

## Lesson 10

# Temperance (2)

In lesson 9 we saw that temperance is essential to becoming a Christian, basic happiness, unity, living pure, and a happy marriage. We also saw how chaotic life would be without temperance. In this study we want to consider some areas wherein temperance is needed and look at some misconceptions about it.

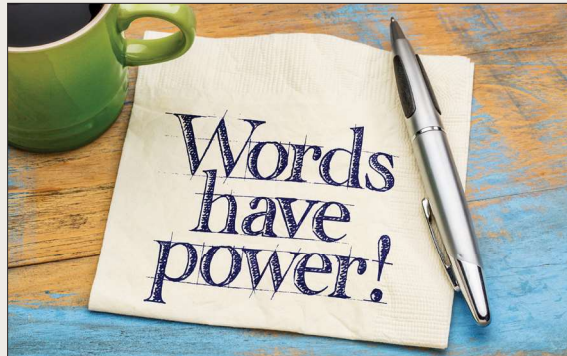
### Temperance Is Needed in . . .

Temperance must be applied in all areas of life. I wonder if we don't limit the idea of temperance to our temper or tongue. Certainly, these must be controlled. However, there are many areas wherein we must apply self-control.

**1. Our temper.** The Proverb writer said, "A quick-tempered man acts foolishly" (14:17). Just twelve verses later he said, "He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, But he who is impulsive exalts folly" (v. 29). The same book states, "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city" (16:32). Again, "Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls" (25:28). We can and must control our anger, our fits and our tantrums.

**2. Our pride.** We must control what we think about ourselves. Paul urged all men not to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think (Rom. 12:3; cf. v. 16).

**3. Our words.** While the tongue is hard to control, it is not impossible to handle. We must be slow to speak (Jas. 1:19). If we do not bridle our tongue, our religion is empty and vain (v. 26). The fact that Paul accused some of "saying things which they ought not" (1 Tim. 5:13) suggests that we must control the tongue. In the Proverbs we read, "He who has knowledge spares his words" (Prov. 17:27). Before we speak we should ask: Is it true? Is it nice? What purpose does it serve? Is there a better



way to say it? Could I be misunderstood? Is this something that is confidential?

**4. Our thoughts.** Not only our words, but even our thoughts must be put into subjection to the Lord (2 Cor. 10:5). While some say, "I can't help what I think," we can and must control our thoughts. Controlling our thoughts means we must: (a) cease lustful and immoral fantasies (Matt. 5:28; 2 Tim. 2:22; Prov. 6:25), (b) fight bitterness (Jas. 3:14), (c) be forgiving (Eph. 4:32), and (d) be optimistic (Phil. 4:8, 13).

**5. Our reactions.** We cannot retaliate when we have been wronged. We must treat others right whether or not they do so to us. Jesus set us an example of controlling our reactions, "when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten" (1 Pet. 2:23). Remember what Jesus said about those who put him on the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

**6. Our will.** We have previously noted that we must yield our will to the will of God in order to become Christians (Acts 24:25). Paul exemplified temperance in his will, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

**7. Our opinions.** While we may be entitled to hold to our own opinions, we must not bind that which is not a part of divine revelation on others (Rom. 14:22). Thus, we must exercise self-control.

**8. Our buying and spending.** Many live in debt and struggle with financial difficulties simply because they do not curb their desire to buy and spend. Money problems are involved in a lot of marriage difficulties. We must be careful about how much we owe. We cannot afford to get to the point that we cannot pay our debts (Rom. 13:8). A lot of what we buy is bought simply because it is what we want. The impulsive buyer does not exercise temperance.



**9. Anything that might be a hindrance to us.** That applies even to things right within themselves (1 Cor. 6:12). Whether it be sports, a romance, or a job that could little by little lead me away from my diligent service to the Lord, I must be in control.

**10. General self-discipline (self-help).** Temperance (self-control) means that I make myself do what I know I need to do. If not, then how

could we practice self-control? Thus, it includes (a) making myself study the Bible without being forced to prepare, lest I be embarrassed in class, (b) working without a boss or time-clock, (c) taking care of my body (using some will power), and (d) controlling my time and not wasting it.

**Misconceptions about Temperance**

It is not unusual for someone to do something like letting his temper flare and then justify it on the basis of “That’s just my nature” or “I just can’t help it, that’s just the way I am.” A lack of self-control may be your “nature” in the sense that it is something you have developed and learned. However, it is not something beyond your ability to control. Since the Bible demands self-control, we can help what we think, say and do.

Quite often we hear someone say, “I just don’t have any will-power.” This sounds as if one can’t help it. It suggests that some have will-power and others don’t, just like some are tall and some are short. Sometimes we hear, “I just can’t get motivated to. . . .” You can’t? Would \$100 or \$1000 help motivate you? Yes, we can get motivated. The question is whether or not we will motivate ourselves.

That’s what self-denial is all about. Thus, if we don’t have any will-power, it is because we haven’t tried to develop and use it.

**Conclusion**

We can and must control ourselves. Real self-control will not just say “We should. . .” but, “We will. . .” In the next two lessons we will consider how to develop self discipline.

**NOTES**

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## Questions

1. List any other areas wherein temperance needs to be applied? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. How does temperance apply to our opinions? \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. How does temperance apply to our buying and spending? \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. How does temperance apply to our thoughts? \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. How does temperance apply to our reactions? \_\_\_\_\_  
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6. For class discussion: How does temperance relate to general self-discipline? Be prepared to discuss some specifics. \_\_\_\_\_  
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7. List some other misconceptions about temperance than those mentioned in this lesson? \_\_\_\_\_  
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8. How does our "will-power" relate to the command to be temperate? \_\_\_\_\_  
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9. How does temperance relate to things that hinder our service to God (i.e., a job, romance, or sports, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_  
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10. List any practical lessons you learn from lesson 10. \_\_\_\_\_  
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