



PRETEEN

OCTOBER 2024

FOR LEADERS ONLY

GOD VIEW: THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SELF-CONTROL AND GOD'S CHARACTER, AS SHOWN THROUGH GOD'S BIG STORY

There are a lot of choices that we need to make in life. Some of those choices can help us grow and shape us positively. Others can pull us in different directions, leaving us struggling to figure out which choice is best. What do we do when we're confronted with all of these choices? Do we rush ahead? Or do we pause and let God lead us toward the best way to act? Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. It's one of the ways we can tell that God is transforming our lives and that we're growing in our faith. Thankfully, we don't have to find self-control on our own. When we follow Jesus, God's Spirit is with us and helps us make the wise choice.

CORE INSIGHT: The theological foundation for SELF-CONTROL

Transformation by the power of God's Spirit

God's Spirit is transforming my unique and imperfect life into the character of Jesus.

As we follow Jesus, His love transforms us. His Spirit helps us show self-control. We can follow Jesus' example and choose to do what's best—even when we don't want to.

SELF-CONTROL is choosing to do what's best even when you don't want to

HEADS UP: IDEAS TO KEEP IN MIND AS YOU TALK ABOUT SELF-CONTROL WITH KIDS

As we talk about self-control this month, keep in mind that kids are still growing and learning every day (just like us adults!). Sometimes kids will need a couple of tries to put an idea into practice . . . or you may have to repeat something multiple times for them to understand. Tensions and frustrations may rise easily, but remember to extend grace and practice self-control yourself as you teach and guide the kids in your environment.

Also, be sensitive to those kids who may struggle more with keeping their bodies under control. Provide safe spaces for them to have an outlet to release energy and emotions. Remember that self-control may be easier for some kids than others. For those who need a little extra love, take the time to connect with parents and caregivers on how to best love and direct their kids so everyone knows they have a safe place to belong.



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WEEK 1

Key Question: How do you get ready? Think about the best party you've ever been to. It probably had great food, great entertainment, and a prepared host. Now think back to when you were in school and got an A on a really hard test. You probably took the time to study and be prepared. As preteens think through this question and think about what it means to be ready, our hope is that they will begin to see how preparation can help them when they're faced with important moments and decisions.

We start the month in **Luke 4:1-13**. We see how Jesus was led into the desert by the Spirit and tempted by the devil for 40 days. Jesus was able to face these temptations because He was prepared and understood God's Word. In this passage, we can see from Jesus' actions how important it is to be prepared. Then, with God's help, we'll be able to face whatever situations come our way.

Bottom Line: Be ready to do the right thing. There may be moments in our lives when we're faced with many different choices—both good and bad. Some choices may be obvious, while other times we're left struggling to figure out the best choice to make. The **right** thing may not always be the **easy** thing to do. But we can practice doing the right thing by being ready and asking God to help us make the wise choice.

WEEK 2

Key Question: How can your words change things? Have you ever said something mean to someone and didn't mean it, but it was too late to take back the words you said? Maybe it took a while to rebuild that trust, or maybe you lost the relationship. Our words have the power to cause pain or bring healing. Because our words hold that much power, the way we use them can make all the difference. We hope this question helps preteens to remember to think before they speak.

In week 2, we head to **Proverbs 12:18**, where Solomon spoke about the power of words. He said, "The words of thoughtless people cut like swords. But the tongue of wise people brings healing." Thoughtless, mean, and hurtful words can cause harm like a sword! But on the flip side, when we ask God for wisdom and speak intentionally with kindness, love, and care, the words we say can bring healing.

Bottom Line: Think before you speak. "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." Ever heard or said that phrase growing up? The thing is, words DO hurt. When we aren't careful and when we lose control, we have the potential to do damage to others and ourselves that may be harder to overcome later. However, when we take the time to sort through our thoughts before we say them, we can build better and stronger relationships in the future. Relationships matter to God, so they should matter to us as well.



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WEEK 3

Key Question: **When have you had self-control?**

Sometimes in life, it's easy to get upset when things don't go our way. Maybe you planned that perfect vacation and then it rained . . . or maybe someone just spilled their drink all over you and ruined your favorite outfit. You may have felt like getting angry and taking out your frustrations on someone. But what would happen if you chose to show restraint instead? This question prods preteens to think about the impact self-control can have—not just on themselves, but on others as well.

In week 3, we head to **1 Samuel 24**, where we find David on the run from his enemy, King Saul. Saul's jealousy got the best of him, so he set out to kill David. While on the hunt, he entered a cave to relieve himself, which also happened to be the SAME cave where David was hiding! David could have killed Saul, but he chose to trust God and show self-control instead.

Bottom Line: **Think before you act.** Do you ever catch your body reacting to something before you can even think about it? Like when a baseball comes flying at you, you duck or stick out your hand to catch it before you even realize that you're doing it. Sometimes it's easy to react first and think later . . . and that can be a good thing. However, when we act out of anger or act before we think, our actions can do more harm than good.

WEEK 4

Key Question: **Why is it hard to stop?** What's the one thing you love to do the most? How much time do you dedicate to doing that thing? What about when you're watching your favorite show and it asks you, "Are you still watching?" Sometimes the things we have and do are SO good that we forget to take a break and be present. That can start to take a toll on our lives—either mentally or physically. Our hope is that as kids begin to think through this question, they will be able to build healthy habits that will help them stay in control.

We end the month in **Proverbs 25:16** with another one of Solomon's wise sayings—this time about food: "If you find honey, eat just enough. If you eat too much of it, you will throw up." Of course, Solomon's words are true about more than just food. Too much of anything isn't good for us. But when we trust God to help us, we can choose to stay in control.

Bottom Line: **Know when to stop.** It's hard to stop if you don't know WHEN you should stop. God has given us the Holy Spirit to help us show self-control. In fact, self-control is something God's Spirit creates IN us. When we demonstrate self-control, others can see the difference God has made in our lives. That may not come easily, but we can choose what's best when we trust God and ask God to help us.