

**Purpose** To help class members realize that lasting joy and happiness are achieved through self-mastery.

**Preparation**

1. Prayerfully study Matthew 16:24; Luke 22:39–46.
2. If *Family Home Evening Video Supplement* (53276) is available, prepare to show “The Consequences of Our Choices (The Pump),” a nine-minute segment.
3. Materials needed:
  - a. A picture of a beautiful new car from a magazine or newspaper (optional).
  - b. A pen or pencil and a piece of paper for each class member.
  - c. A set of scriptures and a scripture marking pencil for each class member.  
Continue to encourage class members to bring their own scriptures to class each week.

*Note to the teacher* Many youth are concerned most with what they want at the present moment. They may have difficulty thinking about the long-term consequences of their actions. Help class members see that most worthwhile things in life, both temporal and spiritual, can only be achieved by mastering ourselves.

**Suggested Lesson Development**

**Living without Self-Mastery Is Dangerous**

**Picture discussion** Display the picture of a car (if you do not have a picture, describe such a car). Ask class members:

- Would you like to ride in or drive this car? Why? What do you like about this car?

Allow class members a few moments to comment on the car.

- Would you want to ride in or drive this car if it had no brakes? Why not?

Point out that no matter how beautiful a car is or how good its engine or tires may be, if it does not have brakes it will soon be the cause of an accident. It would be very dangerous to ride in such a car.

Explain that today’s lesson is about something that is as important to our lives as brakes are to a car: self-mastery (also called self-control or self-discipline).

**Discussion and quotation**

- What do you think self-mastery is?

Allow a few moments for comments, then have a class member read the following statement from Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“You consist of two parts—your physical body, and your spirit which lives within your body. You may have heard the expression ‘mind over matter.’ . . .

I would like to phrase it a little differently: ‘spirit over body.’ That is self-mastery” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1985, 38; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 30).

Explain that self-mastery is the ability of your spirit to control your body, the ability to do what you know you should do even if a part of you does not want to do it. You exercise self-mastery when you do God’s will instead of your own.

- How is a person without self-mastery like a car without brakes? Why is it important to exercise self-mastery?

---

### Self-Mastery Brings Blessings

Scripture discussion

Explain that Jesus taught us that we must be able to master ourselves if we are to be his disciples.

Have class members read and mark Matthew 16:24.

- Why must a person “deny himself [or herself]” to be a follower of Jesus Christ?

Point out that the Joseph Smith Translation of Matthew 16:24 (see footnote *d* in the Latter-day Saint edition of the Bible) clarifies that we are to deny ourselves “all ungodliness.” We are to give up unrighteous actions and replace them with righteous ones. Exercising self-mastery involves using our agency to choose to live righteously.

Help class members understand that exercising self-mastery does not mean denying oneself everything that is enjoyable or fun. When we practice self-mastery, we give up some things or experiences in order to receive things or experiences we want more. For example, when we fast, for a time we give up eating, which is enjoyable, in order to receive spiritual strength and growth. On a larger scale, we give up sin (which may sometimes *appear* enjoyable) in order to have peace of mind and the opportunity to live with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ again.

Video presentation and discussion

Show the video segment “The Consequences of Our Choices (The Pump).” Then discuss the following questions:

- How does this man’s experience show the need for self-mastery? (Because he lacked self-mastery, he satisfied his immediate desire instead of preparing for the future.)
- How would his experience have been different if he had exercised self-mastery? (If he had primed the pump before taking a drink, he would have had all the water he needed.)
- How is this man’s decision (whether to drink the water in the bottle or prime the pump with it) comparable to spiritual decisions each of us must make?

---

### We Can Exercise Self-Mastery

Chalkboard discussion

- What are some ways you demonstrate self-mastery? (If class members have difficulty coming up with answers, point out that they show self-mastery when they fast for spiritual strength despite being hungry or when they get up on time even though their bodies want to stay in bed.)

Explain that self-mastery, like other skills, is developed through practice. In some instances, we practice self-mastery simply by doing the desired action each day and thus forming a habit. Self-mastery in other areas, however, may require more effort.

Write the heading *Self-Mastery* on the chalkboard.

- What actions can help us exercise self-mastery?

List class members' answers on the chalkboard under *Self-Mastery*, and discuss each suggestion. You may want to include the following suggestions in the discussion:

1. Work to achieve appropriate goals.

When we recognize areas in our lives that require greater self-mastery, we can set goals with clear achievable steps to help us. For example, if we need greater self-mastery in getting ready for church on time, we can plan what things need to be done on Saturday in order to achieve this goal.

2. Replace bad habits with good ones.

It is easier to break a bad habit if we replace it with a better habit or activity. For example, a person trying to increase self-mastery over procrastination can replace a habit of leaving homework until the last minute with a better habit of doing it at a specific time every day.

3. Ask friends or family members to help.

Sometimes simply telling someone else about a goal we have set or a habit we are trying to develop can motivate us to work harder. Friends and family members can also give us encouragement and assistance as we work to exercise greater self-mastery.

4. Pray and read the scriptures.

When we pray, we can ask Heavenly Father to give us the strength we need to reach our goals or change our habits. As we study the scriptures, we can be guided by the Lord's counsel and the example of others who have exercised self-mastery, such as Daniel or Joseph of Egypt. If we are receptive to the influence of the Holy Ghost, he can also help us achieve self-mastery.

---

### **We Can Accomplish Great Things with Self-Mastery**

Story and  
discussion

Tell in your own words the following story about a man who exercised self-mastery:

"Many years ago [Roger Bannister] participated in the Olympic Games as a champion in the one-mile race. He was supposed to win, but he wound up finishing in fourth place. He went home from the Olympics discouraged, disillusioned, and embarrassed.

"He had his mind set on giving up running. He was a medical student at the time, and his studies were so demanding. He decided that he'd better get on with life and devote all of his time in preparing for medicine and forget his hopes about running the world's record in the four-minute mile. He went to his coach and told him, 'Coach, I'm through. I'm going to devote all my time to studying.' His coach said, 'Roger, I think you are the man who can break the four-minute mile. I wish you'd give it one last try before you quit.'

“Roger . . . went home knowing not what to say or to do. But before the night was over, he had convinced himself that he would develop an iron will before he quit running. He was going to break the four-minute mile.

“He knew what this meant. He would have to set a pattern and live by it. He realized he would have to study seven, eight, or even nine hours a day to get through medical school. He would have to train for at least four hours a day. . . . He knew he would have to eat the best foods. He knew he would have to go to bed early every night and sleep nine or ten hours, to let his body recuperate and constantly build up for the great day. He determined within himself that he was going to follow the rigid pattern he and the coach knew was necessary for victory and achievement.

“On May 6, 1954, the four-minute-mile barrier was broken by Roger Bannister, . . . a man committed to a winning pattern which would bring him recognition worldwide. . . . Roger Bannister set the pattern many years ago and followed it with total commitment, self-discipline, and a will of iron” (Marvin J. Ashton, in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 25–26; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 22).

- What did Roger do to exercise self-mastery?
- How might Roger’s life have been different had he not exercised self-mastery?

Personal experiences

Give class members a few minutes to think of examples of how they or someone they know accomplished something that required self-mastery, such as overcoming a handicap or personal problem, learning to play a musical instrument, developing a spiritual gift, developing a sports ability, or achieving a special honor at school. Invite several class members to share their examples, and ask each of these class members the following questions:

- How did you (or the person involved) realize this achievement?
- How much time did it take? How much work and effort were required?
- How do you feel about this achievement? Was it worth the time and effort required?

Remind class members that self-mastery can require hard work, but it also brings great blessings.

Scripture discussion

Read Luke 22:39–46 with class members.

- How did the Savior exercise self-mastery? (He did what Heavenly Father wanted, not what he wanted to do.)
- What were the results of his self-mastery? (He suffered for our sins and made salvation possible for us when we repent.)

Point out that as we develop self-mastery, we develop a greater ability to say, as Jesus did, “Father, . . . not my will, but thine, be done.”

---

### We Must Decide Now to Master Ourselves

Quotation

Read or have a class member read the following statement:

President David O. McKay urged us to remember that “the greatest battle of life is fought out within the silent chambers of your own soul” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1969, 95; or *Improvement Era*, June 1969, 30).

Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think this statement means?</li> </ul> <p>Give class members pens or pencils and paper and ask them to write down their answers to the following question (assure them that no one else will see their answers):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is one thing you can do this week to increase your self-mastery?</li> </ul> <p>Encourage class members to keep their papers in a place where the papers will remind them to work on the action they have written down.</p>
Testimony	<p>Bear your testimony about the rewards you have received as you have learned to master yourself.</p> <p>Encourage class members to pray for help in exercising self-mastery. Remind them that all the blessings promised to the faithful in the plan of salvation come to those who learn to deny themselves of all ungodliness and follow the Lord.</p>

**Enrichment  
Activities**

You may want to use one or more of these activities during the lesson.

1. Invite to class a ward or branch member who has recently achieved a notable goal, such as doing well in an athletic event; performing in a concert or play; or graduating from high school, seminary, or college. Give the guest a few minutes to tell class members how self-mastery enabled him or her to reach the goal.
2. Explain that many ancient cities had walls around them to protect the inhabitants. A city whose walls were missing or in poor condition was vulnerable to attack.

Have class members read and mark Proverbs 25:28.

- How is a person who “hath no rule over his own spirit,” that is, a person without self-mastery, “like a city that is broken down, and without walls”? (Such a person has no defense against temptation and is vulnerable to Satan’s attacks.)

Divide the class into small groups and give each group a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Have the members of each group create one or more proverbs, like Proverbs 25:28, that show the danger of living without self-mastery. (Another example is the comparison that begins this lesson: “A person without self-mastery is like a car without brakes.”)

When all groups are finished, have a member of each group read and explain the proverbs the group has written.

3. Make for each class member a card with the following statement on it:

*Never give up what you want most for what you want at the moment.*

Give each class member a card, and discuss what the statement means and how it relates to self-mastery. You may want to point out that the man in the video segment used in the lesson gave up what he wanted most (survival) for what he wanted at the moment (a drink of water).