

Sermon Transcript

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So I hail from Southern California.

I teach at Loma Linda University, and I am so blessed and so happy to be here today.

I love talking about families, and today we'll be talking about fruits of the Spirit, specifically the ninth fruit of the Spirit.

In chapter five of Paul's letter to the church in Galatia, which is located in central Turkey, he penned this famous list.

Say them with me if you know them.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Good.

These fruits of the Spirit are not what save us.

They are not a way to obtain God's favor or get more grace.

He has already freely offered that to us.

Instead, these fruits of the Spirit flavor our behavior in our relationships, and they teach us how to love each other better.

But if we're honest with ourselves, do these fruits of the Spirit always show up on our relationships?

Not for me.

For me, they only show up inconsistently, intermittently, on the good days with the right people.

How often is there a consistent pattern of being loving, joyous, peaceful, kinder than kittens, patient, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, all the way down to self-control?

Self-control has always felt like the ugly duckling of the bunch.

It seems different.

And I think this ninth fruit of the Spirit actually affects how often the other eight fruits of the Spirit actually show up in our relationships.

Let's pray.

Father God, Father of lights, you are a good Father who knows how to give good gifts to your children.

I pray you take my words this morning and transform them into whatever words you need them to be.

Please speak to me, speak to us, and help us know you more, amen.

So what is this self-control fruit that Paul is talking about?

Christians have often framed self-control as not doing bad things, as in restraining ourselves from sinning.

So many of us might be thinking about the fruits of the Spirit as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and not sinning.

And this might be an unfortunate misunderstanding as to what self-control actually is.

The immediate context around the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5 is chock full of verses about the battle between the flesh and the Spirit.

And those who belong to Christ have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires.

And if we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

And from this walking with the Spirit, from this context, the fruits of the Spirit will grow.

And I'd suggest that even though the night fruit is self-control, many of us might read into the text the word self-restraint instead of self-control.

Maybe partially influenced because some older English versions use the word temperance here instead of self-control.

But there's an important distinction between self-restraint versus self-control.

Yes, self-control and self-restraint sound similar.

Might actually use them interchangeably in certain contexts like at the blessed potluck dessert table.

But there is a difference between self-restraint versus self-control.

The Greek word used here is the noun ekratas, pertaining to have one's emotions, impulses, or desires under control.

Self-controlled, discipline.

King Solomon in Proverbs 16, verse 32 also addresses this idea when he says, he who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit better than he who captures a city.

Now, I'm not a general, but I don't think you capture a city on accident.

There's planning, preparing, persistence, et cetera, et cetera.

So let's look at another passage where Paul uses the same word ekratas, but in the verb form.

This is his first letter to the church in Corinth in 1 Corinthians chapter nine.

And here Paul is a youth pastor using a sports metaphor trying to convey an idea to his audience.

So we'll be starting with verse 24.

1 Corinthians, verse nine.

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize?

Run in such a way that you may win.

Everyone who keeps peeps in the games, here's the verb, exercises self-control.

They're doing self-controlling in all things.

They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

Therefore, I run in such a way as not without aim, and I box in such a way as not beating the air, but I discipline my body and make it my slave so that after I've preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

So Paul seems to be using a lot of training and doing associated with this idea of self-control.

So let's take a moment to untangle this.

Self-restraint is restraining ourselves from doing bad things, even though we might feel like doing it.

And this is good, but self-restraint is not a fruit of the spirit.

Self-control is a fruit of the spirit, which means there is some doing involved, not just restraining.

The self-control is both restraining ourselves from doing bad things or hurtful things, even though we might feel like doing it, and getting ourselves to do

good things, even when we don't feel like doing those good things.

The pairing of these two elements is crucial for understanding self-control, because self-control is both the ability to stop ourselves from doing bad things, even when we feel like doing them, and getting ourselves to do good things, even if we don't feel like doing them.

Unfortunately, many of us have been settling for self-restraint, stopping ourselves from doing good things, instead of aiming for self-control, which includes the whole enchilada of both stopping ourselves from doing bad things, even when we feel like doing them, and doing good things, even if we don't really feel like doing those good things.

Leviticus 19, verse 18 has a really good example of this.

Two pieces of restraining ourselves from doing bad things, and getting ourselves to do good things, even if we don't feel like it.

The context of Leviticus 19, is God has taken the children of Israel, who have been captive down in Egypt as slaves, and he's taken them across the harsh desert, into the promised land.

Leviticus 19, God is talking about economy, worship, and social expectations.

So look at the first part of the verse, which is about self-restraint, not doing bad things, and then look at the second part of the verse, which is about getting ourselves to do good things, even if we don't feel like it.

You shall not take vengeance, nor hold any grudge against the sons of your people.

Self-restraint.

But you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

I am the Lord.

Can you imagine what would happen, if people were holding grudges across multiple generations?

Of course we can.

We know there are grudges being held across multiple generations, and that has changed the geopolitical climate of our world today.

And God is saying, I don't want you to do this.

So, unfortunately, many of us have been settling for this self-restraint, instead of aiming for self-control, and what happens is, if we don't feel like doing something, we may not do it, even if it's a good thing.

What happens is, if I don't feel like displaying the other eight fruits of the Spirit, then I may not display the other eight fruits of the Spirit, if I don't feel like doing it at that point in time.

There's a famous author, C.S.

Lewis, maybe you've heard of him, and he has a book called "The Problem of Pain," and in "The Problem of Pain," he says this, everybody feels benevolent, as long as nothing happens to be annoying him at the moment.

But in our daily lives, how often do we have long stretches of time, where nothing is annoying us, and we feel benevolent?

Don't we experience stress and anxiety, spillover from work, school, neighbors, TV, the news, radio, friends, family, church?

So how often are we going to feel benevolent?

What's challenging is, we have these emotions that play an integral role into how we behave with other people.

As a family therapist, I love emotions, but I know emotions by themselves are not categorically positive or negative, good or bad, they are neutral.

Our experience of the emotions might be pleasant or unpleasant, but the emotions themselves are just sources of information about our well-being and the world around us.

But if I'm not feeling in a good mood, if I'm not feeling benevolent, I'm much less likely to exhibit the other fruits of the Spirit.

Because when I'm stressed and upset, Brian is much more likely to act unlovingly, not kind, not at peace, impatient, et cetera, et cetera.

And I'm not someone you want to be around when I'm upset.

In fact, I don't even like being by myself when I'm upset.

Ultimately, I'm less likely to be in control of myself when I'm upset, which means I'm less likely to exhibit the other eight fruits of the Spirit when I'm upset.

There's a Japanese proverb that says, "The reputation of a thousand years "can be determined by the conduct of one hour."

I think the reverse can also be true.

The reputation of a thousand years can be ruined by the conduct of one hour.

I'm guessing most of us have come across devout followers of Christ, Christians who are fervent Christians, but maybe we know someone who tends to act differently when they encounter someone who thinks differently than they do.

What happens is they might exhibit the other eight fruits of the Spirit on a regular basis, but if they do not have self-control, this person then exhibits this hostility towards someone who disagrees with them.

And this hostility of this emotionally reactive behavior jeopardizes the integrity of their theology

and sours their credibility as acting ambassadors for Christ because they show they're more interested in winning an argument at the expense of loving others.

Paul also knew some people like this in Corinth.

Later on in his letter to the church in Corinth, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13, verse two, "If I have the gift of prophecy "and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, "I can break things down in your understanding "of Revelation and Daniel "so that even Alan can understand it."

Where are you, Alan?

Thank you.

"If I can understand all this complexity "and explain it in such a way "that even you could understand it, "and if I have faith that can move mountains, "but I don't have love, "then I am nothing."

Paul understands what's important here.

He's trying to convey this to his audience.

I think there are some good biblical examples of what it's like to not always showcase love or the fruits of the spirit when you're upset.

So woe to us who have difficulty controlling our emotions and are blown about by the waves of our emotions and the emotional wind pushing and pulling us, and we are at the mercy of doing whatever we are feeling at that moment in time.

I think of Moses, who is leading the whining children of Israel through the desert, and in one moment of upsetness, he struck the rock instead of speaking to it.

I think of Balaam and his Old Testament road rage.

I also think of Peter, zealot Peter, who just a few hours earlier had pulled out his sword to defend his savior, but is now being falsely accused of being with that Nazarene.

How we behave is strongly influenced by our moment-by-moment emotions.

The good news is we can become better at not reacting with our emotions.

Indeed, self-control is more about not allowing your emotions to dictate your behavior.

Instead, you're living in accordance with your values despite the transient emotions you might experience.

I think there are some good biblical examples of this as well.

I think of Esther, planning, praying, preparing, walking into the king's throne room when Esther could have been saying, this is not gonna work, this is too risky, this is too much, I don't know what I'm doing here.

But instead, she did it anyways.

I think Joseph, continually refusing to give into Potiphar's wife's friend requests.

I also think of the Good Samaritan, who had a lot of really important reasons why maybe this person would not want to help the stranger on the side of the road.

Maybe there are some political justifications or some racial discrimination.

Really important reasons why you would not want to help a stranger on the side of a road where there might be some other bandits.

But instead, the Good Samaritan helped out anyways.

Which I think tells us some of the most powerful things we can do in our lives are the things that come after.

After acknowledging that I'm afraid or worried, I still find a way to do the thing that I'm scared of.

Why?

Because I know it's the right thing to do.

After I realize I'm upset or frustrated with someone else, I still find a way to treat that person with some respect.

Because I believe they are a child of God and they are worthy of respect.

After I realize I don't know what I'm doing, I'm not sure how to get out of this, I still find a way to show up.

Because I said I would and I want to be a person of my word.

So I wonder if we've been thinking about self-control all backwards.

By focusing too much on the outcome, whether or not we do something, instead of focusing on the process.

Namely that our emotions do not have to dictate our behavior.

Self-control is accepting our emotions for what they are, but then choosing to live in accordance with our values in spite of these transient emotions.

This means we have to recognize we have emotions, maybe listen to what they're telling us, but still live in accordance with our values despite what we feel.

Because emotions come, they grow, and then they go.

In the world of mental health, there is a concept called urge surfing.

Has anyone heard of the term urge surfing before?

Oh great, some new stuff.

Urge surfing is the concept that when you have this urge to do something bad, the urge will come, it will grow, it'll cap, it'll crest like a wave, then it will crash and it will dissipate.

This is very predictable.

This is usually in the world of addiction or self-harming behavior or doing bad things that hurt yourself or other people.

So the urges are very predictable in that they come, they show up, they grow, and then they go.

So you have to surf that urge and not give into it.

You don't know when the urge will come, you know it will come, and when it shows up, it follows this predictable pattern of coming, growing, and then going.

Wouldn't people be surprised if we were able to surf the urges of our powerful emotions instead of giving into them?

My friends, this would turn some heads.

If you are a person who has powerful emotions, powerful feelings, but don't give into them and are still able to act in accordance with your values, people will see you very differently.

They expect you to turn rancid when you're upset or do they expect you to showcase the other fruits of the Spirit on a regular basis?

'Cause that's really the problem, isn't it?

When we don't feel like it, we may not showcase the other eight fruits of the Spirit.

So whether or not we show our fruits of the Spirit, if that's dependent on how we feel, people don't know what to expect from us.

They expect to see love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control or do they expect to not see those when we're upset?

I think that Paul purposefully mentioned love as the first fruit of the Spirit 'cause it's the first and the greatest.

But I think it was also by design that self-control is the final fruit of the Spirit.

The self-control is that fruity linchpin.

Without it, the other fruits of the Spirit rapidly fluctuate in and out of season depending on how I'm feeling at that particular moment in time.

Thus, my inability to respond in accordance with my values may mean that I'm reacting in accordance with my emotions and end up saying things or doing things that hurt other people.

I'm gonna take a risk here.

Raise your hand if you've ever been upset and you've said something or done something that hurt someone else.

Okay, so some of us know a little bit what I'm talking about, okay.

Oftentimes, when we react in accordance with our emotions, we end up, we're not thinking about long-term consequences, we're thinking about short-term survival.

We end up saying things and doing things that are not necessarily in alignment with our values.

And so we end up hurting other people or hurting other relationships.

So the question is, how can we cultivate more self-control?

How can we have more self-control in our life?

Because you can't force self-control to grow no more than you can force a tomato plant to produce fruit.

You can give it good sunlight, good soil, some fresh water, a good space to grow, maybe some opportune pruning.

So you can be intentional about allowing your tomato plant to grow, but you can't force it to grow.

So what can we do to cultivate more self-control?

What can we do to alter our lives in such a way that we can allow self-control to exhibit more often in our life?

(silence) My first suggestion is the opposite of an old, old parenting strategy.

Raise your hand if you've ever heard of time out before.

Okay, good.

So for those of you who did not raise your hands, I'll tell you what time out is, or I'll attempt to.

Supporters of time out have this idea that children get upset, they're emotionally dysregulated, and you're giving them a chance to calm down, just to simmer down, to take the edge off those powerful emotions, 'cause often they're acting out in such a way that we do not approve of.

So time out gives the child an opportunity to go off by themselves, just take the edge off, so that then they can come back to the family and behave in accordance with the rules that they are expected to follow.

This about right?

Yeah, okay.

But in most time out situations, kids, especially small kiddos, will experience time out as a punishment, because they are removed from

community, they are removed from their support network just because they expressed big emotions.

Big emotions, which most of us adults were oppressively trained not to express.

So what happens is, we have these kiddos who are set off by themselves, and not having these big emotions, and we're thinking that these kids will learn how to self-regulate, emotionally regulate themselves.

But what they will probably learn how to do is emotionally suppress those emotions.

'Cause most of us, as we're moving into adulthood, we might think we learned emotional regulation skills, but most of us probably actually learned emotional suppression skills, so that we would not get in trouble with our family and our friends.

Instead, we learn how to suppress our emotions and behave in accordance with the rules of our family.

So here's the uncomfortable irony.

By the time most of us reach adulthood, whatever that is, most of us have been trained that it is unacceptable to showcase our big emotions.

But we are never taught how to handle these big feelings, or what are we supposed to do when these big feelings do come and we can't suppress them?

What are we supposed to do then?

So what happens is, we grow up uncomfortable with our big emotions, as we're learning how to suppress them.

So if someone else nearby shows big emotions, there's a natural resonance between you and me, and you and me, and if you're upset, or you're upset, I will start to feel uncomfortable, because I'm uncomfortable with my own big emotions.

And if I can't handle my big emotions, this means I do not know how to handle your big emotions.

So the best way for me to feel calm is to get away from the person who is not calm.

What this means is, we tell ourselves that timeout is a strategy for kids.

But timeout is actually a strategy for adults, to help adults feel calmer.

Because the best way for us to feel calmer is to remove the person that is not calm.

Then we feel better.

So what would actually help kids?

Because kids outbursts and tantrums, they are a form of communication.

This is saying, help me, I'm overwhelmed, I don't know what to do, help me.

This means the child is not throwing the tantrum, rather the tantrum is throwing the child.

So we're expecting this child, who is being thrown by their tantrum, to go into a corner by themselves and figure out a way to calm down, which would be a tall ask for most of us to do.

If we continue this pattern, these kids will learn how to either numb their emotions or suppress their emotions, because whenever they express them, they get in trouble.

Or they will learn not to talk about these emotions to other people, because if we start to talk about our emotions, we start to feel these emotions more, and all of a sudden we're at risk at showcasing more of these emotions, and then we get in trouble.

So what would actually help kiddos is time in, not time out, time in.

Time in with a calm parent, a calm caregiver who's able to share their calmness with the child, co-regulating, that is the most powerful thing you can do, help someone calm down.

What happens is, the caregiver takes the child and maybe the child sits on their lap, or they sit on the stairs, or they go for a walk, and this shows the big child, sorry, the child with the big emotions, this teaches the child that these big emotions are not too big for their caregiver.

And if these big emotions are not too big for the caregiver, maybe eventually the child will figure out a way, "Ah, these big emotions won't be too big for me either."

And after the child calms down, after the caregiver shares their calmness with the child, then we can have a conversation about, "Wow, those are big feelings, huh?"

"What can we do differently?"

"Where did they come from?"

And explore those sort of things.

So the connection has to come before the correction.

And in doing so, you're giving the child an opportunity to feel what it feels like to have big emotions, and then to calm down and deal with those emotions.

Because just like upsetness can spread from person to person, calmness also spreads.

I know some adults might be saying, "Yeah, but my child's behavior needs to change."

That's true, maybe, but it's usually the adult's reaction to the behavior that needs to change first.

If you can change that behavior in reaction to the child's behavior, ah, you're creating space for the

child to be able to learn how to actually manage their emotions.

Now I'm looking around, and some of you might be thinking, "Brian, not all of us have little kiddos right now.

"So you drove all the way from Southern California.

"Do you have anything for us?

"Because we know that children stop having temper tantrums "when they turn nine years old."

Or did children stop having temper tantrums when they turned 10, or 11, or 12?

Let's actually tap into the wisdom of the room.

I'm curious. [mouse clicks] Raise your hand when I get to the age when children stop having temper tantrums.

Deal?

So raise it high when I get to the age when children stop having temper tantrums. 15, children stop having temper tantrums when they're 15. 16, 17, hopefully by 18 when they get their driver's license.

Raise your hand if kids stop having temper tantrums when they're 18.

Got a few hands, okay.

So I don't know if this means you're not hearing me.

Maybe you don't play these sort of games very often up in front of church.

Let me explain the rules again.

Raise your hand when I get to the age when children stop having temper tantrums.

19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 30.

Okay, a few, okay, a few have, okay.

35, 40, 45, 50.

Come on folks, when do kids stop having temper tantrums?

We all know adults who have been storming off after an argument with face flushed, really upset, stomping their feet, manipulating, lying, being aggressive, maybe even physical altercations when they don't get their own way.

So maybe the question is, is there a big difference between children's temper tantrums and adult temper tantrums?

The big difference in my mind is that adults have been practicing their temper tantrums for decades.

So we are much better at temper tantrums than the kiddos.

And the kiddos are watching us to figure out how they should be throwing their temper tantrums.

What would actually be helpful for us is also to do some time in.

Time in with our breath.

Time in with a cold glass of water or hot tea.

Noticing the temperature difference between the liquid and our body.

Maybe some time in using the senses that God gave us and being aware of those senses.

Maybe it's going outside and feeling the breeze across our face, seeing the green trees, seeing the blue sky.

Maybe it's sitting outside on the bench.

Maybe it's going for a walk and feeling our contact of our feet on the ground, on the gravel or the cement or the rocks or the grass.

Maybe it's even parenting ourselves.

Time in with ourselves.

Talking to ourselves might sound like this.

Wow, Brian, that did not go well.

You really messed that up.

That is not what you wanted.

Makes sense you're feeling disappointed.

Makes sense you're feeling sad.

This is hard.

This is not the outcome that you wanted.

It's okay to feel sad sometimes because little by little, you'll feel better again.

Maybe it's time in with your good heavenly father.

God is an expert at handling tantrums.

If you read the book of Psalms lately, about 40% of the Psalms are about David, the artist, complaining, whining, wailing about his life.

God is so good at handling our tantrums.

And I'm sure the Prince of Peace would be happy to spend some time with you during your time in when the ways of our anger overshadow our patience, our kindness, our goodness, our love, all those things.

And I'm sure the Prince of Peace would be happy to share some of his peace with you.

So I think that all of us could use a little bit of time in for our inner child, for our child, or maybe for our partner's child.

Time in so you can slow things down and resist the urge to do something that might hurt you or someone else.

Number two, my second suggestion this morning has to do with understanding your behavior.

And I'm encouraging you to intentionally orient yourself directly against your typical behavior patterns that you probably learned in your family of origin.

Last night, we talked about the story of Abraham and how there are certain behaviors that are passed down from generation to generation.

In a similar manner, you might have to reflect upon what sort of behaviors run in your family and then intentionally lean against those behaviors.

So unless there's a concern for safety, unless there's a concern for safety, I encourage you to think of your pattern behavior as the enemy, not the other person, not the other partner, but your pattern behavior as the enemy.

Now some of you might be thinking, Ryan must not have it right, 'cause we know about the great controversy.

We know about the cosmic conflict playing out here on Earth.

And we know who the enemy is.

There's God and Satan.

And we know the deceiver is the enemy.

But here's the thing.

If you are doing destructive things in your lives, the deceiver doesn't have to lift a finger when you are doing all of the heavy lifting yourself.

What happens is we learn things in our family of origin.

And if we leave our family of origin with unresolved tension, we will still end up dealing with those hot button issues in the rest of our daily lives.

We carry that unresolved tension to our family of choice, our family procreation, and our romantic relationships with our roommates, with our children, with our neighbors, with our colleagues, with our bosses, 'cause that old family stuff follows us.

Ever wonder why your family's so good at pushing your buttons?

It's because they installed those buttons.

And we carry those buttons with us.

And other people will be poking those buttons, and they may not even realize it.

Because we learn certain dance steps in our family of origin, whether it's the Macarena, the Do-Si-Do, the Samba, the Foxtrot, et cetera, et cetera.

And we end up using those same dance steps regardless of the music that's playing.

So by intentionally and purposefully trying to lean against those dance steps, we have an opportunity to change the way we walk around in our relationships.

'Cause the truth is it takes two people to make a pattern, but only one person to break a pattern.

Which means you actually have quite a bit of power as long as you recognize what your patterns are.

Speaking of power, when I was a sailing instructor at Camp Myvidan on Hayden Lake, Idaho, I would regularly take out four, five, or six junior campers on these 16-foot catamarans, and we'd get them

on their ill-fitting life jackets and get them out on the water, and then we would try and tack back and forth to get them used to sailing.

And maybe you've never been sailing yourself, but maybe you can see a picture of sailing like this.

And when the sailboat tacks back and forth, essentially zigzagging in the water, the sail is catching the wind, and so some people have to intentionally lean out away from the sail to counterbalance the force of the wind on the vessel.

This is called hiking out.

But the nautical slang term for these people is rail meet.

Say it with me, rail meet.

Good, I'm guessing you've never said that in church before.

Because their main role is to be rail meet on the side of the boat to counterbalance the force of the wind.

And if you don't have rail meet, the wind might push the sail and the boat might tip over.

So you have to intentionally lean out away from the force of the wind.

Otherwise, you're gonna have a group of junior campers upset and wet trying to scramble back onto the boat.

So for you, what is your troublesome family pattern wind that you need to deal with, that you need to lean against?

I know what it is for me.

I am a passive aggressive artisan.

I am very good at being passive aggressive.

This is a skill that's been passed down from generation to generation and now perfected in Brian.

So if I'm not careful, if I get upset in the relationship, I will immediately retort with a passive aggressive comment.

Or I will throw up this emotional wall called stonewalling.

Or I might be present with you physically, but in an icy cold shoulder form of punishment, petty sort of way.

So for Brian, I need to fight the urge to press my eject button, instead stay very present in the conversation, which is so hard for me to do.

'Cause my knee jerk reaction, my learned pattern behavior is to just distance myself from someone and get out of the conversation.

I might be with you, but I'm really no longer engaging with you.

This is so hard for me because my well-practiced familiar response is to be passive aggressive.

So for me, I have to be aware of this and lean directly away from that and stay present in the conversation.

For others of you, maybe you've learned how to be aggressive aggressive in your relationships, which might mean for you, you might have to have a little bit of time in to put your swords away, come back to the conversation and listen to the other person instead of demanding that they listen to you.

You have to lean out hard in the opposite direction 'cause you are not used to this sort of thing.

As an example, let's have everyone cross their arms.

We'll cross their arms.

Okay, okay.

Now be aware of which arm is on top, which arm is on bottom.

Now I want you to try and do the opposite.

Okay.

One of these probably feels more uncomfortable than the other.

One of these, you have to think about, right?

Depending on the cross.

In a very similar manner, you're going to have to be intentional about what your typical reaction is.

And if you don't know what that is, ask a close family member or a friend and they would be happy to tell you what you do when you're upset.

And if you can understand how you typically cross your arms, what that looks like, if you can say, okay, I need to do anything but that, I need to cross it the other way.

And if you can be aware of your emotional experience right before you cross your arms, you've probably stumbled upon the family tree root of the problem that is tripping up your self-control.

And if you can do this and practice this enough, oh, it's this way, this way.

If you can do this enough, then you can say, it ran in my family until it ran into me.

But we know it's not just you versus your family's behaviors.

If God is with us, who could be against us?

Jesus says, I am the vine and you are the branches.

And if you would remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit.

Fruits of the spirit are the fruits of the spirit, which means the Holy Spirit has bushels and bags and baskets and pallets of this fresh fruit ready for you with your name on it.

So ask him for some, ask him for some self-control.

Ask him to help you understand what your typical behavior patterns are so you can lean against them.

And if you're able to do this and you're able to live in accordance with your values and not slide into your well-trodden familiar behavior, then you'll be able to showcase who you truly are, children of God, ambassadors of Christ.

So let's recap.

First suggestion is about time in, taking some special time in with yourself.

Surf the urge of that emotional wave so you don't give in to doing bad things that might hurt you or other people.

'Cause you know if you do these things, this is not truly in alignment with your core values.

Second suggestion was to intentionally lean away from your typical behaviors.

You probably learned in your family of origin.

'Cause the better you get at leaning away from your typical responses, the more you're gonna be able to get your boat to sail in the direction you want it to sail.

So let's kinda end where we started, with Paul's famous list.

Say them with me if you know it.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and rail meet.

Intentionally leaning away from your pattern behavior so that you intentionally do better things.

Amen.