

## Self-Control

Out of all the character traits we teach our kids, self-control may be one of the hardest—but also one of the most life-changing. It doesn't always look big or bold. In fact, it often shows up in small, quiet choices: holding your tongue when you're frustrated, walking away from temptation, or doing what's wise instead of what's easy.

Self-control helps us not just *know* what's right—but *do* what's right, even when it's hard. And while kids are still growing in this area, let's be honest—so are we. Thankfully, God gives us His Spirit to help us practice self-control as we walk with Him.

This month, we're going to explore this powerful trait through God's Word and His creation. You'll find stories of animals that display remarkable restraint, natural forces that regulate themselves with precision, and Scripture that speaks to how important it is to master our own desires. Self-control isn't about perfection—it's about learning to pause, choose wisely, and rely on God's strength.

This chapter includes content for a range of ages—from young children to teens. You can use it one-on-one or with a group, adjusting questions and activities as needed. At the end of each section, you'll find suggestions broken down by age group, plus journal prompts and reflection questions. You'll also find printable visual pages to help reinforce the character trait and Bible verse throughout the month.

There's nothing extra you need to get started—just a Bible, a space for notes or drawings, and an open heart. Let's begin this month by taking a deeper look at what self-control really means.

## Character Trait of the Month: Self-Control

### Definition for Children:

Self-control means choosing to do what is right, even when I feel like doing something else.

### Definition for Parents/Leaders:

Self-control is the ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in order to make wise and godly choices. It's choosing obedience over impulse, and discipline over desire. It is not a natural strength—but a fruit of the Spirit that grows through maturity and reliance on God.

### What Self-Control Looks Like:

- Pausing before speaking or reacting
- Finishing your work before play
- Saying no to things that aren't good for you
- Choosing kindness, even when you're upset

### What Self-Control Does Not Look Like:

- Interrupting or speaking without thinking
- Giving in to every emotion or craving
- Blaming others for your reactions
- Quitting when something takes effort

### Memory Verse for the Month (New Living Translation):

“A person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls.”  
— Proverbs 25:28 (NLT)

### Suggested Printables for This Month:

1. Printable Character Poster: “Self-Control” – with definitions
2. Printable Memory Verse Page: Proverbs 25:28 –These can be printed at the beginning of the month and placed on a bulletin board, in a journal, or in a homeschool binder as a monthly focus visual.

## Week 1: The Disciplined Beaver and Building Strong Walls

As we begin this month, take time to talk about the character trait of Self-Control. Read the verse together and imagine what it would look like to live with “strong walls” in your thoughts and choices.

This week, we’ll study the beaver—a hardworking, focused animal that knows when to stop, when to work, and how to build wisely. Then we’ll explore the idea of “walls” in Proverbs and what they mean in our own hearts and minds.

### Animal Study: The Beaver

Beavers are known for their incredible self-discipline. They work with purpose, stopping only when the job is done. They don’t rush or get distracted. Instead, they build strong, protective dams—bit by bit—with patience and care.

Beavers remind us that building something strong takes time, focus, and self-control. If they gave up or got lazy, their homes would collapse. But because they stay steady, their homes are safe and strong—even through storms.

Just like beavers build dams, we build our lives with our choices. When we practice self-control, we create strong boundaries that protect us.

### Discussion Questions: The Beaver and Self-Control

1. What do beavers do that shows focus and discipline?
2. Why is it important that they don’t give up halfway?
3. What could happen if they didn’t stay steady or gave up easily?
4. What are some “walls” or boundaries we need in our own lives?
5. How does self-control help us stay safe—like a strong dam?
6. When do you find it hard to stay focused or do what’s right?

## Bible Story Connection: A City with Broken-Down Walls

Read Proverbs 25:28 together.

Talk about what it means to be “like a city without walls.”

In Bible times, cities had tall walls to keep enemies out. If the walls were broken, the city was weak and vulnerable. That’s how God says we are when we don’t have self-control—open to harm, danger, and bad choices.

But when we live with self-control, it’s like building a strong, protective wall around our hearts. We can’t always control what happens around us, but we can learn to guard our responses.

### Discussion Questions: Proverbs 25:28

1. Why were walls important in Bible times?
2. What do you think it means to have “walls” in your own life?
3. How can self-control protect your heart and mind?
4. What are some situations where you need strong “walls”?
5. Can you think of a time when you lost self-control—what happened?
6. What helps you pause before reacting?

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### Journal Prompts

1. Describe a time you stayed calm when you really wanted to react.
2. What kind of “walls” do you want to build in your life?
3. Draw a beaver building a dam—and write what it teaches you.
4. When is it hardest for you to stay in control?
5. What helps you stop and think before acting?
6. Write a prayer asking God to help you build strong walls of self-control.

## Activity Suggestions by Age Group

### Elementary:

- Build a small dam or wall with blocks or sticks.
- Act out a story of a beaver building something carefully.
- Draw your own “city with walls” and label things that protect your heart.

### Middle School:

- Write a short story called “The Day I Built My Wall.”
- Make a list of 5 things that test your self-control and how you can respond.
- Research how beavers build dams and why they don’t give up.

### High School:

- Reflect in writing: “When I lose self-control, what do I risk?”
- Memorize Proverbs 25:28 and write a reflection on it.
- Make a weekly self-check chart to track moments of strong self-control.

## Week 2: The Disciplined Elephant and Jesus Resists Temptation

Self-control isn't just about saying "no"—it's about choosing what's best, even when something else seems easier or more tempting. This week, we're learning from one of the most powerful animals—the elephant—and from the story of Jesus being tempted in the wilderness.

When we're strong in spirit, we don't let our emotions or desires lead the way. Instead, we follow truth.

### Animal Study: The Elephant

Elephants are massive, strong animals. Yet they're also surprisingly gentle and self-controlled. In the wild, a mother elephant will carefully lead her calf through danger. A bull elephant will stay with the herd and only fight when necessary. Elephants show restraint, protect others, and often communicate calmly with their trunks and rumbles.

In captivity, elephants are trained not by fear but through repetition and trust. Their ability to follow commands and avoid outbursts comes from years of learning discipline.

Self-control means using your strength wisely. Elephants remind us that having power doesn't mean you always need to use it. Sometimes, the strongest choice is the quiet one.

### Discussion Questions: The Elephant and Self-Control

1. What makes elephants strong? What makes them gentle?
2. How do elephants show restraint?
3. Why do you think being powerful doesn't always mean acting powerful?
4. When do you feel tempted to react too quickly?
5. How can learning from elephants help us pause before acting?
6. What does it mean to have strength under control?

## Bible Story Connection: Jesus Resists Temptation

Read Matthew 4:1–11 together.

Before Jesus began His public ministry, He spent 40 days in the wilderness fasting and praying. During this time, Satan tempted Him three different times. Each time, Jesus responded with Scripture—not with anger, fear, or panic.

Jesus showed self-control by standing on truth. Even though He was hungry, tired, and alone, He didn't give in. His self-control came from knowing God's Word and staying focused on His purpose.

When we're tempted to give in or give up, we can remember that Jesus understands—and He gives us the strength to say "no" too.

### Discussion Questions: Jesus in the Wilderness

1. What kinds of things did Satan tempt Jesus with?
2. How did Jesus respond each time?
3. Why do you think it's important to know Scripture when you're tempted?
4. What would self-control have looked like in this situation?
5. When do you feel like giving in to something you know isn't right?
6. How does Jesus give us strength to resist temptation?

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### Journal Prompts:

1. Write about a time when you had to control your words or actions.
2. What's something that's hard for you to say "no" to?
3. Describe how an elephant stays calm and what it teaches you.
4. What does Jesus' example in the wilderness show you about self-control?
5. When do you feel strongest in your choices?
6. Write a prayer asking God to help you stand firm when you're tempted.

## Activity Suggestions by Age Group

### Elementary:

- Make an elephant craft or draw a picture showing gentle strength.
- Act out a scene where someone is tempted but chooses the right thing.
- Play a “freeze” game to practice stopping and thinking before acting.

### Middle School:

- Write a short story about someone showing self-control in a tough situation.
- Memorize one verse from Matthew 4 and talk about how it helps in temptation.
- Create a “strength journal” tracking how you show control this week.

### High School:

- Reflect in writing: “What does it mean to have emotional discipline?”
- Study the 3 temptations of Jesus and how they relate to real-life struggles.
- Write about an area of your life where you’re asking God to help you stay steady.

### Week 3: Beavers, Dams, and Nehemiah's Focus

Self-control also means keeping your focus, especially when others try to distract or discourage you. This week, we'll learn from the beaver—a determined builder—and from Nehemiah, who refused to be pulled off course while rebuilding Jerusalem's wall.

It's easy to give in to distraction. But when we stay grounded in our purpose, we build something lasting.

#### Animal Study: The Beaver

Beavers are some of the most focused and hard-working animals in creation. Once they begin building a dam or lodge, they stick with it—gathering materials, swimming back and forth, adjusting and reinforcing, sometimes for weeks.

They're not loud or flashy. They just keep working.

Beavers teach us that self-control isn't always dramatic. Sometimes, it looks like quietly staying on task, even when we're tired or others try to interrupt.

#### Discussion Questions: The Beaver and Self-Control

1. How do beavers build their dams?
2. What helps them stay focused on their task?
3. Why is consistency important in building something strong?
4. What distractions make it hard for you to focus?
5. How can you be more like a beaver in your daily work?
6. What does "working with control" mean to you?

## Bible Story Connection: Nehemiah Rebuilds the Wall

Read Nehemiah 4 and 6:1–9 together.

Nehemiah had a clear job: rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. But he faced constant distraction—people mocking him, enemies threatening him, and false invitations to lure him away. Through it all, he stayed on task. He didn't stop to argue or defend himself. He simply said, "I am doing a great work and cannot come down."

Nehemiah's story reminds us that self-control includes guarding our time, attention, and energy. There's always something trying to pull us off track. But when we know our purpose, we can keep going.

### Discussion Questions: Nehemiah

1. What was Nehemiah trying to do?
2. What kinds of distractions came his way?
3. How did he respond to those who mocked or tried to stop him?
4. What can we learn from his focus and boundaries?
5. When do you find it hard to stay on track?
6. What's your "great work" right now that you need to finish?

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### Journal Prompts:

1. Write about something you built or completed—even when it was hard.
2. What's something that distracts you the most?
3. Describe how a beaver stays focused and what it inspires in you.
4. What do you think Nehemiah meant when he said, "I cannot come down"?
5. Where do you need more focus and control right now?
6. Write a prayer asking for determination and follow-through.

## Activity Suggestions by Age Group

### Elementary:

- Build a dam using blocks or sticks in a baking tray.
- Read Nehemiah's story and act out staying focused while being interrupted.
- Make a "focus chart" to track daily routines.

### Middle School:

- Create a comic strip of Nehemiah saying "I am doing a great work."
- Reflect on a project or goal you want to stick with this month.
- Make a list of "distraction busters" for staying on task.

### High School:

- Write an essay: "The Power of Focus in a Distracted World."
- Journal about your "wall"—what's something you're building with your life?
- Study how beavers' dams affect the ecosystem—how does your focus affect others?

## Week 4: Volcanoes, Steam, and David Spares Saul

Self-control doesn't mean we never feel strong emotions—it means we don't let those emotions control us. This week, we'll study volcanoes and pressure in nature, and how David chose mercy over revenge when he had every reason to act in anger.

Even in heated moments, God calls us to pause and choose His way.

### Nature Study: Volcanoes and Pressure Release

Volcanoes build pressure beneath the surface for days, months, or even years. If there's no release valve, the eruption can be destructive. But some volcanoes have smaller vents or steam holes that allow pressure to escape gradually.

Our emotions can feel the same. We build up anger or frustration, and if we don't handle it with care, it can come out in harmful ways.

Learning self-control means noticing our feelings and finding healthy ways to process them—before they explode.

### Discussion Questions: Volcanoes and Emotions

1. What causes a volcano to erupt?
2. How do steam vents help manage pressure?
3. How is this similar to how we feel emotions?
4. What can happen if we don't manage our emotional "pressure"?
5. What helps you calm down when you feel upset?
6. What does self-control look like when you're angry?

## Bible Story Connection: David Spares Saul

Read 1 Samuel 24 together.

David had been chased and hunted by King Saul for no reason. Then one day, he had the chance to get revenge—Saul was alone and vulnerable in a cave. But David didn't act. Instead, he showed self-control and spared Saul's life.

David trusted that justice belonged to God. He chose mercy over anger.

This powerful story reminds us that self-control includes how we treat people who've hurt us. It takes great strength to respond with peace instead of revenge.

### Discussion Questions: David and Saul

1. What happened in the cave with Saul?
2. Why didn't David take revenge?
3. How did David show self-control in that moment?
4. What would you have done in his place?
5. What does this story teach about trusting God with justice?
6. Is there someone in your life who's hard to be kind to?

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### Journal Prompts:

1. Write about a time you felt really angry—what helped you calm down?
2. What's something that "builds pressure" in your day?
3. Describe how volcanoes teach us about emotional control.
4. Why do you think David made the choice he did?
5. What does it mean to respond instead of react?
6. Write a prayer asking for God's help in handling strong emotions.

## Activity Suggestions by Age Group

### Elementary:

- Use baking soda and vinegar to make a mini volcano—talk about what happens when pressure builds.
- Act out the cave scene and practice choosing peace.
- Make a “feelings chart” and label ways to cool down.

### Middle School:

- Write a fictional story where a character chooses mercy instead of revenge.
- Journal about how your emotions feel like “lava” sometimes.
- Research how volcanoes form and how they’re managed.

### High School:

- Write an essay: “Choosing Peace When You Have Power.”
- Study the emotional intelligence of David in this story.
- Reflect on a time when you felt like “erupting” and how you handled it.