



Sermon Notes

Topic: This is Living: Eye on the Prize

Preacher: Ps Sam Toms

Bible Passage: Philippians 3:12-4:1

Date: Sunday 21st September 2025

Study Guide Overview

In *Living With Purpose: Eye on the Prize* (Philippians 3:12–4:1), Paul teaches that the Christian life is not passive but purposeful — pressing forward like an athlete in training. The prize is not just heaven someday, but a life now that reflects the likeness of Jesus.

At the heart of this pursuit is **self-control**, the Spirit-empowered discipline that shapes us into Christ’s image. Without self-control, we are like a city without walls, vulnerable and distracted. With it, we can say “No” to impulses and distractions so we can say a greater “Yes” to Christ. Self-control is not rigid willpower but Spirit power — the fruit of God’s kingdom at work in us.

Living with purpose means training ourselves, like Paul, to forget what is behind and strain toward what is ahead. Every small act of discipline — guarding our words, stewarding our time, managing our desires, resisting temptation — becomes a step toward maturity in Christ. The true prize is not achievement or survival, but transformation into His likeness.

Takeaway: *The goal isn’t just reaching heaven, but becoming more like Jesus — and the Spirit grows this in us through self-control in every part of life.*

Small Group Questions/Discussions

Theme: Developing Self-Control in All Aspects of Life

Text: Philippians 3:12–4:1

1. Icebreaker

- Share a time when lack of self-control cost you something (e.g., finances, health, relationships, words spoken in frustration).
- Or, share a moment where exercising self-control brought long-term benefit.

2. Read the Passage

Philippians 3:12–4:1 (NIV)

- Take turns reading aloud. Encourage participants to listen for images of “straining forward,” “pressing on,” and “living with purpose.”



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3. Key Insights from the Sermon

- **Self-Control is Spirit Power:** Galatians 5:22–23 – self-control is the Spirit’s capstone fruit that holds the others together.
- **Discipline as Training:** 1 Corinthians 9:24–27 – athletes train hard to win a temporary crown; believers train for eternal reward.
- **Boundaries Bring Freedom:** Proverbs 25:28 – lack of self-control leaves us vulnerable and exposed, like a city without walls.
- **Purpose Shapes Discipline:** Matthew 6:16 – even spiritual practices can become self-serving if the motive is wrong.

Self-control is not about perfection or rigid rule-keeping — it is about shaping a life that is increasingly Christlike.

4. Discussion Questions

A. Understanding the Text

1. Paul says, “*I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.*” What does this reveal about the balance between God’s grace and our effort?
2. How does Paul’s image of “straining forward” compare to the modern experience of distractions and comforts?

B. Self-Control in Practice

3. Where in your life do you feel most “out of control” right now (time, speech, emotions, finances, habits, technology, appetites)?
4. How do you see the Spirit’s role in giving you strength to grow in these areas?
5. Paul likens the Christian life to athletic training. What spiritual “training rhythms” could help you develop self-control?

C. Motives and Heart-Check

6. Why is the **why** behind our self-control so important? How can self-discipline drift into self-righteousness if the motive isn’t Christ?
7. How might developing self-control open space for greater freedom, joy, and intimacy with Jesus?

5. Application

- **Personal Challenge:** Identify one area where God is calling you to grow in self-control this week. Write down a small, practical step (e.g., limit screen time, budget spending, schedule prayer first, practice silence before speaking).
- **Group Challenge:** Encourage one another by checking in next week. Share victories, struggles, and how the Spirit is at work.
- **Prayer Focus:** Pray for the Spirit’s power to help each person say “Yes” to Christ and “No” to distractions.

6. Reflection Questions (Optional for Journaling)

Here are some great questions to help identify growth areas in our spiritual formation.

- What areas in my life are marked more by chaos than peace?
- When I am weary, what unhealthy patterns do I default to?
- Am I giving God my best time or just leftovers?
- What small daily practice could become a training ground for self-control in my life?