Can Call Me ... Irresponsible!

“Hi, Jodi! Got a minute?” Karen asked over the phone. “Boy, you wouldn’t believe how bad my day was! First, I was late for school. I just didn’t get up! You know how I’ve tried to get into the habit of getting up on time? But I just don’t.

“Then when I got to school, I realized I had a Chemistry test. Guess who forgot to study ... you’re right! It was me. After I failed that test, I was really mad. Then Laura comes walking down the hall. She makes this wisecrack about how my hair looks today. Hey, how does she expect it to look? I got up late and didn’t have time to fix it. Laura can be such a pain!

“The end of the day was worse. Mrs. Johnson kicked me out of the vocal ensemble because I skipped a few rehearsals and didn’t have my part memorized. Oh well, I guess I really didn’t want to be in that group anyway. People say I need to be more responsible. Sometimes I think they might be right ...”

Maybe you’ve recently had a day like Jodi’s. Or maybe you’ve had more of this kind than you care to remember! ***If Jodi were talking to you, how would you react towards her irresponsibility?***

- Sympathetic, because I’m irresponsible at times, too
- Indifferent, because it’s not my problem
- Annoyed, because she’s old enough to know better
- Amused, because it’s actually pretty funny

Let’s look at this area of responsibility. It’s a part of self-control. You can discipline yourself to be responsible! In the Bible, we find those who were responsible (faithful) and those who were irresponsible (unfaithful).

A Look in the Book: *Read Daniel 6:4 to learn about someone who was responsible. Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.*

Can you imagine being like this? Daniel had learned that part of living a successful life is to be a responsible, self-controlled person.

What is one area in which you’d like to become more responsible?

Now read Ezekiel 33:6. Ezekiel warns of the consequences of being irresponsible. *But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman’s hand.*

The watchman’s job was to guard and warn the people when an enemy invaded the land. The Bible gives a very vivid example of the disaster that would come if the watchman failed to be alert and responsible. Similarly, you have responsibility to warn people about the danger of rejecting Christ!

A moment ago, you wrote about an area in which you need to become more responsible. ***What kind of “disaster” may happen to you and those around you if you continue in the direction you’re heading?***

To you: _____

To others: _____

Think about how disciplined you are in the area of responsibility. ***Write one recent situation in which you showed responsibility, and one time when you didn’t.***

Responsible: _____

Irresponsible: _____

What can you do to change this “irresponsible” area?

Being a responsible teen will help self-control become a reality for you. Whether it means taking out the trash, doing your homework, being on time to class, or attending youth meetings regularly, do your best to show responsibility!



DAY THREE — Self-Control

SPEND TIME IN PRAYER: Thank God for the lessons we can learn from Timothy. Then thank God for making you who you are. Ask Him to help you become the best worker possible for Him.

VERSE TO THINK ABOUT: *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me (Phil. 4:13).*

I Can Handle It ... I Think

At last! It was the day of the state basketball tournament. The boys from Central had practiced long hours to become the first team from their school to ever reach State Finals. Emotions were running high!

It had been a close game, but Central now trailed by one point with 12 seconds left in the final quarter. Suddenly, what everyone had feared happened! Central's star shooter fouled out.

Coach Jones looked at his reserves on the bench. Little did he realize that one player, Bill Thomas, was silently thinking. *Please don't pick me.* Coach Jones, however, was now motioning for Billy to report in.

"Billy," said Coach Jones, "we only have 12 seconds left to score. They'll pass the ball to you, and you put it up. MAKE IT COUNT! Can you handle it?"

Bill sighed, "I can handle it ..." But as he ran onto the court, Coach Jones thought he heard two other words whispered, almost inaudibly, from Billy. They were, "... I think."

One of the reasons you may have trouble with self-discipline is that you doubt the abilities and talents which God has given you. What is one area in which you feel inadequate, and, therefore, don't always do your best?

A Look in the Book: Let's take a look at a man in the Bible who struggled in this area. Timothy grew up being instructed in the Scriptures by his mother and grandmother. When Paul first met Timothy, he saw what a valuable worker he would be someday for the cause of Christ.

But Timothy doubted himself. He wasn't sure he was really cut out for a ministry in church leadership. "I'm too shy, too timid," he probably said to himself over and over. "Maybe someone else could do a better job."

But look up 2 Timothy 1:7 and read what the Apostle Paul wrote to his younger friend, Timothy.

Wow! Paul had confidence in Timothy, and wanted Timothy to develop a self-confident, godly attitude. With these three elements - power, love, and a sound mind (self-control), Timothy could overcome his fear and shyness. He could conquer the "I'm-not-good-enough attitude."

First, God hasn't given us a spirit of fear (or timidity), but of POWER. Through Christ, we can have power over our fears! *I can do all things through Christ ... (Phil. 4:13).* Self-control comes from knowing you CAN do it with God's power.

Secondly, God hasn't given us a spirit of timidity, but of LOVE. When you love others, you won't be so concerned about yourself. You'll be more willing to give of yourself. **Take a look at Colossians 3:12-14.** *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity [love], which is the bond of perfectness.*

Thirdly, God hasn't given us a spirit of timidity, but rather of a SOUND MIND (or self-control). God wants you to have a positive attitude! He wants you to believe in what He'll do through you. A sound mind won't allow Satan to convince you that you're worthless. **Read Philippians 4:8.** *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*

At times, you'll have fears and doubts about yourself and about your ability to live a "controlled" life. When you start to doubt, remember Timothy. He doubted the abilities God gave him. But he, like you, was told to not be afraid. Rather, he was encouraged to depend upon the power of God in his Christian service. He could experience, through Christ, self-control and a sound mind.

Look back to what you wrote earlier about an area in which you feel inadequate. Then think through the three qualities of power, love, and a sound mind. Choose one of these qualities which you can specifically apply in your situation. Write how it could change your feelings of inadequacy.

DAY FOUR — Self-Control

SPEND TIME IN PRAYER: Thank God for those people whom He has set in authority over you, and how they want to help you grow in your Christian life. Ask God to help you control your life as you obey and respect your parents and Christian leaders.

VERSE TO THINK ABOUT: *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors ... (1 Peter. 2:13-14).*

Lord, Take Control of Me ... Please!

Do you recognize any of the following conversations?

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| “Clean up your room.” | “Later.” |
| “Take out the trash.” | “Why do I have to do all the work?” |
| “Would you watch your little sister?” | “Not now, I’m too busy!” |
| “Where are you going tonight?” | “It’s none of your business.” |
| “Would you please be quiet!” | “I wasn’t talking!” |

Sound familiar? On your road toward self-control and self-discipline, one of the areas you have to deal with is learning to respect authority.

You may think you’ll never be able to get along with your parents or teachers. But with God’s help, you can make real progress in this area! Are you ready to give it a try? This one may seem hard, but hang in there!

Let’s look at various authorities with whom you may have trouble controlling your feelings. See what God says about how you should respond to them.

A Look in the Book: One of the first authorities you may have trouble with is your parents. Maybe you think they’re too strict, or they don’t understand you. (Maybe they are, and maybe they don’t!) But God still has guidelines concerning how you should respond to your mom and dad.

Read Colossians 3:20. *Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.* In how many ways are you to obey your parents?

Now read Deuteronomy 5:16. *Honor thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.* God not only wants you to honor your parents, but also promises good things for those who do. Wouldn’t it be great to get rid of some of the hassles at home? Try what God says and enjoy the results!

Write three specific areas in which you could show more honor and respect to your parents.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Other authorities you might struggle with are your youth leaders, the pastor, and others “in charge.” Perhaps you think they’re unfair, they pick on you, or they expect too much work from you. And you may be right! But let’s look at how you should react to them, regardless of how well they do their job.

Read Hebrews 13:7. *Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.* God’s Word says that you must show honor or respect to those in church leadership. You can be respectful and obey them because God says that is what He expects you to do. Don’t forget that He is always willing to help you through the hard times. This includes even when showing respect to someone seems impossible!

Do you want to get your life under control? Are you willing to trust God? Will you let God help you control your life in the areas of obedience and respect to authorities? If you answer “Yes” to these questions, you have just taken another positive step in the area of self-control.

On My Own: If you struggle with authority, don’t give up. You’re not alone. Think of a pastor or youth pastor you respect. In the next couple of days, ask him if he ever has trouble with authority. If he does, ask how he handles the problem. Then ask him to pray with you. **After your talk with him and with God, write how you feel about what you learned.**

Would your parents die of shock if you showed them respect?

DAY FIVE — Self-Control

SPEND TIME IN PRAYER: Ask Him to give you the strength to keep going, no matter how hard and frustrating life might be. Trust God to guide and direct you to be all He desires for you.

VERSE TO THINK ABOUT: *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted [tried] like as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15).*

Whoops! ... Slipped Again

The youth meeting was over. As the teens relaxed and talked with each other, Tom noticed Susan sitting all alone. She seemed unhappy.

“Something wrong, Susan?” Tom asked. Susan shook her head.

“Come on, Susan, we’re friends,” Tom urged. “Talk to me.”

“I just get so frustrated,” Susan finally answered. “Tonight we talked about self-control. I’ve tried so hard these past couple weeks to do what the Bible says, and I just keep blowing it. I’m so discouraged. I feel like giving up ...”

This week, you’ve been learning about different areas which demonstrate the amount of self-control you have - or don’t have. When you try to live a life in control, rather than out of control, you’ll have many times when you slip and blow it. Whether you rebound (get up and try again), or just give up and quit, depends on how you handle these disappointments. **How do you feel after you lose control of a situation?**

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and He delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand (Psalm 37:23-24).

Remember, God wants you to win in your spiritual life! Too often, however, Christians make excuses rather than trust God. Let’s look at some of the promises God has given to encourage you to live a self-controlled, fulfilled Christian life.

Your excuse — “I’m not strong enough.”

God’s promise — Isaiah 41:10: *Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.*

Your excuse — “I’m afraid I’ll just fail again.”

God’s promise — Psalm 37:24: *Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand.*

Your excuse — “I feel all alone.”

God’s promise — Isaiah 43:1-3: *But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, “Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior ...”*

Your excuse — “Life’s too tough, I can’t handle it.”

God’s promise — Philippians 4:13: *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

You can allow yourself to be afraid, weak, and totally out of control ... or you can trust God!

Do you remember the disciple, Peter, you studied on Day 1? If someone had given out medals for trying and failing, Peter would have won the gold! He tried and failed over and over again. Yet, as Peter trusted and allowed God to control his life, he turned out to be a very different kind of person than he was before.

Read Acts 2:14, 38 and 5:29. *But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, “Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words ...” Then Peter said unto them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost ...” Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, “We ought to obey God rather than men.”* Does that sound like the “old” Peter speaking? Peter developed and grew into a bold preacher of the gospel. **Write below why you think Peter changed.**

Peter trusted God and let the Holy Spirit guide him. He didn’t just sit there when he failed. He got back up! With God’s help, he got his life in control. You can do this, too! **List two major areas of your life which you would like to see changed in regards to self-control or self-discipline.**

1. _____
2. _____

Now share these things with the Lord Jesus. Ask Him to help you in these areas. Believe His Word and remember that He is always with you, even when you fail. Ask Him to pick you up and get you going in the right direction.

As you grow in your Christian life, failures and disappointments will come. Don’t quit! Trust God! Don’t settle for second-best. Go for the gold!



DAY SIX — Self-Control

Hiding It in My Heart: To finish this week off right, *memorize this verse today!*

This Book ... shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night ... for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success (Josh. 1:8).

SPEND TIME IN PRAYER: Thank God for the lessons He has taught you this week. Ask Him to make the desire of your life to be like Him.

VERSE TO THINK ABOUT: *Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord (Psalm 107:43).*

Success — At Last!

The crowd cheers loudly as the first runner in the Boston Marathon crosses the finish line. SUCCESS!

The quarterback holds the ball high as he runs into the end zone for the touchdown. SUCCESS!

The high-school senior smiles as she receives her diploma. SUCCESS!

The minister pronounces the couple husband and wife. SUCCESS!

“Look, Mom, no cavities.” SUCCESS!

If you thought about it for a minute, you could come up with many more examples of what people today call success. You’ve been learning this week, however, that real success comes as the Christian relies on God and learns to live a disciplined life.

A Look in the Book: *Read Psalm 1:1-3. Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*

The Psalmist tells the result of living a godly, self-controlled life. Write what God says will happen (especially in your witness for Him) when you live a self-controlled life that is yielded to God’s will (see end of verse 3).

God reminds us that doing what He said is the key to having real success and happiness in life.

As you’ve looked at yourself more closely this week, you’ve seen areas involving self-control which need improving. Each day you’ve studied different aspects of attaining a self-controlled, godly life. Let’s end the week by looking in God’s Word again for some helpful ideas on how to continue having that success in your Christian life.

1. Joshua 1:8: *This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*

Key to success: Read your Bible

2. Psalm 119:11: *Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.*

Key to success: Memorize Scripture

3. Psalm 55:16-17: *As for me, I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and He shall hear my voice.*

Key to success: Pray

4. Proverbs 27:17: *Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.*

Key to success: Share with a Christian friend

5. Hebrews 10:25: *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

Key to success: Go to church and youth meetings

When you allow Christ to control your life, self-control won’t be a problem. Self-control is really Christ-control!

Matthew 6:33 says: *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

Joshua 24:15 says: *... choose you this day whom ye will serve ...*

Starting today, will you choose to let God control your life?

___ Yes ___ No

If you say “Yes,” you’ve just made one of the most important choices in your Christian life. Go out there and live for God! Show the world what SUCCESS really is!

