

Unit 2: The Seven Virtues

Lesson 2.3: Temperance: The Power of Knowing When to Stop

Teacher Preparation and Materials Needed:

For the Lesson: Orthodox Study Bible or Holy Bible: Armenian Church Edition

Recommended Orthodox Study Bible [HERE](#).

Recommended Holy Bible: Armenian Church Edition [HERE](#).

Scripture Reference:

Proverbs 25:28; 1 Corinthians 9:25

Activities:

Implement based on available time. Detailed instructions and materials lists are provided in the lesson.

Activity: My Temperance Challenge Card

Words of the week:

ժուժկալութիւն - zhoozh-gal-oo-tyoon - temperance

չափաւորութիւն - chap-a-vor-oo-tyoon - moderation

պահեցողութիւն - ba-hets-ogh-oo-tyoon - fasting

Objective:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to define temperance as self-control over desires and pleasures, identify areas in their own lives where they struggle with self-control, and commit to one practical way to practice temperance this week.

Moral Character Focus:

Knowledge: Students will learn that temperance means having self-control over their desires and knowing when enough is enough.

Understanding: Students will understand that temperance frees them from being controlled by their appetites and makes room for better things in their lives.

Application: Students will identify one specific area where they need more self-control and create a practical plan to practice temperance this week.

Values: Students will desire to follow Christ's example of discipline and self-control, choosing what is best over what merely feels good in the moment.

Memory Verse:

"Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever."

-1 Corinthians 9:25

Lesson

**Wisdom Prayer, written by St. Nersess the Grace-filled (Shnorhali).*

Open with prayer:

Իմաստութիւն Յօր՝ Յիսուս, տո՛ւր ինձ իմաստութիւն, զբարիս խորհել եւ խօսել եւ գործել առաջի Քն՝ յամենայն ժամ. ի չար խորհրդոց եւ ի բանից եւ ի գործոց փրկեա՛ զիս. եւ ողորմեա՛ Քն արարածոց եւ ինձ բազմամեղիս: Ամէն

Eemasdootyoon Hor Heesoos, door eents eemasdootyoon uzparees khorel yev khosel yev kordz arachi ko hamenayn jham. Ee char khorhrtos yev paneets yen kordzots prgya zees yev voghormya ko araradzots eents pazmameghees. Amen.

Wisdom of the Father, O Jesus, grant to me the wisdom to think, speak, and do that which is good in Your sight. Save me from all evil and distracting thoughts, words, and deeds. Have mercy upon your creatures and upon me, a great sinner. Amen.

Lesson Body: Temperance: The Power of Knowing When to Stop

We live in a world that constantly screams: “MORE!” More food. More screen time. More stuff. More entertainment. More, more, MORE! And honestly, it’s exhausting.

Today we’re talking about temperance, one of the virtues that humans have recognized as essential for thousands of years. It’s the virtue that helps you know when enough is enough. But temperance isn’t about being boring or depriving yourself of good things. It’s actually about being free. Free from the chaos of never being satisfied, free from being controlled by your appetites, free to actually enjoy life instead of always chasing the next thing.

Temperance is the power to be in charge of yourself.

What Is Temperance?

Temperance is self-control applied to your desires and pleasures. It’s knowing when enough is enough.

In Classical Armenian, we say, “ժուժկալութիւն “ (zhoozhgalootyoon), but a more modern way is, “չափաւորութիւն” (chapavorootyoon), which means moderation or measure. Let’s be clear about what temperance is NOT. Temperance is not never enjoying anything. It’s not feeling guilty about fun. It’s not being boring or rigid. Temperance IS enjoying good things without being controlled by them. It’s knowing when to stop. It’s choosing what’s best instead of just what feels good right now.

Think of it like this: Temperance is eating a small slice of dessert versus eating the entire cake. One leaves you satisfied and happy. The other leaves you sick and regretful.

Brief Discussion: Can you think of a time when you had too much of something good and it stopped being enjoyable? What happened?

Why Temperance Matters

“More” does make you happy! This is the big lie our world sells us. If you just get more, you’ll be happy. But it doesn’t work that way. Too much candy makes you feel sick. Too much scrolling leaves you exhausted and empty. Too much binge-watching makes you feel like you wasted your time. The things that felt good in the moment leave you feeling worse afterward. If we are not careful, we may allow our desires to control us.

Proverbs 25:28 says, “*Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.*” Think about that image. A city without walls has no protection. Enemies can walk right in. When you lack self-control, anything can control you. Your cravings, your impulses, your moods. If you can’t say “no” to yourself, you’re not free. You’re controlled.

Temperance makes room for better things. When you’re always on screens, you lose interest in books and real conversations. When you’re constantly snacking, you lose your appetite for actual meals. When you fill your life with junk, there’s no room for what really matters. Temperance clears space for the good stuff. Temperance is God way to call you to be disciplined.

First Corinthians 9:25 talks about athletes in training. They practice strict discipline, giving up things that slow them down, so they can win a race. But Paul says we’re training for something way bigger than a trophy that will eventually end up in a garage. We’re training to become saints. We’re training for a crown that lasts forever.

Brief Discussion: Which of these reasons is most convincing to you? Why do you think it’s so hard to believe that “more” won’t make us happy?

Where Temperance Shows Up in Our Life

Let's get practical. Where does temperance actually matter for us right now?

Food: Lack of temperance looks like eating until you're uncomfortably full, constant snacking even when you're not hungry, or eating out of boredom. Temperance looks like eating when you're actually hungry, stopping when you're satisfied, and enjoying your food without overdoing it.

Screens: Lack of temperance looks like scrolling for hours without even realizing it, checking your phone constantly during conversations, or staying up way too late because you can't put it down. Temperance looks like setting time limits and actually keeping them, putting your phone away during family meals, and choosing to disconnect before bed.

Stuff: Lack of temperance looks like always wanting the latest thing everyone else has, getting bored with what you have almost immediately, or filling your room with things you never use. Temperance looks like appreciating what you already have, saving money for things that truly matter, and not needing to own everything your friends have.

Entertainment: Lack of temperance looks like binge-watching until 2 AM on a school night, gaming so much that you ignore your responsibilities, or spending so much time on entertainment that you have no time for anything else. Temperance looks like enjoying shows and games without letting them take over your life, and knowing when it's time to turn them off.

Sleep: Lack of temperance looks like staying up too late scrolling or gaming, hitting snooze five times every morning, or being constantly exhausted because you won't go to bed. Temperance looks like going to bed at a reasonable time even when you don't feel like it, getting up when your alarm goes off, and taking care of your body by giving it the rest it needs.

Brief Discussion: Which of these areas is hardest for people our age? Which one is hardest for you personally?

Words of the Week:

ծուժկալութիւն - zhoozh-gal-oo-tyoon - temperance

չափաւորութիւն - chap-a-vor-oo-tyoon - moderation

պահեցողութիւն - ba-hets-ogh-oo-tyoon - fasting

Memory Verse:

"Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever."

-1 Corinthians 9:25

Biblical Examples

Daniel: Choosing What's Best (Daniel 1)

Daniel was taken captive to Babylon as a teenager. The king offered him royal food and wine, the best stuff in the kingdom. But Daniel knew that eating it would compromise his commitment to God. So he asked for vegetables and water instead. After ten days, he and his friends looked healthier than everyone else who ate the king's food. Daniel practiced temperance even when no one was forcing him to. He chose what was best over what was easiest or most appealing.

Jesus: Fasting in the Wilderness (Matthew 4)

After Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness to fast for forty days. Forty days without food. And at the end, when He was starving, Satan tempted Him to turn stones into bread. Jesus had the power to do it. He was literally dying of hunger. But He said no. He showed perfect temperance because He trusted God's plan more than His immediate physical needs. If Jesus needed to practice self-control, how much more do we?

Temperance Is Training

Here's what we don't often hear. As hard as it is to admit, self-control is like a muscle. The more you use it, the stronger it gets. The less you use it, the weaker it becomes.

Every time we practice temperance, even in small ways, we're building strength. We stop scrolling and go to bed on time? We're getting stronger. We have one cookie instead of five? We're getting stronger. We finish our homework before playing games? We're getting stronger.

But every time you give in without thinking, you're getting weaker. "Just one more episode" for the fifth time tonight? Weaker. "I'll start eating better tomorrow" for the hundredth time? Weaker. "I'll do my homework later" when you know you won't? Weaker.

The small choices matter way more than you think. You're not just deciding about one cookie or one episode. You're deciding what kind of person you're becoming. You're either training yourself to be disciplined or training yourself to give in to whatever you feel like doing.

Question for reflection: Think about yesterday. Did you do anything that made your self-control muscle stronger? Did you do anything that made it weaker?

Commonly Asked Questions about Temperance

"Isn't temperance just about food?"

No. Temperance applies to anything you can overdo. Food, screens, entertainment, shopping, even exercise. Anything good can become bad if you lose control of it.

"Does temperance mean I can never have fun?"

Absolutely not. Temperance helps you enjoy things more, not less. When you eat one really good cookie mindfully, you enjoy it way more than mindlessly eating ten while scrolling. Temperance makes pleasure better because you're actually present for it.

"What if I keep failing?"

Then you keep trying. Remember, self-control is a muscle. You don't go to the gym once and become strong. You practice. You fail. You get back up. You try again. God's grace is there every time you fall.

"How do I know if I'm overdoing something?"

Ask yourself these questions: Am I neglecting responsibilities because of this? Do I feel guilty or ashamed afterward? Can I stop when I want to, or does it control me? Am I hiding this from people who care about me? If you answered yes to any of these, you might have a temperance problem in that area.

Activity: My Temperance Challenge Card

**You're going to create a challenge card to help you practice temperance this week. Give students time to work quietly. Soft liturgical music in the optional.*

Materials: Index cards or half-sheets of paper, markers

Instructions:

1. On one side of your card, write:

- MY TEMPERANCE CHALLENGE
- Choose ONE area where you struggle with self-control (food, screens, sleep, entertainment, etc.) and write one specific, doable challenge for this week.

Examples:

1. "No phone after 9 PM"
2. "Only two episodes per day"
3. "One dessert per day, no seconds"
4. "In bed by 10 PM on school nights"
5. "Homework before games, every day"

2. On the other side of your card, write:

- WHY THIS MATTERS TO ME
- Write one reason why you want to get stronger in this area.

Examples:

- "So I can focus better in school"
- "So I don't feel exhausted all the time"
- "Because I want to be in control of myself"
- "To honor God with how I use my time"

3. Decorate your card if you want. Keep it somewhere you'll see it every day this week (bathroom mirror, backpack, by your bed).



Review

Memory Verse Review:

“Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.”(1 Corinthians 9:25)

Words of the Week:

ժուժկալութիւն - zhoozh-gal-oo-tyoon - temperance

չափաւորութիւն - chap-a-vor-oo-tyoon - moderation

պահեցողութիւն - ba-hets-ogh-oo-tyoon - fasting

Life Application

What are we going to do with what we have learned today?

This week, you’ll have dozens of chances to practice temperance. The moment when you want to keep scrolling but know you should stop. The moment when you want another snack but you’re already full. These moments feel small, but they’re actually training moments. Every time you choose self-control, you’re becoming stronger. Temperance isn’t about being perfect. It’s about deciding who’s in control: you or your cravings. With God’s help, you can choose yourself.

Remember This: Temperance isn’t about missing out. It’s about being in control. And when you’re in control of yourself, you’re free.

Lesson Review Questions:

1. What is temperance? How is it different from never having fun? (*Temperance is self-control applied to your desires and pleasures. It’s knowing when enough is enough. It’s not about never enjoying things, but about enjoying good things without being controlled by them.*)
2. Why doesn’t “more” make us happy? (*Too much of even good things makes us feel sick, exhausted, or empty. More candy makes you sick. More scrolling leaves you tired. More binge-watching makes you feel like you wasted your time.*)
3. What does Proverbs 25:28 compare a person without self-control to? (*A city whose walls are broken through. Without walls, a city has no protection and enemies can walk right in. Without self-control, anything can control you.*)
4. How is self-control like a muscle? (*The more you use it, the stronger it gets. The less you use it, the weaker it becomes. Every small choice either makes you stronger or weaker.*)
5. What’s one area where you want to practice temperance this week? (*Personal answers will vary based on their challenge cards.*)

* *Departing Prayer, written by St. Nersess the Grace-filled (Shnorhali).*

Close with prayer:

Պահապան ամենայնի Քրիստոս, աջ Քո հովանի լիցի ի վերայ իմ, ի տուէ եւ ի գիշերի, ի նստիլ ի տան, ի գնալ ի ճանապարհ, ի ննջել եւ ի յառնել, զի մի երբեք սասանեցայց եւ ողորմեա՛ Քո արարածոց եւ ինձ բազմամեղիս: Ամէն

Bahaban amenayn Kreesdos, ach Ko hovanee leetsee ee vera eem; ee dveh yev ee keesher-ee, ee nsdeel ee dan, ee knal ee janabarh, ee nunchel yev ee harnel, zee mee yerpek sa-sanetsayts yev voghormya Ko araradzots yev eents pazmamyghees. Amen.

O Christ, guardian of all, let Your right hand guard and shelter me, by day and by night, at home and abroad, in sleeping and in waking, that I may never stumble. Have mercy upon Your creatures and upon me, a great sinner. Amen.