

Day 8

Self Control

Silence (2 minutes) Take some time to be quiet, to calm down, and to listen. What has God been teaching you? What are the next steps He wants you to take? How is your spirit doing?

Scripture *“For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.”* Galatians 5:17

Discussion We live in a culture that encourages us to do whatever we want. Our way, right away, we deserve it. The lie is that if it feels right, then it must be right. Unfortunately, just because it makes us happy doesn't mean that it is good for us. There are lots of things that might feel right but can be detrimental to our well being. We might like a big, fat, juicy hamburger once in a while, but if we eat them often enough we might end up with a heart attack. Drugs might make us feel good, but too much can lead to a lethal overdose. Driving recklessly can give us an adrenaline rush, but it puts us and others at risk. Flirting may seem harmless, but it can lead to broken families. Just because it feels good does not mean that it is good.

We are to do only what the Spirit desires. Knowing what the Spirit desires means being intimately aware of the heart of God. We learn about the heart of God through reading His Word. The Bible tells us about love and grace and mercy and forgiveness. God desires that no one should perish, but that all would come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). God wishes for us to go to the ends of the earth to teach people about Him and His plan for salvation (Mt. 28:19-20). He gives an example to live by in His Son, Jesus, who perfectly reflected the heart of the Father (Heb. 1:3). To love Him is to obey Him (Jn. 14:15).

The flesh is in complete opposition from the heart of the Spirit. This is our natural tendency; we desire to oppose the will of God. That's why the transformation of the Holy Spirit in a person's life is so incredible. Our natural desire to appease the flesh is replaced with a hunger to live for God above all else. Unfortunately, until we are made complete someday, we currently live in a state where our flesh and God's Spirit compete for attention. The Apostle Paul points this out in Romans 7:21-25. If Paul struggled with this, how much more will we! The key is to allow our heart to be transformed and our minds renewed by the Spirit of God (Rom. 12:1-2). We do this as we pray for the will of God to be manifested in our life and as we meditate and think about what God wants from us. It is a lifelong pursuit of growth. Everything is permissible, but not all is beneficial. Let's stick to what God says is beneficial for us and allow Him to provide the fulfillment that we seek in this world.

Application Do you know the heart of God? How willing are you to be obedient to do His will? The heart of God is to sacrifice everything for the benefit of others! Take 5 minutes today to pray about what the heart of God desires and how you can live it out in your life. Is there anything in your life that feels good but is harming your relationship with Him? Get rid of it from your life today! You want to be completely right with God in every area. Surrender everything that hinders your relationship with Him and thank Him for giving you everything you need to find fulfillment in this life and in the life to come!

Prayer Lord Jesus, I come before You today with everything I am. It is my desire to give you my whole life and nothing less. Search my heart and show me anything that has come between us and convict my spirit because I don't want my desires to get in the way of the work that You want to do in me. Help me to discern the difference between my will and Your will and give me the strength to choose what is best. *“May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer”* (Ps. 19:14).

Silence (2 minutes) Talk to God about what you are learning. What are your fears? Where are your hangups? Pray for direction.

Scripture memory for the week: *“Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.”* Titus 1:7-8

