

Self-Control

We made it to the last fruit of the Spirit- self-control! For many people- especially kids- self-control feels like one of the hardest things. We think about being told *not* to do things- don't touch fragile things, don't eat cookies before dinner, don't bicker with your siblings. Those things do take self-control! But self-control can also be about doing things (and good things!).

Think of your favorite Olympic sport to watch- maybe it's swimming, gymnastics, running or figure-skating? The athletes competing at the Olympics are people who had a lot of self-control to practice for thousands of hours, follow their coaches' advice, and help their bodies stay healthy. They've worked so hard because being a great athlete is what they wanted more than anything else!

The kind of self-control that God gives us comes from wanting to follow God's ways more than anything else. Sometimes it doesn't feel fun- it feels like not hitting your brother or obeying your mom even when she's not watching. We obey not because we're scared of consequences, but because as Jesus' followers, we truly believe that Jesus has lovingly showed us the best way to live.

Just like an Olympic athlete shows self-control through their actions, I wonder if there are ways God is calling you to show self-control by what you do and not just what you don't do. You might be really good at focusing on a big project to bless someone else with your creativity, or you might be good at thinking of ways to make a new fun activity when your mom or dad says it's time to turn off screens for a little while.

Jesus showed us an amazing example of self-control when he resisted temptation in the desert. After he was baptized by John the Baptist, he went into the desert. He was there for a whole 40 days without any food! He had spent a lot of time praying, and the Father gave him supernatural strength to resist temptation:

Matthew 4:1-11:

"The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert. There the devil tempted him. After 40 days and 40 nights of going without eating, Jesus was hungry. The tempter came to him. He said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

Jesus answered, "It is written, 'Man must not live only on bread. He must also live on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Deuteronomy 8:3)

Then the devil took Jesus to the holy city. He had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. It is written,

“The Lord will command his angels to take good care of you.
They will lift you up in their hands.
Then you won’t trip over a stone.” (Psalm 91:11,12)

Jesus answered him, “It is also written, ‘Do not test the Lord your God.’” (Deuteronomy 6:16)

Finally, the devil took Jesus to a very high mountain. He showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. “If you bow down and worship me,” he said, “I will give you all this.”

Jesus said to him, “Get away from me, Satan! It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God. He is the only one you should serve.’” (Deuteronomy 6:13)

Then the devil left Jesus. Angels came and took care of him.

Discussion Questions:

- Who led Jesus into the desert?
- What were some of the ways the devil tempted Jesus?
- What “toolkit” did Jesus use to resist temptation?
- Who took care of Jesus after the temptation was over?

I wonder...

- If you have ever felt like you were tempted beyond what you felt you could resist on your own?
- What Bible truths might be in your “toolkit” for resisting temptation?
- If you have ever asked God for help in following him?

Family Activity:

Come up with a one sentence “calm down and ask God for help” prayer that you can use in a time when you need to ask God’s help for self-control. During the first part of the prayer, take a deep breath in, and during the second part, take a deep breath out. You might need to pause and say the prayer a few times in an especially difficult situation, but it’s helpful to have a prayer waiting for you in a hard situation!

Here’s an example: (Breathe in) “Jesus, I am having difficulty choosing to follow your ways, (breath out) send your Holy Spirit to give me strength.”

Daily Challenge:

Set up your own Olympic-style obstacle course! How fast can you get through it? Can you do it without using your hands? What about on one foot? How could you train to go faster?

Explore More

Bible Story for the day: Jesus' Temptation

- You can re-read the story above from Matthew 4:1-11
- Watch a [video](#) about the story
- You can set- up your own "Desert box" with a sandbox or just an area of patio or grass in your yard! I wonder if you can find objects in your toy boxes to set up your own story?
- [Color the Story](#)

Music: (add a little movement by dancing, adding motions, or jump-roping to these songs!)

- One of the hardest times to have self-control is when we're waiting. The Bible talks a lot about waiting. The Israelites waited many years for the Messiah! Here's a great [waiting song](#) to learn: