



TRANSFORMED

DEVOTIONS CONNECTING TEENS TO CHRIST

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.
Galatians 5:16-25

Monster killer: Self-control

Just stop it.

That's our default strategy for dealing with spiritual monsters we face. Whether it's lust, jealousy, rage, alcohol and drug addiction, or sexual sins, we normally have one plan to battle them.

"I'm just going to stop it. I'm going to use my will power."

But this strategy doesn't work. You know it doesn't work because you've tried (and failed) to just stop. Why doesn't it work? Because human will power is part of the "flesh". That means it's corrupt, weak, and incapable of following God's will.

That's why we will become frustrated and filled with guilt and hopelessness if we try to achieve self-control simply by following God's law by our own power.

There's a better way to battle against these monsters—these sins of our flesh.

Instead of "just stop it," how about "just step with" the Holy Spirit? This is a better strategy. Why? Because with this strategy you're tapping into the power of the only one who can truly transform your heart and life. With this strategy, you're getting true self-control because you understand some important things about yourself.

Keeping in step (walking with) the Holy Spirit and getting true self-control involves three parts.

1. Remember who you belong to.

Through faith, God has made you his dearly loved child. You belong to Christ, and he has given you his Spirit. The Holy Spirit is powerful. He has transformed your heart by giving you faith in Jesus. You are deeply loved and



Monster killer: Self-control - continued

valued, no matter how well or how poorly you have been living. God never abandons his dearly loved children!

2. Call things what they really are.

When you fall into temptation, don't deny it or hide it. Confess it. Bring it into the open. Call those actions what they are: "the old me". You will always have a sinful nature that wants to keep sinning here on earth. These actions lead to guilt, pain, and death. The more you call out your own sin, the more you destroy its power.

3. Put what you learn into practice and persevere!

Stepping with the Holy Spirit means you are moving forward. He promises that when you stay close to him you will bear fruit (love, patience, goodness, kindness, and self-control). And, most importantly, don't give up! Keep going back to #1 and #2.

Remember that keeping in step with the Holy Spirit is a marathon and not a sprint. Jesus is with you on the journey!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please give me true self-control by reminding me about myself. I am a dearly loved child of God bought with the blood of your Son, Jesus Christ. You will never abandon me! I also know I have a sinful nature. Help me put it to death every day by confessing my sins and trusting in your forgiveness. Finally, let me trust your Holy Spirit and keep moving forward. Staying close to him, I will produce good fruit in my life, all to your glory. Amen!