

LIFE CHURCH OF NEW JERSEY

22 Laurence Parkway, Laurence Harbor, NJ

FRUIT SALAD SERIES — WEEK 9 (SERIES FINALE)

I Just Can't Help Myself... Only With Jesus

Six-Day Devotional

The Fruit of the Spirit: Self-Control (Enkrateia)

Galatians 5:22-23, KJV

Pastor Andrew Chung-Ying

How to Use This Devotional

Over the next six days, you'll walk through the fruit of self-control one layer at a time — from the oldest excuse in the book, to the very modern habit of doom scrolling, to the biblical portraits of gluttony, excess, and greed, to the two men who proved a governed life is possible, to the One who never once needed the excuse. Each day includes a scripture to read, a short reflection, a Digging Deeper section for a bit more depth, questions to search your heart, a practical step to take with you, and a closing prayer. Space is provided for you to write. Take your time — fruit doesn't ripen in a hurry.

Where We Are in the Harvest — Week 9

TOWARD GOD	TOWARD OTHERS	TOWARD SELF
✓ Agapē — Love ✓ Charā — Joy ✓ Eirēnē — Peace	✓ Makrothymia — Longsuffering ✓ Chrēstotēs — Kindness ✓ Agathōsynē — Goodness	✓ Pistis — Faith ✓ Prautes — Meekness ▶ Enkrateia — Self-Control (THIS WEEK)

DAY 1 — The Oldest Excuse in the Book

READ

He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.
(Proverbs 25:28, KJV)

REFLECT

"I just can't help myself" is one of the oldest excuses in the human race — and one of the catchiest lines in pop music, thanks to Motown's classic "I Can't Help Myself (Sugar Pie, Honey Bunch)." Fine for a love song. A different matter when it becomes how you explain your appetite, your temper, your wallet, or your worship. Solomon doesn't call the ungoverned life free — he calls it defenseless, a city with no wall left standing. Here's the truth we're chasing this week: on your own, "I can't help myself" is almost always true. In Christ, it's almost always a lie the enemy needs you to believe.

DIGGING DEEPER

Galatians 5:19-21 catalogs exactly what an ungoverned self produces — "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness... drunkenness, revellings, and such like." Three of those flavors show up constantly in ordinary life: GLUTTONY, appetite enthroned ("whose God is their belly," Philippians 3:19); EXCESS, indulgence past the point of need ("be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess," Ephesians 5:18); and GREED, covetousness ("the love of money is the root of all evil," 1 Timothy 6:10). Different flavors, same root — self enthroned where the Spirit was meant to sit.

SEARCH YOUR HEART

- Where have I used some version of "I can't help myself" to excuse something the Spirit actually wants to govern?
- Of the three — gluttony, excess, greed — which one do I most recognize in my own life right now?

TAKE IT WITH YOU

Name your version of the excuse honestly today. Don't fix it yet — just stop calling it something softer than what it is.

PRAY

Father, I confess I have hidden behind "I can't help myself" instead of bringing my appetite, my temper, and my wallet under Your rule. Show me honestly which wall in my life is down. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 2 — Doom Scrolling: Akrasia in Your Pocket

READ

All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

(1 Corinthians 6:12, KJV)

REFLECT

Doom scrolling is the compulsive, prolonged consumption of negative or distressing content on a phone or feed — usually late at night, usually well past the point of any benefit or peace — driven not by a need for information but by an inability to stop. It's important to name, because it doesn't look like gluttony, excess, or greed, and it doesn't feel sinful. No commandment says "thou shalt not scroll." That's exactly what makes it dangerous: it is an ungoverned appetite so normalized that almost no one guards against it. Esau's temptation was a bowl of stew sitting in front of him. This one is disguised as harmless boredom relief, sitting in your pocket right now.

DIGGING DEEPER

Here's what's actually happening in your brain. Every swipe is a small gamble — the next post, the next notification, the next headline — and the reward is uncertain. Uncertain, variable rewards release more dopamine than predictable ones; it is the same mechanism that makes a slot machine so hard to walk away from. Over time, this trains your brain to crave the unpredictable hit and grow restless in the ordinary, undramatic silences of life — the quiet room, the red light, the moment before sleep — the very moments that used to invite prayer. The effects compound: elevated anxiety from a mind fed constant threat and outrage, disrupted sleep from late-night screens and stress hormones, fragmented attention that shrinks your capacity for sustained focus and Scripture reading, and an erased stillness that leaves your soul with no quiet room in which to hear from God.

Akasia (akrasia, Strong's G192)

The direct grammatical opposite of enkrateia — a ("without") plus kratos ("strength, mastery") — without inner strength, unable to hold the reins of yourself. Translated "incontinency" in 1 Corinthians 7:5. The Greek philosophers used akasia for something painfully familiar: doing the very thing you already know isn't good for you, against your own better judgment, because appetite has overruled reason.

Akasia vs. Ignorance — Akasia isn't failing to know better. It's knowing better and doing it anyway — the exact shape of a 2 a.m. scroll you regret before you've even finished it.

— 1 Corinthians 7:5, KJV ("incontinency")

SEARCH YOUR HEART

- When was the last time I picked up my phone "for a second" and lost far more time than I meant to?
- Is there a quiet moment in my day I have stopped protecting because I reflexively fill it with a screen?

TAKE IT WITH YOU

Choose one quiet moment today — waking up, a meal, a commute, before bed — and leave the phone untouched. Notice what rises up in the silence instead.

PRAY

Lord, I confess the hours I have surrendered to a feed instead of to You. I don't want to be brought under the power of anything — not even something as small as a phone. Give me back the quiet moments, and meet me in them. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 3 — Gluttony and Excess: Esau and Noah

READ

And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint... Thus Esau despised his birthright.

(Genesis 25:30, 34, KJV)

Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

(Hebrews 12:16-17, KJV)

REFLECT

Esau didn't fall to murder or adultery — he fell to a bowl of stew, because he had trained himself, meal by meal, to always trade tomorrow for today. Hebrews calls him "profane," not because of one dramatic sin, but because that moment exposed a lifelong pattern. The devil rarely needs a big temptation. A bowl of stew has ended more destinies than a sword ever did.

DIGGING DEEPER

Genesis 9:20-21 gives us excess. Noah — the one righteous man of his entire generation, the man God trusted to carry the human race through the flood — plants a vineyard, drinks to excess, and is found exposed and shamed in his own tent. Ephesians 5:18 names the word directly: "be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." Surviving the flood did not automatically produce self-control in Noah. It never does. Self-control is grown, not inherited from your past deliverances — a man can walk with God through the worst storm of his life and still drown in a cup afterward.

SEARCH YOUR HEART

- Where am I, like Esau, trading a lasting inheritance for something that only satisfies for a moment?
- Is there a "vineyard" in my life — something good in itself — that I have let become excess?

TAKE IT WITH YOU

Identify one appetite you have stopped governing because it felt small. Bring it back under the Spirit's rule today, in one specific, practical way.

PRAY

Lord, forgive me for the bowls of stew I have let cost me more than they were ever worth, and for the good gifts I have let become excess. Fill me with Your Spirit instead of what I have been filling myself with. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 4 — Greed: Achan's Wedge of Gold

READ

And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent.

(Joshua 7:20-21, KJV)

REFLECT

"I saw... I coveted... I took... and hid." That is the entire anatomy of greed in a single confession — the same four steps every act of covetousness follows, from Eden to Achan's tent to our own hearts, if we're honest. And greed only feels private while it's hidden. Joshua 7 opens with Israel losing a battle they should have won easily — one man's hidden greed had brought defeat on the whole camp.

DIGGING DEEPER

First Timothy 6:9-10 warns that "they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Notice the word "coveted" — the same root as Achan's confession. Greed is rarely about the amount. It's about an appetite that never says enough.

SEARCH YOUR HEART

- Is there something I have "seen, coveted, and taken" — or am still holding onto — that I have never brought into the light?
- Who else has been affected by a greed I thought was private, the way all of Israel was affected by Achan's hidden gold?

TAKE IT WITH YOU

Bring one hidden thing into the light today — a confession, a return, a release of something you have been gripping. Let it be between you and God first.

PRAY

Father, search me for anything I have seen, coveted, and hidden away. I don't want a wedge of gold buried under my tent costing me — or the people around me — what You actually have for us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 5 — Two Who Said No: Joseph and Daniel

READ

How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? ... And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.
(Genesis 39:9, 12, KJV)

But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.
(Daniel 1:8, KJV)

REFLECT

Joseph had every earthly reason to give in — no father watching, no community to answer to. What held him wasn't fear of being caught, but the presence of a God who sees the empty room as clearly as the crowded one. He didn't win by standing his ground; he won by running, coat left behind. Daniel, meanwhile, didn't wait for the tray of food to be set in front of him to decide who he was going to be — he purposed it in his heart ahead of time. Most failures of self-control aren't failures of willpower in the moment. They're failures to ever purpose anything beforehand.

DIGGING DEEPER

Contrast both men with Samson (Judges 14-16) — supernatural strength and zero self-government, ruled by his eyes, his temper, and his appetite, worn down compromise by compromise until "he wist not that the LORD was departed from him" (Judges 16:20). Gifting is never a substitute for self-control. Joseph and Daniel had no supernatural strength to fall back on — only a settled heart, purposed ahead of time. That is available to every one of us, gifted or not.

SEARCH YOUR HEART

- Where do I need Joseph's courage to leave the room rather than prove I'm strong enough to stay?
- What decision do I keep re-fighting in the moment of temptation that I need to purpose, once and for all, right now instead?

TAKE IT WITH YOU

Write down one purpose you are settling in your heart today, before the next moment of pressure ever arrives.

PRAY

Lord, give me Joseph's awareness of Your presence and Daniel's habit of deciding ahead of time. I don't want to keep fighting the same battle in the heat of the moment — let me purpose it now, in the quiet. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 6 — Only With Jesus

READ

And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

(Matthew 4:2-4, KJV)

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

(Hebrews 4:15, KJV)

REFLECT

Esau, Noah, Achan, and Samson each said, in their own accent, "I can't help myself" — and so does every unlocked phone at 2 a.m. Jesus faced every one of those categories at once — appetite, excess, greed for power — at His weakest physical moment, forty days without food, and He never once reached for the excuse. Every answer was "It is written": not raw willpower, but the Word of God already hidden in Him, ready before the wilderness ever came. He didn't come to help you cope with "I can't help myself." He came to end the sentence.

DIGGING DEEPER

Paul's grammar in Galatians 5:22 is singular — "the fruit of the Spirit is," not "are." One fruit, nine flavors, one whole character being formed in you by the same Spirit who sustained Jesus in the wilderness. Whichever category feels hardest to you this week — gluttony, excess, or greed — it is not stronger than the Vine that produced perfect self-control in Christ and now lives in you by the Holy Ghost.

SEARCH YOUR HEART

- How full of the Word am I before the wilderness comes, or am I reaching for Scripture for the first time in the middle of the test?
- Can I finish the sentence honestly tonight — "I can't help myself... only with Jesus, I can"?

TAKE IT WITH YOU

Choose one verse to memorize this week — your own "it is written" ready before the next test comes.

PRAY

Jesus, thank You that You faced every temptation I face and never once yielded. I bring You my unfinished sentence tonight — the gluttony, the excess, the greed, whatever it is — and I ask You to finish it in me. Only with You, I can. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Nine Weeks in Review

Take a few quiet minutes to look back — not just over this week, but over the whole Fruit Salad series.

Where We Are in the Harvest — The Complete Harvest

TOWARD GOD	TOWARD OTHERS	TOWARD SELF
✓ Agapē — Love ✓ Charā — Joy ✓ Eirēnē — Peace	✓ Makrothymia — Longsuffering ✓ Chrēstotēs — Kindness ✓ Agathōsynē — Goodness	✓ Pistis — Faith ✓ Prautes — Meekness ✓ Enkrateia — Self-Control

- Agapē (love), charā (joy), and eirēnē (peace) turned my heart toward God. Which of these three still needs the most tending in me?
- Makrothymia (longsuffering), chrēstotēs (kindness), and agathōsynē (goodness) turned my heart toward others. Have I actually grown more patient, gentle, and good with people, or just more aware that I should?
- Pistis (faith), prautes (meekness), and enkrateia (self-control) turned my heart toward the government of myself. Where do I most need the Spirit's rule over my own heart right now — gluttony, excess, greed, a screen, or something else?
- Which week's fruit was hardest for me to receive, and why?
- What is one way I sensed the Holy Spirit producing fruit in me over these nine weeks, rather than me forcing it?

A CLOSING WORD

Fruit is grown, not manufactured. If any part of this series felt more like striving than growing, go back to Day 1 of Week 1 and remember: His love led you here in the first place, and it isn't finished yet. "I can't help myself" is a sentence every one of us has spoken. "Only with Jesus, I can" is the sentence He came to give us instead.