



Self-control is choosing to do what's best even when you don't want to.



DAY 1

Read 2 Peter 1:3a

Self-control is choosing to do what's best even when you don't want to. It's hard to do something you don't want to do, isn't it? Doing what you want is way easier. But if we don't have self-control, we could end up hurting ourselves and the people around us.

Today's verse reminds us that we don't have to try to do the right thing on our own. God's power will give us EVERYTHING we need to live a godly life, to have the self-control to do what is best. No one is more powerful than God!

Get Ready for Self-control

What if you started your day by praying for self-control? Grab an index card or scrap of paper and write, "BE READY TO DO THE RIGHT THING" in capital letters and place it next to your shoes. As you put them on tomorrow morning, stop and ask God to help you have self-control all day long!

DAY 2

Read 1 Corinthians 9:25

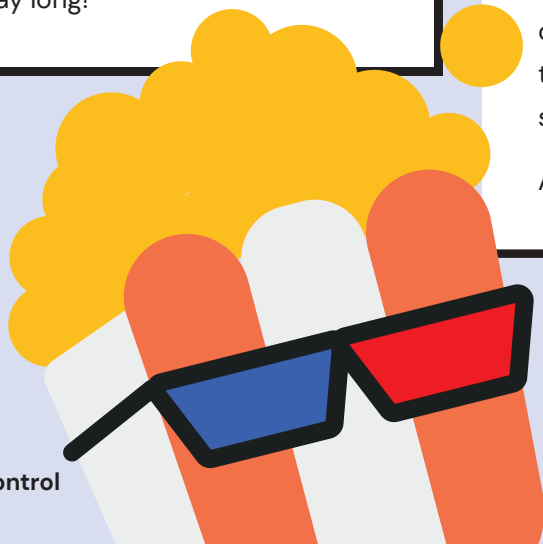
What's your favorite sport? Who's your favorite athlete? To become a great athlete, you have to spend years practicing in the gym and on the field. Great athletes might make it look easy, but that big win you see on TV is the result of years of training.

Self-control takes practice, and just like those athletes, you won't always get it right. Every athlete misses a shot or loses a game, but champions keep trying. You won't show self-control in every single situation. But the more you try, the more you practice, the easier it will become.

Practice Makes Progress

Practice your free throws. If you can't go outside, practice with a small basketball hoop hung over the door or with paper and a trashcan. Spend ten minutes shooting the ball into the basket. Give yourself a point for every shot you sink. Repeat the same process for three days in a row. No basketball hoop? Pick some activity that is challenging, like doing sit-ups for a minute. Keep track of how many you can do in a minute and see how that number grows over the three days.

Are you getting better with practice?



Read 1 Corinthians 10:13

Temptation is a desire to do something wrong or unwise. Everybody faces temptation, even Jesus! Every day you'll be tempted to lash out in anger, or say something unkind, or lose your cool when you should show self-control. But there is a way out. You have God on your side. When you're tempted, God will help you!

How can you avoid losing self-control?

You could...

- ➔ Look away.
- ➔ Realize that it's just a temptation and that you DON'T have to give in!
- ➔ Distract yourself with something else.
- ➔ Picture yourself resisting the temptation.
- ➔ Pray and ask God to help you keep your cool.

Read the scenarios below. For each one, write down how you could avoid losing self-control by choosing one of the methods listed above.

1. Your mom tells you no video games before dinner. This makes you angry. . .
2. Your brother breaks the new Star Wars **LEGO**® ship you spent hours putting together. . .
3. A kid in your class tells a joke about you and everyone laughs. . .

Read Proverbs 4:23

Have you ever seen a guard in front of something important— like a monument or museum? A guard's job is to protect something valuable. When it comes to self-control, do you know what you need to guard? Your heart. Everything you do— every word, every thought, every action— comes from your heart.

In order to guard your heart, you need to make sure that there's nothing hidden that you need to get rid of. Do a heart check:

- Are you angry?
- Are you bitter?
- Are you jealous?
- Are you frustrated?

The best way to get in the habit of guarding your heart is to begin asking yourself the following question every night before you go to bed: *God, what is in my heart today?* Remember, when you guard your heart, self-control will follow. Your actions will reflect what's in your heart.

Be ready to do
the right thing.

Self-control is choosing to do what's best even when you don't want to.

DAY 1

Read Proverbs 13:3

Ever get a “talks too much” or “needs to work on controlling their words” on your report card? For some of us, talking just comes naturally. When we think of something we want to say, it's hard to keep our mouths closed. But talking out of turn can get you in trouble—and not just in the classroom.

It's not a bad thing to be a talkative person, but it isn't a good thing if you're the only one who ever talks. If you want to control your tongue and create friendships that are strong, you have to be a good listener too. It takes self-control!

Take a listening challenge. Look at the two questions below. When you see a friend tomorrow, before you start talking about yourself, ask your friend one of these questions first, and then LISTEN.

What is the best thing that's happened so far today?
What's the worst thing that's happened so far today?

DAY 2

Read Proverbs 21:23

Do you love trouble? Do you LIKE getting grounded or having a note sent home from your teacher about poor choices at school? NO WAY! No one likes to get in trouble. In fact, we like to stay AWAY from trouble, right?

The things you say can get you in trouble. Once you've said something hurtful, even if you didn't really mean it and even if you say you're sorry, it can't be unsaid. So it's better to think before you speak and select your words carefully. When you're careful about what you say, you'll stay out of trouble—and maybe keep yourself from getting grounded too.

On Repeat

Proverbs 21:23 is a GREAT verse to have in the back of your mind when you need it. Say this verse at least 10 times using different voices (soft, loud, fast, slow, opera style, rap etc.) until you have it memorized.

Read James 1:19

Did you have to hurry anywhere today? Maybe you hurried to . . .

- . . . catch the bus to school.
- . . . finish your homework to play.
- . . . grab your cleats and water bottle so you wouldn't be late for soccer practice.

When it comes to controlling our tongues, there is one thing we should always be in a hurry to do— LISTEN. When you listen, you always learn something. When we're quick to listen, it helps us to hear what the other person is feeling. When we're SLOW to speak, we give ourselves time to calm down before we lose our tempers!

Hop To It

Grab some index cards or small pieces of paper and write the verse in phrases on the cards. Place them on the ground so that you can jump or hop from one card to the next. Walk over the phrases quickly or slowly as you repeat the verse.

Read Ephesians 4:29

Is there a "list" of words you're not allowed to say? If you say a word from the "list" in front of your mom or dad or your teacher, you'd probably get in BIG trouble! There are other words that you also should avoid. Do you know what they are? To help you figure it out, read through the questions below.

- ➔ Is it helpful?
- ➔ Is it something that's okay for my three-year-old brother to repeat?
- ➔ Would I say it to the principal at school or the president of the United States?
- ➔ Would I say it to Jesus if He were standing right in front of me?

If you answered "no" to any of these questions, then whatever it is that you want to say is better left unsaid. Careless or thoughtless words can ruin your relationships with others. Instead, use words that will build others up. Think before you speak so that others can trust that you are a good friend.

Think before you speak.

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DAY 1

Read James 1:19-20

You have one mouth and two ears. Have you ever stopped to think about why?

Read today's verse out loud. Maybe you have twice as many ears so that you'll remember that listening is more important than talking. And also because having two mouths on your face might look a little weird.

Like we talked about last week, we need to think before we speak. But that also is true for our actions. Before we fly off the handle, it might be a better idea to take some deep breaths first. That simple pause might keep us from doing something we'll regret when the anger starts to rise.

Remember, self-control isn't something that just happens. We need God's help to control our words and our actions. Let's listen more. Speak less. Take deep breaths and calm down.

Self Portrait

Draw a picture of your cute/handsome face. Then write the words of James 1:19-20 underneath to remind you to have self-control.

DAY 2

Read Proverbs 16:32

When someone makes you angry, what do you usually want to do? Yell? Scream? Throw something? Hit someone? In the heat of the moment, any of these responses just come naturally. But ALL of these responses end up hurting you and the person on the other end of your anger.

Out of Control

With a parent's permission, grab a bottle of pop (or Coke) from the fridge and take it outside. Shake it up as fast as you can and then carefully open it. What happened? (Hold on to the empty bottle of soda for an activity next week!)

When you lose your temper, it's like that exploding bottle of pop. Just like all that sticky pop got all over you and made a huge mess, your uncontrolled angry response can cause a lot of damage too. Thankfully, there IS a better way. When you find yourself getting angry this week, think about that exploding soda. Pause, take a step back, and think of a way to respond with self-control instead.

Read Proverbs 29:11

The Bible makes it very clear that when you respond in anger without self-control, you're a fool. Wouldn't you rather be someone who is wise?

What are the three colors on a stoplight? Red, yellow, and green. First, STOP. Stop before you respond. Take a deep breath. That's the *red* light. Then THINK. Think about how you could handle the situation like a wise person instead of a fool. That's *yellow*. And finally, ACT. Once you've taken a deep breath, pause to think about what you should do, then you're ready to respond. That's the *green* light.

Stop, Think, Act

Fill in the stoplight below. Color the top circle red, the middle circle yellow, and the bottom circle green. On the lines, write the words "STOP" (for red), "THINK" (for yellow) and "ACT" (for green). When you roll up to a stoplight this week, think about self-control. Before you let your anger fly like a fool, stop, think, and then act.



STOP

THINK

ACT

Read Proverbs 4:23

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Think before you act.



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DAY 1

Read Proverbs 25:16

This verse gives a pretty clear picture of why self-control is important. If you eat too much of something yummy, even if it's your very favorite food, you will throw up. Spin around one too many times and you will fall down dizzy. Ride your bike too far in the hot sun and you might pass out. You have to know when to stop!



Enough Is Enough

Grab an empty soda bottle and pull off the label. Then, mark 18 lines on the side from the bottom to the top. Under each line, write one word of the verse in order. Fill a pitcher with water and set the bottle in the sink. Carefully pour the water from the pitcher into the bottle as you say the verse. When it gets to the top, keep pouring. This is a picture of what happens when enough is enough! Dump out the water and repeat again until you can say the verse from memory.

DAY 2

Read Proverbs 28:7

Too much of a good thing is actually a bad thing. Your parents know this is true. That's why it's often your mom or dad who tells you when it's time to turn off the TV, or reminds you to put on sunscreen, or limits the amount of ice cream in your bowl.

It isn't that your mom or dad doesn't want you to have fun. It's that they understand that limits can actually make your life a whole lot easier. So when your grownup says, "Enough is enough" or "It's time to stop," you need to pay attention so that good things will always be good things.



Talk About Self-control

Interview your parent. Ask them: Was there a time when you were my age and you didn't show self-control or know when to stop? What happened?



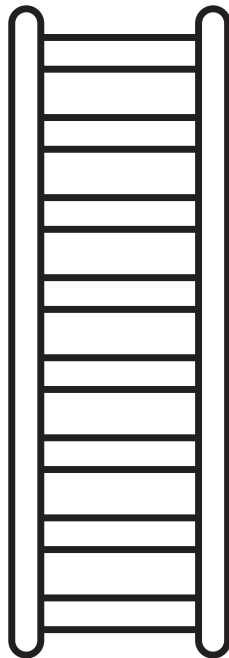
DAY 3

Read 2 Peter 1:5-7

Self-control is choosing to do what you *should* do, not what you *want* to do. Doing what you *want* to do is easy. Doing what's *right* or what you *should* do isn't.

When you become a Christian—a follower of Jesus—you grow in your faith, just like you're growing taller and stronger as you age. As your faith grows, some things that were once hard will become easier. It doesn't happen overnight, and it doesn't mean that you'll always get it right. But God promises to help you as you follow Jesus. Before you know it, all those things you "*should*" do will become almost as easy as all the things you "*want*" to do.

Fill in the words from the word bank on the ladder below. Start with Faith on the bottom rung. Then fill in the other words from the verse from bottom to top.



- Faith
- Goodness
- Knowledge
- Self-control
- Strength
- Godliness
- Kindness
- Love



DAY 4

Read Galatians 5:22-23

What's your favorite fruit? For your favorite fruit to grow the right way, it has to come from a healthy tree or plant. Plenty of water, sunlight, and the right kind of soil produce the juiciest, yummiest fruits.

Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. By reading your Bible, praying and talking to God, meeting with your small group at church, and talking to your parents about God, you are learning to grow in the Spirit and produce good fruits like love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, and even self-control.

Fruit Wrap Up

Grab a piece of fruit from the kitchen. Find a piece of paper, write "Self-Control" across the front, and decorate the page. Then "wrap" up your fruit with the paper and put it back in the fruit bowl. When a family member goes to grab a piece of fruit, be prepared to explain how self-control is a fruit of the Spirit.

Know when to stop.

