



January is a great time to work on changing the way we play this game of life. It feels like a fresh, crisp start to a new year! We've been listening to leaders like you asking us to spend more time in one book so we can take kids deeper, as well as focusing even more on the faith skills they need to connect to a really big God. So, we're going to spend the month in Proverbs, a book packed full of wise and visual verses to challenge our thinking—especially about the topic of **Self-Control**.

Self-control means **choosing to do what you should do—and not what you want to do**. In the moment, that's hard for a lot of us. The good news is that God doesn't ask us to do anything all on our own. We'll share verses like 2 Peter 1:3 that say: "God's given us everything we need to lead a godly life." Self-control is a way to display to the world around us that we have God in our lives. And He's present every hour of every day, ready to help us take control of our thoughts, words and actions.

Each week, we'll talk specifically about choosing to have self-control in areas where we know kids (and adults) typically struggle, plus we'll focus on faith skills like navigating the Bible and personalizing Scripture in their everyday lives.

In week one, the Proverbs principle we're focusing on compares someone without self-control to a city with broken down walls—defenseless (**Proverbs 25:28 NirV**). In our monthly memory verse, the very beginning of **James 1:19** begs us to pay attention and be quick to listen. Our Bottom Line is: **God can give you the power to control yourself.**

In week two, we're studying a young and new king, Solomon, who was smart enough to ask God to make him wise. What he learned is recorded for us in the book of Proverbs. We'll talk about the biblical principle that it's better to be patient than to fight (**Proverbs 16:32**). The Bottom Line is: **Pause before you lose your temper.** We want to be slow to anger, to make the best choice for the future too, instead of just reacting based on how we feel and what we want right now.

In week three, we're continuing to see the destruction that happens when we don't have self-control. We want kids to know that God wants better for us and wants to protect us. So, we'll focus on the hurt that's caused when we use our words thoughtlessly like a sharp sword. We need to be slow to speak because wise people's words can bring healing to a situation (**Proverbs 12:8**). The Bottom Line is: **Select your words carefully.**

In week four, we continue to see that sometimes God says things a certain way to grab our attention and hold it long enough to make His point. He'll use words to create a picture that's really hard to get out of our mind and show us that it's possible to have too much of a good thing. **Proverbs 25:16** clearly says we better be cautious or we'll end up in a stinky mess. None of us like getting sick (or cleaning up), that's why our Bottom Line is: **Know when to stop.**

Maybe that's why **Galatians 5:22-23** says: "But the fruit of God's spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law." The only thing you can't get too much of is God!

In week five as we wrap up, we really get to the heart of what gets us in trouble most. It's not really our temper or our words or our choices like we've talked earlier this month. No, it's what comes before all that and can happen so fast that it's hard to catch. We want kids to understand that our thoughts lead to all our actions.

We'll finish up by discussing the important principle in **Philippians 4:8** about watching carefully what we think about. Whatever we focus on most will take over and fill our minds. That's why God encourages us to think about only what's true and right, what's excellent and worthy of our praise. Bottom Line, we will learn: **Use the Bible to guide your thoughts.**

We are so excited about this month in Proverbs with a different principle each week addressing real life situations where we need self-control. Isn't it great to know that God's given us everything we need to live a godly life and to grow in **wisdom**? We can't wait to hear what you think about **Self-control: Changing the way you play!**

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