

## INTRO

- As we enter December, do you have any favorite Christmas carols or songs? Or any that you would be happy not hearing this year?

## READ

Read Galatians 5:22-25, 2 Timothy 1:7

## REFLECT

Self-control is a virtue that can refer both to the strength to refrain from doing something that we shouldn't, but also to the strength of stepping up and acting when we should. Both in Galatians 5 and in 2 Timothy 1 we are promised that God gives us a spirit that enables us to have these two kinds of self-control. But self-control is not only about strength. Part of what God does for us is give us wisdom to create the conditions in which self-control can flourish.

### 1. Self-control and our desires

We can't talk about self-control without talking about what really goes on in our hearts. We lack self-control when we give space to certain desires in us that hinder us from living the life God has for us. Self-control requires that we are honest about the things we actually want, and also about what we should *want to want*.

*Qu: Have you ever brought before God the desires that you have but that you wouldn't like to have?*

*Qu: How would you describe the kind of person God wants you to become? What are the desires inside that person like? How much do you want to be like that?*

### 2. Self-control and the things we do

We can't simply create new desires inside ourselves just by willing them. Desires arise from,

and are shaped by, the things we do every day. If we want to re-organize our desires so that we live a life of self-control, we must be careful with the things we engage with daily.

Three kinds of things are worth paying attention to: (1) the things we do habitually, like first thing in the morning, last thing before bed, etc.; (2) the different influences we encounter daily in the things we see, watch, listen to, etc.; (3) all the small battles against "trivial" indulgences that feed the desires that go on to tempt us more strongly later. A life of self-control is honest about these things and radical about organizing life so that we have the freedom to pursue and obey God.

*Qu: What daily habits can you change moving forward so that your desires are more aligned with what God has for you?*

*Qu: Can you think of any small battles that God is calling you to rely on him for victory?*

### 3. How Christ makes self-control possible

It is Christ who makes any of this possible. Because of him we can be honest and vulnerable before God. Because of him we don't need to be afraid when we fail. Because of him we have the power to win both small and big battles. And because of him we can seek greater self-control out of love for him, and not out of fear.

*Qu: Moving forward, how can you rely more on Christ to grow in self-control?*

## RESPOND &amp; PRAY

- What encouraged/challenged you the most from this discussion?
- Spend time praying for one another and those you know who need to hear the good news of salvation.