

WHAT our WORLD NEEDS NOW

Part 9 - Self-Control - Rich Barrett

Group Discussion

We all have appetites and desires that demand immediate satisfaction. Like Esau, we can become so focused on what we want right now that we trade away something we want much more. God does not ask us to overcome these desires through willpower alone. Self-control is fruit produced by the Holy Spirit as we follow his leading. One important way we cooperate with the Spirit is by intentionally choosing the environments, habits, and relationships that shape us.

Read 2 Timothy 2:22 aloud together.

1. Paul tells Timothy to “run from” certain desires. Why do you think Scripture sometimes tells us to flee temptation instead of simply standing our ground and resisting it?
2. The verse contains both a negative command—“run from”—and a positive command—“pursue.” Why are both necessary? What can happen when we remove a temptation but do not replace it with something better?
3. Esau traded his future birthright for the immediate satisfaction of a meal. Where do you see people being tempted to exchange what they want most for what they want right now? Where have you experienced that tension personally?
4. Think about your normal surroundings, routines, and access to technology. What parts of your environment make self-control more difficult? What practical change could make the wise choice easier?
5. Paul tells Timothy to pursue God’s way “along with those who call on the Lord with pure hearts.” How have your friendships influenced your desires and decisions? Who helps remind you of the person God is calling you to become?
6. Where do you most need the Spirit’s fruit of self-control right now? What could you pre-decide—and what specific plan could you put in place—before the next moment of temptation arrives?

Self-control is not merely a matter of trying harder or proving that we are strong. It grows as we keep in step with the Spirit, flee environments that feed destructive desires, and pursue God’s life alongside people who strengthen our faith. Close your time by asking each person to identify one practical change they will make this week. Then pray for the Holy Spirit to give each person the desire, wisdom, and strength to follow through.