

# Self-Control Is Important

Quarter 9 • Lesson 9

Focus on Life Skills

- 1. Connecting:** Play a game to learn about self-control.
- 2. Teaching:** Learn about self-control from the story of Isaac in the valley of Gerar (Genesis 26; 2 Timothy 1:7).
- 3. Responding:** Choose how to practice self-control.

## SUPPLIES

- Bible
- Optional Supplies:*
- Memory Verse Poster
- Crayons
- Student Pages

## Teacher Devotion

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*God gave us his Spirit.  
And the Spirit doesn't make us weak and fearful.  
Instead, the Spirit gives us power and love.  
He helps us control ourselves.  
2 Timothy 1:7*

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Self-control can be a lifelong struggle. As believers, we know that we are called to live as Jesus did, so we commit ourselves to choosing self-control. But sometimes we may conquer a bad habit or overcome a wrong attitude only to uncover another weakness or sinful desire. We begin to struggle all over again. Through this process, we forget that we cannot overcome sin alone. Instead, we need to give control to the One who created us. He knows each of our flaws. Because of His love for us, He has promised to help us to overcome our weakness and sin.

Think about an aspect of your life that causes you to struggle with self-control. Next, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to show you a way you can choose self-control. Now close your eyes, take a deep breath, and give it to God. Let the Giver of power, love, and self-control help you to honour Him in this area of weakness. Let God be your strength!

**Family Connection:** Encourage families to practice stopping and calming down together. Have the children share how to take deep breaths to calm down. Explain to families that calming down can help children to act with more self-control.

## LESSON TIME

### 1. Connecting: Play a game to learn about self-control.

Greet the children as they arrive. Think of a simple joke or appropriate funny story to share with them. Ask them to sit in groups of 4–5 children. Before beginning the lesson, be sure every child is in a group.

**Let's play a game. In a moment, you will all have an opportunity to make someone laugh! Each group will choose 1 person to be the "serious child." This child will do everything she can not to laugh.**

Allow a few seconds for the children to decide who the "serious child" will be. Then ask the "serious child" from each group to raise a hand.

**The rest of the children in your group will try to make this child laugh. You may tell a joke or funny story, do something silly, or make a face. When trying to make the "serious child" laugh, follow these rules:**

**Do not touch the child**

**Do not make fun of anyone**

**Do not use words that are not kind or that are not appropriate**

**Be safe with your movements**

**Once you make the "serious child" laugh, choose another "serious child" and try to make him laugh. When you have made all the children in your group laugh, stand up. The last group to stand up wins the game!**

After they make the child laugh, have the groups choose another child and try to make that child laugh. Continue until there is only 1 group sitting down. Announce this group as the winner and ask the children to sit in their normal places.

Allow 2–3 children to respond to each of the following questions.

- **What did you enjoy most about this game?**
- **What was the most difficult part of the game?**

**This activity helped us to understand what it feels like to struggle to control ourselves. We tried very hard to be serious, but eventually our funny friends made us laugh. Today, we will learn about what self-control is and why it is important.**

### 2. Teaching: Learn about self-control from the story of Isaac in the valley of Gerar (Genesis 26; 2 Timothy 1:7).

**Self-control is the ability to control our behaviour and our words. Self-control may feel difficult when we experience very strong emotions, even good ones. When we are angry, frustrated, afraid, or even excited, we may feel out of control. Here are some ways our bodies change when we feel strong emotions.**

Our hearts may start to beat very fast or we may start to breathe very fast.

Our faces may turn red or get hot.

We may squeeze our fists together or push our teeth tightly together.

We may start talking louder or faster.

We may get an upset stomach or a headache.

We may feel like we cannot sit still or be quiet.

“Self-control” is the ability to control our behaviour even when our emotions make it difficult. This is especially difficult when we experience very strong emotions, even good ones. We are not alone when we struggle to use self-control. Listen to what the Bible tells us about this:

If possible, read this verse directly from your Bible.

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*God gave us his Spirit.  
And the Spirit doesn't make us weak and fearful.  
Instead, the Spirit gives us power and love.  
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2 Timothy 1:7*

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**Teacher Tip:** God promises His Holy Spirit will live in Christians to help them live godly lives. If any children in your class are not yet Christians, point out that self-control is important for everyone to exercise. Christians just have Someone to help them!

The Bible tells a true story about a man who showed self-control. This man was Abraham's son, Isaac. At that time, God had sent His people to live in a place called Gerar. God had promised to give this land to His people, and God always keeps His promises. God also promised to bless His people, and He did that, too.

One of the people God blessed was Isaac. Isaac planted crops in Gerar, and his crops grew and grew. He raised animals, and his flocks and herds grew larger and larger. Isaac became very rich and powerful.

**Teacher Tip:** For some students who have had to move because of violence in their communities or who live in areas where refugees settle, Isaac's story may cause emotional responses. Throughout the lesson, help the children to understand that God can help them respond to their situations in ways that show self-control.

Isaac and his family were not the only ones who lived in Gerar. The Philistines also lived there. The Philistines became jealous of Isaac. They filled up Isaac's wells with dirt, so he did not have water for his crops or his animals. One of the Philistines told Isaac that he had become too rich and powerful, so they told him to move away.

Isaac needed water. Without it, all of his crops and animals would die. Without water, Isaac could not stay in his home.

- If you were Isaac, how would you feel?
- If you were Isaac, what would you do?

**Teacher Tip:** Questions like these help children to understand that their emotions and their actions are connected. It can also help them to understand the effects of their actions. If the children suggest negative responses, ask them to consider what might happen if they responded in that way. Then suggest more positive responses to help them to find better solutions.

**Isaac may have felt angry or sad, but he did not fight with the Philistines. Instead, he moved away. He found a new home in a valley nearby. He opened the wells that he found there. His servants also dug a new well in the valley.**

**But the people who lived in the valley became angry with Isaac. "The water is ours!" they said. So Isaac's servants dug another new well. But the people of the valley argued with Isaac about that well, too.**

- If you were Isaac, how would you feel?
- If you were Isaac, what would you do?

**Isaac may have felt frustrated and angry, but he did not fight with the Philistines. Instead, he dug another well. This time, no one argued with Isaac. Listen to what Isaac said:**

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*Now the LORD has given us room.  
Now we will be successful in the land.*  
Genesis 26:22b

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**God appeared to Isaac and promised again to bless him. Isaac built an altar and worshipped God. Isaac's servants dug another well. Now Isaac had plenty of water for his crops and his animals. Isaac was blessed just as God had promised.**

- If you were Isaac, how would you feel?
- If you were Isaac, what would you do?

**Later, some Philistines came to see Isaac.**

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*Isaac asked them, "Why have you come to me?  
You were angry with me and sent me away."*  
Genesis 26:27

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**The Philistines replied:**

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*They answered, "We saw clearly that the LORD was with you.  
So we said, 'There should be an agreement between us and you.'  
We want to make a peace treaty with you.'"*  
Genesis 26:28

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- If you were Isaac, how would you feel?
- If you were Isaac, what would you do?

Isaac did not fight with the Philistines, and he did not send them away in anger. Instead, he prepared a feast for them. They ate and drank together. Then the Philistines left in a way that was peaceful.

Isaac used self-control with the Philistines. When the Philistines were angry with him, Isaac did not argue or fight. When they did things that may have hurt Isaac, he chose to be peaceful. When he could have hurt the Philistines or caused an argument with them, Isaac chose to be kind. Because Isaac used self-control, he was able to solve his problems in ways that were good for him and for others.

- **What might have happened if Isaac had not showed self-control?**

Children may suggest that there could have been a war or an argument with the Philistines.

Because Isaac showed self-control and chose to be kind and peaceful, the Philistines chose to be peaceful. Because Isaac acted in the ways God wanted him to, the Philistines saw that Isaac was blessed by God. That brought honour to God, too!

**We can choose self-control, like Isaac did. Here are some ideas to try when you need to show self-control. After I explain them to you, we will do them together.**

After reading each idea, show the children what it looks like to do the action. Then ask the children to do the action with you.

- 1. Stand up with your legs apart. Now touch your toes. Let your head hang down. How does your problem look when you are upside down?**

Model this movement for the children and encourage them to do it with you.

**Putting your head so that you see upside down changes how you see things. It also releases chemicals in your brain that help you to calm down.**

- 2. Rub your head where your hair meets your forehead. Start at the middle of your forehead and rub in small circles all the way to just above your ears.**

Model this movement for the children and encourage them to do it with you.

**Massaging your foreheads helps you calm down so you can think of good solutions.**

- 3. Close your eyes and take a big breath—as big as you can. Hold your breath until you silently count to 4. Then let your breath out very slowly.**

Model this for the children and encourage them to do it with you.

**When you close your eyes and breathe deeply, it is easier to avoid things that distract you and it helps you to focus and calm down.**

- 4. Hug yourself as hard as you can.**

Model this for the children and encourage them to do it with you.

**Hugs help us not to feel lonely and angry, and they help us to relax.**

- 5. Ask God for help.**

**You can ask God to help you choose self-control. Isaac trusted in God. That helped him use self-control to solve his problem. God can help us to choose self-control, too.**

Pause and pray to God to help the children choose self-control.

Ask the children to sit in their normal places again.

### 3. Responding: Choose how to practice self-control.

**Self-control is not always easy. We need to practice using it to get better at it. Let's practice some of the ways we learned to calm down when we are feeling angry, afraid, or very excited.**

**Pretend you are very angry. Make a very angry face and some angry noises.**

Pause for the children to do this.

**You all look very angry! Which of the ideas we learned could help you in this situation? You can choose to hang your head down between your legs, rub your head, take a deep breath, or hug yourself. Do 1 of those things right now.**

Pause for the children to do this.

**Now, everyone pretend you just heard something funny. You cannot stop giggling! Laugh and smile and be silly with the friends around you.**

Pause for the children to do this.

**You are all so happy! Being happy is good! But in some situations, we cannot laugh and play with our friends, even when we really want to. This requires self-control, too! Choose 1 of the ideas we learned and try it now to help you to choose self-control when you feel like being silly.**

Pause for the children to do this.

**Teacher Tip:** Children often experience strong emotions—positive and negative—that can be difficult to control. Learning to manage their positive emotions can help them to learn that they can control their emotions instead of letting their emotions control them. This can help them to develop the skills to control their more difficult emotions.

*Optional:* If you are using the Student Pages, give the children crayons. Allow 2–3 minutes for them to draw pictures of how they can show self-control.

**You all did a great job of deciding what to do to help you use self-control! Remember that we learned 1 more thing about self-control. We learned that God gives His Spirit to those who believe in Him to help them to choose self-control. Let's learn the verse we heard earlier to remind us that we can ask God to help us with self-control.**

If you are using the Memory Verse Poster, show it to the students.

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*God gave us his Spirit.  
And the Spirit doesn't make us weak and fearful.  
Instead, the Spirit gives us power and love.  
He helps us control ourselves.  
2 Timothy 1:7*

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**Teacher Tip:** If you change these actions, make note of your changes so you can show the children the same actions next week.

**God gave us—**Hold your hands open with your arms stretched out in front of you.

**His Spirit—**Pull your hands toward you and place them over your heart.

**And the Spirit doesn't—**Shake your head to indicate "no."

**Make us weak and fearful—**Stand with your hands hanging in front of you and your body bent forward at your hips.

**Instead, the Spirit gives us power and love—**Hold up your arms, clench your fists, and tighten your arm muscles as a sign of strength.

**He helps us control ourselves—**Stand very straight with your legs together and your arms at your sides.

Repeat the verse and actions for the verse 3 times.

**As this Bible passage teaches us, God has given us the Holy Spirit to help us when we need to choose self-control. God helped Isaac to choose self-control, and He will help us, too! We just need to ask Him.**

End class by saying this blessing, based on 2 Timothy 1:7, over the children.

**Blessing: May you feel God's Spirit in your life when you need to choose self-control. May you trust in His power and love when you need help controlling yourself.**

Lead the children in singing this quarter's song, if possible.

"Agnus Dei" by Michael W Smith <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVFzxazTQNM>