

KIDS *of* INTEGRITY

Self-control



Build a fort, play the giggle game, or shake a pop bottle into a volcano of fizz. Who would have thought learning self-control could be so much fun?

Review these ideas, plus plenty more, to create lessons that help kids:

- control negative impulses, in dependence on the Holy Spirit
- think through consequences before speaking or acting
- walk away from troublemakers.

This lesson is also helpful for children who tend to overreact, have difficulty managing anger and lash out by shouting, hitting or biting.

Lesson contents

Parents' prayer	2
Kids talk with God	3
Speak a blessing	4
Memory verses	4
Kick-off craft	5
Bible stories	6
Creative discipline	8
Hands-on options	9

Parents' prayer

Before you begin leading your children through this study on self-control, spend time alone with God interceding for His help.

Use the sample prayer below, or build your own prayer using the verses under "Scripture-guided prayer."

Sample prayer

Jesus, You, are the Lord of self-control. Satan tempted You to flaunt Your power, to show off and to indulge Your appetite. But You were "full of the Holy Spirit" and used Scripture to rebuff Satan (Luke 4:1-13). Thank you for choosing to experience life in a human body. You really do know how challenging it can be to exercise self-control (Hebrews 4:15).

Self-control doesn't come easily to me. Please forgive me for the times I have said and done things rashly. Please remind me to consider self-control as "God-control" – not trying to control myself with human effort, but rather depending on You to fill me with the Holy Spirit so I can be self-controlled. I ask that You will make that supernatural change in me so I can keep in step with the Spirit. My desire is to have the fruit of Your Spirit evident in my life, especially self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). You know that I struggle with self-control when _____. Please remind me to go to You when I am tempted, as I know Your promise to "provide a way out so that [I] can stand up under it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). Thank you for promising Your Holy Spirit to all who ask (Luke 11:13)! As I wake each morning, please remind me to ask for a fresh filling of Your Spirit.

If, as an adult, I sometimes struggle with impulsiveness, I wonder what it must be like to be a kid trying to exercise self-control. My children struggle with maintaining self-control when _____. Wonderful Counsellor, please pour out Your heavenly wisdom on _____ and _____ so they are able to recognize temptation when the devil comes prowling around to tempt them to lose self-control in this area. Do not give Satan the joy of seeing them "like a city whose walls are broken down" (Proverbs 25:28). Instead, please prompt my children to go to You for help when they are tempted, so the

walls of their hearts remain intact. Please give them the wisdom to ask to be filled with Your Spirit so they can be self-controlled.

As a family, I ask that we will be strong in You, Lord, and in Your mighty power. Remind us of our need to put on the full armour of God so we can take a stand against the devil's schemes. I ask that in addition to the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation, that we will hold firmly to the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, and that we will be a praying family! Please fit our feet with readiness that comes from the gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:10-18). How better can we be equipped to have victory over the plans of the devil? None of this can be accomplished in human might or power, but by Your Spirit, Lord Almighty (Zechariah 4:6). Amen.

Scripture-guided prayer for parents

Pray through one or more of the selected Scriptures under each heading. Focus on listening to God and allowing His Spirit to direct you as you pray.

Character focus

Begin by letting God know how much you appreciate His ultimate control and the promise of His Holy Spirit.

John 14:15-17 | Romans 8:26-27 |
2 Corinthians 12:7-10 | Colossians 2:9-10 |
Hebrews 4:14-16

Heart search

Acknowledge where and how you lack self-control personally.

Proverbs 25:28 | Proverbs 29:11 | Proverbs 29:20 |
Romans 6:11-14 | Galatians 5:16-21 | James 1:19-20

Gratitude

Thank God for the ways you have seen self-control exhibited within your family.

Family requests

Ask God to help you and your family to be self-controlled in your thoughts and actions.

Luke 11:11-13 | Galatians 5:22-26 |
1 Thessalonians 5:5-8 | 2 Timothy 1:7 | 2 Peter 1:3-4

Kids talk with God

Use this section to help your children learn to reach out to God in all things. The sample prayers all begin with "Dear God," however, you may use any other names for God your children are comfortable with (i.e. Jesus, Father God, Lord Jesus, Heavenly Father, Abba Father, Lord). If your kids are ready to pray original prayers, you may wish to use the Bible verses provided under "Scripture-guided prayer for children."

Sample prayers

Dear God, I am having trouble controlling my tongue. I say unkind things without thinking. Please help me to be full of Your Holy Spirit so I think before I speak. Amen.

Dear God, I am having trouble controlling my hands/ thoughts/feet. I do/think things that do not please You. Please help me to be full of Your Holy Spirit so I can honour You with my thoughts and actions. Amen.

Dear God, if I am upset and getting close to losing self-control, please remind me to ask for the help of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear God, I have a problem with trying to solve problems using rough and hurtful actions instead of kind and gentle words. Please help me to remember to talk about problems rather than acting out towards others. Amen.

Dear God, when the devil comes prowling around trying to devour me, please remind me to pray and ask You to protect me and not to give in to his temptation. Amen.

Dear God, please forgive me for losing self-control. I know it does not please You. Please help me to be full of Your Holy Spirit so I can be self-controlled. Amen.

Scripture-guided prayer for children

Read through one of the selected Scriptures under each heading and help your children pray based on the verse you read. Encourage them to listen to God and allow His Spirit to guide them as they pray.

Character focus

Begin by telling Jesus you appreciate knowing that He understands what it is like to be a kid and thank Him that He promises to share His Holy Spirit with you to help you be self-controlled.

Romans 8:26,37 | 2 Corinthians 12:9 | Hebrews 4:15-16

Heart search

Acknowledge where and how you lack self-control. Proverbs 25:28 | Proverbs 29:11 | James 1:19

Gratitude

Thank God for ways you have been self-controlled.

Personal requests

Ask God to help you, your siblings and your parents to be self-controlled in your thoughts and actions. Luke 11:11-13 | Galatians 5:22-23 | 2 Timothy 1:7

Speak a blessing

Use this section as a reminder to “speak a blessing” when you see your son or daughter growing in the area of self-control.

- Good job using self-control, _____!
- I see that _____ is self-controlled.
- I’m proud to see you’re solving your problem using words instead of actions, _____.
- You kept the walls of your city intact, _____. Good job! (Proverbs 25:28)
- I’m proud you went to God for help in using self-control, _____. I see that the Holy Spirit is living in you, because I see your self-control. _____, Jesus is proud of you and so am I.

- I’m glad you used a Bible verse to fight off temptation. It feels so much better to deal with a problem using self-control than losing it, doesn’t it, _____?

Memory verses

Memorizing Scripture with your children helps God’s Spirit bring about lasting change. Choose a verse that your kids can learn in a pre-determined period of time. Aim to review the verse at least once every day.

Psalm 4:4 “In your anger do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.”

Psalm 141:3 “Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips.”

Proverbs 14:17 “A quick tempered man does foolish things, and a crafty man is hated.”

Proverbs 16:32 “Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city.”

Proverbs 17:27 “A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered.”

Proverbs 19:2 “It is not good to have zeal without knowledge nor to be hasty and miss the way.”

Proverbs 25:28 “Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self control.”

Proverbs 29:11 “A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.”

Proverbs 29:20 “Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”

Ecclesiastes 7:9 “Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools.”

2 Corinthians 12:9 “But He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, my power is made perfect in weakness . . .’”

Galatians 5:22-23 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

Ephesians 4:26-27 “‘In your anger do not sin.’ Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.”

1 Thessalonians 5:6-8 “So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.”

2 Timothy 1:7 “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”

Hebrews 4:15 “For we do not have a high priest [Jesus] who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin.”

1 Peter 5:8 “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around looking for someone to devour.”

2 Peter 1:5-8 “For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge, and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Kick-off craft

The craft suggested here will help remind your children to practice self-control and is based on 1 Peter 5:8: “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around looking for someone to devour.”

A self-control poster

Directions

- 1 Help your children draw or trace a picture of a lion on the poster.
- 2 Next have your children place their hands over the lion and trace around their hands.
- 3 Write the memory verse of your choice on the poster.
- 4 Use the poster as a reminder that the best way to defeat Satan when he tries to devour us is to pray.
- 5 Review the questions for discussion below to enhance your children’s understanding of the concepts.

Throughout the day, encourage your children to clasp their hands together tightly when they feel like they are going to lose self-control. Have them come to you so you can help them pray. Explain that Satan is strong like a lion, but we can be stronger than Satan when we go to God for help. Just as the tracing of their hands covers the lion, they can be stronger than the temptation Satan sends when they are full of the Holy Spirit. Tell your children that putting their hands together will help remind them to talk to God and ask for His help in maintaining self-control. At these times, you may also select a **kids talk with God** prayer to pray with your children.

Questions for discussion

- Could you win in a fight against a real lion?
- Who could help you and how?
- Who does the Bible say is like a lion?
- Why does the Bible say you need to be alert?

- How does Satan try to devour you?
- How can you beat Satan when he is acting like a lion?

Bible stories

This section provides Bible stories with the theme of self-control, along with questions that can be used as a guide for family discussions. Choose one that is appropriate for your children. Before reading aloud, take a few minutes to review the story. If the Bible passage is too complex for your kids, paraphrase the story yourself or use the summary provided under “key concepts.”

Jesus fights temptation

Read Luke 4:1-13.

Questions for discussion

1. Tell me about a time when you were really, really hungry.
2. How badly do you want to eat when you are just starving?
3. Can you imagine how hungry Jesus must have been after not eating for 40 days?
4. If you had not eaten for 40 days and you had the power to turn stone into bread, would you?
5. Jesus had all the power in the world and Satan tempted him to show it off, but Jesus didn't. How did Jesus resist temptation?
6. How can we use Scripture to help us maintain self-control?

Key concepts

The Bible says Satan tempted Jesus for forty days. During this time, Jesus did not eat. Satan tempted Jesus with food, power and the opportunity to show off His power and to honour Himself instead of God.

When Satan tempted Jesus, Jesus used Bible verses to tell Satan why He wasn't going to do what he asked Him to do. The Bible also tells us Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit, which means God helped him

be self-controlled. It is the same for you and I. If we try to fight Satan and temptation on our own, it is difficult, and perhaps impossible. If we ask God to fill us with His Holy Spirit to help us fight Satan and temptation, we can be strong and victorious like Jesus.

Picking fights

Read Genesis 26:17-22.

Questions for discussion

1. What do other kids do when they want to pick a fight?
2. How about your brother/sister?
3. How do you feel when someone says that something you own is his/hers?
4. What happened to Isaac's servants?
5. What did they do?
6. How many wells did they have to dig before the herdsman of Gerar didn't bother them?
7. What is the best thing to do if someone picks a fight with you?

Key concepts

Isaac's servants had moved into a new territory. Part of moving into new territory involved finding water for the flocks they were caring for. As Isaac's men dug wells, the herdsman living in the new territory argued with them and kept claiming the wells as their own.

Instead of fighting back and fighting for the wells that were rightfully theirs, Isaac and his people just kept moving on and digging another well, until the herdsman of Gerar left them alone. These men exercised self-control and didn't fight for their rights. Isaac and his servants set a good example for all of us of what to do if someone picks a fight with you. The best thing to do is to walk away and keep the peace.

The funky fox

Read Nehemiah 4.

Questions for discussion

1. How do you feel when someone makes fun of something you are making?
2. How do you feel when you start a big job that will take a long time to finish?
3. Let's say you were trying to build a big Lego® house or spaceship. If someone were making fun of you, saying what a lousy builder you were, how would you feel?
4. Would you want to quit or would you keep trying?
5. What did Nehemiah do when his enemies made fun of the wall he was building and said it would break if even a fox walked on it?
6. When someone is angry with you, what is the easiest thing to do?
7. What could have happened if Nehemiah had become angry and lost self-control when Sanballat mocked them?

Key concepts

When someone gets mad at us, the easiest thing to do is get mad, too. Nehemiah was rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. His enemies were angry about this and mocked the efforts of Nehemiah and his men and also threatened them with a fight. Nehemiah didn't get angry when they made fun of him, nor did he offer to fight.

If Nehemiah had fought back, there was a chance a war could have started. Nehemiah's anger could have clouded his thinking and he may not have remembered to consult God for directions and protection. Instead, Nehemiah talked to God and asked Him to deal with the troublemakers. Talking to God helps us know what to do when we are tempted to get mad at someone. The best thing to do when we are tempted to fight or lose self-control is to pray!

Who needs to be self-controlled?

Read Titus 2:1-12. As you read this passage, ask the kids to listen for the word "self-control." Ask them to raise their hands when they hear it.

Questions for discussion

1. Can you think of something you do that does not please God?
2. Have you ever wanted something so much that you had a tantrum when you were told you couldn't have it?
3. What is self-control?
4. Who needs to be self-controlled?
5. Why do we need to be self-controlled?
6. When are you most tempted to lose self-control?

Key concepts

Self-control is saying "no" to ungodliness (behaviour that does not please God) and worldly passions (allowing things to be so important to you that they contribute to sinful behaviour). The Bible indicates that everyone is to be self-controlled. When we choose to have the Holy Spirit live inside of us, God helps us to maintain self-control. Self-control is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Ask God to help you remember to ask for help when you are tempted to lose self-control.

Expressing anger hastily

Read Proverbs 29:20, Ecclesiastes 7:9, Proverbs 29:11 and Proverbs 14:17.

Questions for discussion

1. Have you ever said or done anything and later you wished you hadn't?
2. What does the Bible say about doing or saying things without thinking first?
3. What does it mean to speak in haste?

4. When are you tempted to speak without thinking first?
5. What does it mean to be provoked in your spirit?
6. What does it mean to give full vent to your anger?
7. How can you stop yourself from being foolish?

Key concepts

Most of us have said or done something foolish and later regretted it. As you read the Bible verses listed above, notice a word that is used in all of these verses; the word is fool.

Traditionally, the word fool was defined as “one without spiritual wisdom; wicked person” (*Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary*). When we let the devil tempt us with losing self-control, this causes us to do things that are not righteous.

Normally we think of wickedness as something mean or bad that has been planned out ahead of time, but we can actually do wicked things when we say or do things without thinking. In fact, we can hurt people more by careless words and actions than if we planned to hurt them. Matthew 12:36 says that all of us will have to give an account to God for every careless word we speak. The good news is that God will help us with self-control when we ask Him. Take time to pray one of the **kids talk with God** prayers together.

Creative discipline

Few parents enjoy their God-given responsibility of disciplining their children, and even fewer children enjoy being on the receiving end. The Bible tells us to expect discipline to be uncomfortable, but also promises positive results. This section will provide you with innovative suggestions to use when correcting your children, to help them learn to practice self-control.

For problems with self-control

Biblical basis

Mathew 5:29-30 “If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to

lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”

These verses take a pretty hard line on sin. In order to teach our children the importance of self-control, we can choose to take a softer approach. As you read Matthew 5:29-30, realize that Jesus was not suggesting people cut off their body parts; rather, He was telling people they needed to deal with the sin in their lives very seriously. Lack of self-control is a serious sin as it opens the door for Satan to cause us to sin in a number of ways, most commonly through hurting others and ourselves physically, emotionally or spiritually.

Suggested disciplinary action

When a child loses self-control, do not allow him/her to use the body part he/she sinned with for a given period of time. Base this on the age and maturity of the child. For example, if a child shouts or speaks unkindly, he/she can be sent for a quiet time out. If the child hurts another with his/her hands, he/she can give his/her hands a time out by sitting with his/her hands together for a set time. Similarly, if the child uses his/her feet to disobey, he/she can sit with his/her feet still for a set period time.

Affirmation

Read Luke 11:13 with your child. Explain that God wants to give them a wonderful gift – His Holy Spirit. Pray together asking for the “good gift” of the Holy Spirit to come and help maintain self-control.

Another excellent verse to use for affirmation is Proverbs 29:11. Let your child know you are confident that with the Holy Spirit’s help you believe he/she can be a wise boy/girl.

Hands-on options

These ideas require very little preparation, making it easy for you to share some simple but memorable lessons with your children. Read over the options at the beginning of your week and choose one or two that will fit your schedule.

Self-control scenarios

drive time or any time

You can play the self-control game when you are driving in the car or as a family activity at home. Take turns giving examples of when self-control is needed. (See examples below). After each example, ask the questions for discussion.

- Someone has just taken your favourite toy from you.
- You have had one piece of cake and your stomach feels full. Someone offers you another piece.
- You are alone in the kitchen and see an open bag of chocolate chips on the counter where you can reach it. No one will notice if you take a few.
- Someone has just called you a mean name that hurt your feelings – now they are laughing at you.
- You just received some discipline from one of your parents, now your brother or sister is smiling.

Questions for discussion

- Would you need to use self-control in this situation?
- Would it be easy or hard to be self-controlled in this situation?
- If you would have a hard time using self-control, how could you make it easier?

Key concepts

You want your children to understand that when we are full of the Holy Spirit, it is easier to use self-control. It is one of the fruits of the Spirit. Also remind your children that they will never be

tempted beyond what God will help them handle (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Close by praying and thanking God that He understands what it is like to be tempted and that He will never let us be tempted beyond that which we can handle. For further insight, read and discuss the “Jesus fights temptation” story in the **Bible stories** section of this lesson.

Relevant Scripture

1 Corinthians 10:13 “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. 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 stand up under it.”

Everyone loves presents: God’s great gift!

drama / role play

Prior to beginning this discussion, wrap up an empty box in attractive gift-wrap. Attach a note that says:

*An empty box wrapped with ribbon and care,
This gift is not costly, but precious and rare.
Please do not open it – you’ll find nothing there,
It’s just to remind you, that with one simple prayer
God gives you His Spirit, it’s His gift to share.*

Place the gift where it can be admired during your discussion. Use the introductory questions for discussion to introduce the concept of the Holy Spirit as a gift from God.

Questions for discussion

- Can you think of a special gift someone has given to you?
- Who gave it to you?
- Why is it so special?
- Do you want to hear about an even greater gift that God has waiting for all of us? Read Luke 11:5-13. Explain that the Holy Spirit is God’s special gift to us and that His Spirit can come and live in each of us (John 16:5-16, John 14:15-21).

- Have your parents ever given you an awful gift like a snake or a rock?
- When you ask for food, what do your parents give you?
- Have you ever turned down a gift that someone gave you?
- What is the “good gift” God offers us?

Close by reading the note on the gift aloud and ask your children if they want to accept God’s gift of the Holy Spirit. If they do, suggest that while you pray, they hold their hands open as though they were about to receive a gift. Pray with them, thanking God for His gift of the Holy Spirit and asking God to fill each of you with the Holy Spirit. Pray specifically for the Holy Spirit to provide self-control. Leave the gift wrapped as a reminder to ask for a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit every day.

Relevant Scripture

Luke 11:5–13

John 14:15–21

John 16:5–16

Ugly tempers on display

drama / role play

If you get a chance, videotape a temper tantrum. Whining, groaning and complaining are temper tantrums in disguise. If these are problems in your home, you may also want to record them, too. View the recording later and use the questions for discussion to help talk about how the tantrum or the grumbling and whining looks and sounds. Explain to your children that when they lose self-control, they will end up getting disciplined rather than getting what they wanted.

Read Titus 3:1–2. The Bible says we are to be obedient – ready to do good, to slander (speak badly of) no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to have a humble attitude. Pray, asking God to help your family members “do whatever is good” so there will be fewer outbursts of anger, and less whining and/or bickering.

Questions for discussion

- Do you like the way this tantrum looks?
- Do you like the way this tantrum sounds?
- Would you like to be around someone who did this?
- Should a child who loses self-control expect to get what they want?

Relevant Scripture

Titus 3:1–2 “Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.”

Giggle game

physical activity

To play the giggle game, name one person as “it.” The other family members can do anything they want to make this person laugh, except touch them. After the person who is “it” laughs, another person takes a turn being “it” until all family members or players have had a chance.

After the game, talk about self-control. Explain that it is usually okay to laugh in life, but there are times when we shouldn’t laugh. We should not laugh when someone is hurt or sad, during quiet time at school or church, or if they are somewhere where they have been asked to be quiet. The following questions will help to clarify this for young children.

Questions for discussion

- Can you think of some times in life when we shouldn’t laugh?
- Eating is fun, like laughing is fun, but there is a time to eat and a time to stop eating. When is it time to stop eating?
- Playing is fun. But when Mom or Dad say it is time to stop, it can be tempting to continue. When is it time to stop playing?
- Chasing around and being silly is fun, but there is a time and a place for silliness.

- When is okay to be silly?
- When is it not okay to be silly?
- How can you have self-control in these situations?

Key concepts

There are times when we need to obey the instructions of parents and stop doing what seems to be fun. Even though it is tempting to do what feels good instead of stopping, we can ask God to help us be self-controlled and to choose to stop what we are doing.

Relevant Scripture

Ecclesiastes 3:1,4 *“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heaven. . . . a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.”*

Fizzy mess

science with a twist

This exercise in simple science is designed to help your children understand the importance of dealing with emotions before they get to the point of “boiling over.” This project should be done outside or in an area that is easy to clean up.

You will need soda pop in a clear bottle and a suitable place to make a mess

- 1 Shake the bottle of pop up a lot. As you are shaking the pop, explain that life has its shake-ups, too. Life’s shake-ups are times when we feel a lot of pressure. For example, perhaps teasing from a sibling shakes you up; maybe it is feeling as though you’re not getting your fair share or being treated unjustly. Use examples of things that press your children’s buttons.
- 2 Next, take the top off the bottle of pop and fizz from the pop will fly everywhere. Explain that when we lack self-control, we are just like the bottle of pop. Just as the pop flying everywhere makes a mess, we make messes when we lack self-control.

Questions for discussion

Read Galatians 5:13-15 and 25-26 and ask the following questions:

- What kind of messes do we get ourselves into?
- Is it a mess when we hurt someone’s feelings?
- What other messes can you think of?
- Would you rather live in a family where people encourage each other or devour each other?

Key concepts

When we do not use self-control, we end up “biting and devouring” each other, and “provoking and envying” each other. This is not God’s plan for our lives. He would rather see us encouraging and building one another up. When we feel like fizzing all over everyone, it is time to get alone with God for a talk.

Help your children make plans for what they will do when they feel like they are going to lose self-control. Challenge your children to hold one hand in a fist and clamp the other hand over top of it, pretending that it is a bottle of pop ready to explode. In order to “keep the lid on,” he/she can come to a parent who will help them bring their frustration to God. As your children are able, have them go directly to God with their concerns.

Relevant Scripture

Galatians 5:13-15 *“You my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.”*

Galatians 5:25-26 *“Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”*

Hebrews 10:24-25 *“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the*

habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Smart self control

drive time or any time

Give your children a treat that comes in small pieces (e.g. a small box of raisins or Smarties®). As you give the treat to them, explain that if they have self-control and do not eat it all at once, they will have some later for when they want some more. Leave it at that and see what happens. As the day progresses, use it as an opportunity to talk about the benefits of having self-control.

Questions for discussion

- When did you eat your candy?
- Do you still have any left now?
- Do you wish that you still had some to eat now?
- If you had chosen to eat it a little at a time, would you still have some now?
- Would it have been easier to save some for later if you had put it away or asked a parent to care for it for you?

This exercise is applicable to any situation where we are tempted to lose self-control. Work with your children to brainstorm situations where it is better to remove yourself than stay where you are tempted to lose self-control. For example, do not sit beside a friend who you enjoy talking to when you are supposed to be quiet, or choose to leave a play area when tempers are getting heated and you feel angry with a friend.

Note: You may want to repeat this exercise at a later date and see if your children approach it differently after learning about self-control.

Like a city

physical activity

Visit a fort in your vicinity, if there is one. You can also take a book out of the library on forts or build a fort out of snow, blocks or cushions. Talk about how those inside the fort are protected by the walls.

Explain that in Bible times, they put walls around their cities to protect themselves from enemies.

Read Proverbs 25:28 and Ephesians 6:10-18 to find out how to secure protection from Satan's attacks. Emphasize Ephesians 6:11 (“so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes”) and verse 18 (“pray in the Spirit on all occasions”). The questions for discussion can be used to enhance discussion.

Key concepts

When we lose self-control, we are like a city whose walls have been broken down. It is much easier for Satan to tempt us to sin when we have lost self-control. To prevent this from happening, we need to be ready for Satan's attacks by wearing the “armour of God.”

Close by praying, asking God to give you his armour to help you fight temptation to lose self-control so you can keep the walls of your city intact. Also ask that you and your children will be able to resist temptation with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Other ideas

If your children enjoy the “spiritual battle” theme, you can further the activity by making a complete set of the armour of God for themselves, an animal or a doll. Duct tape, tin foil and cardboard can be used creatively for this additional activity.

Questions for discussion

- What do you think the pilgrims were protecting themselves from when they built wooden forts?
- What are we protecting ourselves from when we build snow forts?
- In our spiritual lives whom are we trying to protect ourselves from?
- When you think of temptation to do wrong as “flaming arrows,” what kinds of arrows does Satan shoot at you?

Relevant Scripture

Proverbs 25:28 “Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self control.”

Praying and preying

getting into nature

A careful study of the behaviour of preying animals can teach your children a memorable lesson about the value of self-control. Begin by asking your children to think of a time when an animal would need to use self-control. Use these questions if you wish:

Questions for discussion

- Do you think only people need to use self-control or do animals have to as well?
- Can you think of any animals that might need self-control?
- Would these animals ever catch anything if they just charged in on their prey?
- Are your parents more likely to give you what you ask for if you have a temper tantrum or if you ask politely?
- Will your friend play your game if you speak gently and pleasantly or if you yell and whine?

Key concepts

Animals that stalk their prey need to use self-control. Some examples include owls, cats, coyotes, and wolves. If these animals charged their prey before waiting for an opportune time, they would make a ruckus and the prey would have time to get away. In order to catch their prey, these animals must very carefully sneak up on it. Even though they are close enough to attack and they are very hungry, they must use self-control and wait until exactly the right moment to pounce or they will have no dinner. To be good hunters these animals need a combination of self-control and patience.

These animals can set a good example for us. Let your children know when they are tempted to lose self-control in order to get something they want, they need to remember the wolf/cat/coyote. Remind your children, if they expect to receive something they need, they must use self-control. Prior to playtime,

tell your children that if they speak politely, it is more likely that someone will play cooperatively with them.

To extend the learning time, pretend you are animals hunting. Take turns being the hunter and the prey. Have fun sneaking up and pouncing on each other. Then have your children role play some situations in life where they also need to use self-control in order to accomplish a task. Close your time with prayer.

Recommended resources

For a list of children's stories that reinforce the theme of this lesson, consult the home page for the **self-control** lesson at Kidsofintegrity.com.