



Links Players

EIGHT GREAT TRAITS 4: SELF-CONTROL

For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. (2 Timothy 1:7, NIV)

BY NOW, YOU MAY BE ANTICIPATING these weekly reflections on the eight great traits that Peter urged his readers to “make every effort” to employ in their lives. We have studied faith, then added goodness and knowledge, and we have done so each Friday for the three weeks leading up to this one.

Why am I offering such an elementary outline of where we have been so far and where we are landing today? Because some of you need it. You’ve lost track. And part of the reason may be that you lack self-control.

Often we see self-control as something we must possess in the moment. If we don’t, we can end up looking like noted club throwers Tommy Bolt or Pat Perez. Even typically mild-mannered players like Rory McIlroy have been known to let one go into the watery reaches of a nearby lake. For golfers, such acts—along with snapped club shafts or profane outbursts—are the epitome of a loss of self-control. We go bonkers in the moment, often to our shame and embarrassment.

No doubt, this is a loss of self-control. It doesn’t take too many of these to expose that you have a problem.

But when we begin to look at the scriptural presentation of self-control, we find that it is a trait we are to possess more than a response when “stuff happens.” Our responses stand a great chance of coming off beautifully when we have self-control in place all the time.

All the more, consider Paul’s words to Timothy in today’s verse. Here the apostle says that self-control (along with power and love) is part of the spirit we have been given by God when we walk closely with him. In Christ, self-control should reside at our very core. It is something we can be working on every day.

Many years ago, when I was teaching high school, I used to find that the hardest days I had in the classroom, the days when I struggled most with my students’ behavior, were the days when *I* was unprepared. But when my life and my lessons were under control, my students did just fine. This is only an anecdote, but I hope it carries meaning for you. Establish self-control as an ongoing discipline, and we will come to the moments of testing with Christ’s peace in us.

Opening questions Are you one who has to confess to having “lost it” on the golf course? Why does this happen? How often will you forgive someone their outbursts before you no longer want to play with them?

READING Proverbs 29:11; James 1:19-21; 2 Peter 1:5-7

Wisdom, foolishness, and self-control (Proverbs 29)

What is the difference between a wise man and a fool here? How often do you think you are “allowed” to vent your anger before you are a fool?

Aspects of self-control (James 1)

What aspects of self-control does James offer us? How does the idea of “the word planted in you” line up with our understanding of self-control as a trait, not a response?

Mid-series double check (2 Peter 1)

If we are to “make every effort” to add the traits of 2 Peter 1 to our lives, what might that effort look like? How will are you progressing in this work?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2018 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study with Jeff Hopper and Tracy Hanson is available at <https://youtu.be/LB9WwizjCIA>