

# Practicing the Christian Life: Self Control

## I Corinthians 9:23-27; 10:11-13

8/13/23

### Discussion Questions

#### Preparation:

How do we learn self-control? Think through the cycles of life and the various challenges we faced to gain control of our lives. Is self-mastery possible? Why is self-control important? Why not give in to whatever passion, craving or urge we feel? We have them why not satisfy them?

#### Passages:

*23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.*

*24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25 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. 26 Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. 27 No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. I Corinthians 9:23-27*

*11 These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. 12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! 13 No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. I Corinthians 10:11-13*

1. Were you involved in sports in High School, the college level or after college? What kind of discipline (self-control) does it take to be good at a sport, enough to win? What areas of your life were brought into control by your desire to win or be proficient in your sport?
2. "I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave." (vs. 27) Sounds like masochism or machoism. Is that what self-control is?
3. What does our culture say is the key to self-control? Does it work?
4. How far will willpower take us?
5. What prize did the Apostle Paul focus on and how did it help him gain control of his life when he was surrounded by incredible moral and religious corruption? Does it work?
6. Brainstorm things that people set their hearts on. What level of control do they provide?

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7. What level of self-control does having one's career be our ultimate passion? How can making one's career our highest goal lead to the loss of self-control?
8. Share your struggles with self-control. What helped you bring something that was out of control in your life into control? What did not help you?
9. What are you most passionate about? How has it enabled you to bring a level of control into your life?
10. Discuss vs. 23: *"I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings."* How does the Gospel and the passion to communicate the Gospel to others so they experience Christ enable us to develop self-control? Does that mean we will never be tempted or feel the pull to lose control of an area in our lives?
11. Share an example of a person who lost control in one area of their lives and it cost them dearly.
12. Having ice cream from time to time is not going to hurt you. Eating a gallon of ice cream as a coping mechanism can. However, there are things in our lives that we should never taste because they are caustic. Make a list of things that if you lose control of, even once, can ruin your life.
13. What do you think of Pastor Richard's idea of, when tempted, to allow our imaginations to run wild. Think about how much pleasure you will experience from it, just be honest in your imagination and imagine the day after and the consequences for your behavior? Do you do this and has it worked to keep you in control of your faculties, urges and drives?
14. *"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."* Hebrews 12:1-3

Jesus had a hard job and a tough mission. What helped him remain laser focused on his mission? Apply this to your own life. How will focusing on the Gospel mission help us to gain control over our lives so we our behavior, attitudes and how we treat people draw people to Jesus?

15. Can you think of a person whom God used to bring many to Christ who also had a secret that came out and ended up undoing all the good that he/she did?

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16. Anything else to discuss?

Perhaps consider sharing a current struggle you are having with an area of your life that wants to go wild so you can pray for each other. It is best these things be shared in same-sex groups. If you are in a mixed group, break up into same gender small groups. I know this is difficult and requires a high level of trust. James 5 tells us to confess our sins one to another and pray for one another so you may be restored. It's a good Christian practice, confession, and one not used enough by the church.