



The question isn't 'Do you lose control?' It's 'when.' We all have times when it's hard to do what we know we *should* do because it isn't necessarily what we want to do.

Hopefully you got some ideas when you talked about it with your parents or your leader. Maybe you already expected some of what they said. But did some of their answers surprise you?

Life isn't a smooth path, it can sometimes be a rocky road. If everything went the way it should, it would be a lot easier to control our temper. But instead, life is full of pits and potholes and unexpected bumps. Those are the things that get in the way and cause us to overreact. They make us forget to live the way God wants us to live.

So what are you supposed to do? Can you smooth out the rocks? Not exactly. Those bumps in the road will still be there. But if you *update the way you react*—if you choose to trust God and ask Him to help you—He can help you choose the self-control you need. Even in those times when it seems the hardest.

All this talk about rocky road can make a person hungry. Why don't you ask your mom or dad if you can get a bowl of ice cream? (Or you can wait until tonight.) You deserve it after digging deep into what makes you lose your cool. But, you know, keep it to two scoops. **#SELFCONTROL**



## READ PROVERBS 25:28

**DAY 1**

Have you ever built a sandcastle on the beach? If so, then you know you need wet sand to keep the walls strong and secure. If not, they won't last long against the wind and waves.

Well, guess what? You need strong walls, too. Not walls made of snow or sand or wood or bricks. You need a wall of *self-control* to help you stay safe and secure.

Self-control is **choosing to do what you should even if you don't want to**. If that sounds tough, that's because it is! None of us will just end up having self-control on our own. You've got to choose it. You've got to update your operating system. You need to *update the way you react* so you can stay in control instead of letting yourself lose control.

Why? King Solomon had an idea about that:

*A person without self-control is like a city whose walls are broken through. (Proverbs 25:28, NIRV)*

If you don't have self-control, you might do something you regret like lose your temper, or hurt someone with the words you say. You might even overdo it with the things you love. You'd be like a sandcastle that's been leveled by a rogue wave.

You know how God wants you to live. He wants you to learn to be more like Him: showing compassion, honesty, forgiveness, respect, wisdom, and love. If you decide to live His way—instead of how you might *feel* like acting—that's self-control. That's what can protect you from the tides of life!

PRETEEN

HEAR  
FROM GOD

WEEK 1



Have you memorized this month's verse yet? Check it out—it's 2 Peter 1:3.

## GOD'S POWER HAS GIVEN US EVERYTHING WE NEED TO LEAD A GODLY LIFE. (2 PETER 1:3A, NIRV)

It's important to remember the reason we can have self-control in the first place: God's power, living inside us.

Like we said before, controlling yourself isn't easy.

When things go wrong, it's a lot easier to yell and scream and get mad.

Or when you open a carton of your favorite ice cream, be honest—you want to chow down until you just about make yourself sick!

So how do you get the self-control you need to handle those kinds of situations? This verse says that God's power gives you *everything you need*. You CAN have self-control, with His help.

When you trust God, it's like you've got an instant app that you can access anytime. You can update your operating system with HIS operating system. In any situation, you can take time to stop and think about what you *should* do. You can rely on God to help you make the wise choice—to choose self-control.

## GOD'S WISDOM IS SO EASY TO ACCESS, ANYTIME.

### IT'S CLOSER THAN YOUR FINGERTIPS!

Take some time to talk to God today. Think about some areas in your life where you need self-control, and ask Him to help you. Tell Him that you know He's the one who can help you, because everything you need comes from Him.



It's easy to see when someone *else* needs some self-control.

## YOUR FRIEND IN CLASS WHO NEVER STOPS TALKING.

## THE KID IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD WHO GETS SO MAD AT THE SMALLEST THING.

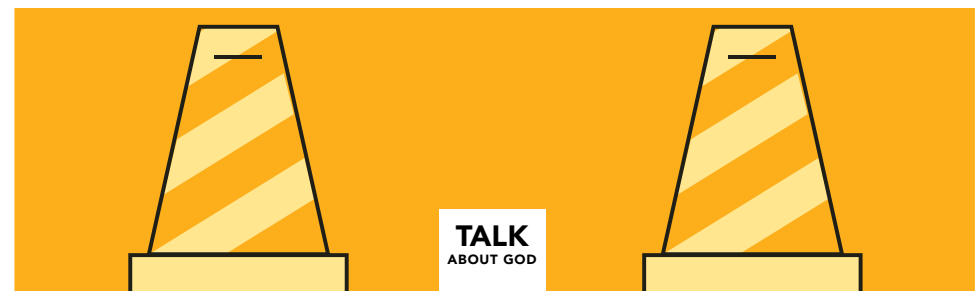
## YOUR BROTHER WHO'S OBSESSED WITH PURPLE SKITTLES. (EVERYONE KNOWS GREEN ARE THE BEST.)

Adults need self-control, too. They love to watch things like home decorating shows—sometimes *too much*! They talk a lot about needing to eat better, or get in better shape. They can be tempted to spend money on things they don't really need.

You know where it's hard to see who needs self-control? Yep. In the mirror.

That's where your mom or dad can really help you. Your teacher or your Small Group Leader, too. If you ask them, they can tell you about some parts of your life where you need to learn some self-control. If you really, honestly, want to know, they can tell you.

Does that sound scary? Are you kind of afraid of what you'll find out? Think of it as a way to get better. After all, once you **KNOW** where you need to improve, you know exactly how to ask God to help you. With His Spirit, you can learn to stay in control.





## DAY 4

It's time to challenge a friend, sibling, or parent. It's time for an ice cube melting contest! It's pretty simple. Say "On your mark, get set, go," pop an ice cube in your mouth, and wait. When your ice cube is completely gone, raise your hand. The first person to raise their hand wins. All right. How did it go? Is your mouth numb? Did you have any kind of strategy to make it go faster?

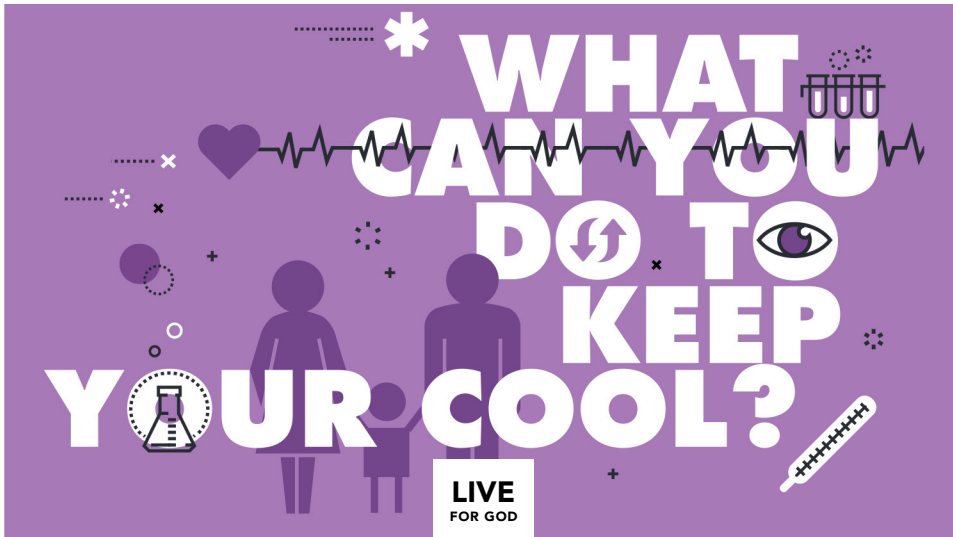
Waiting for an ice cube to melt is actually good practice for self-control. Why? Because it forces you to wait. You can't really do or say anything. You just have to take the time to let it melt.

When you're about to lose your temper, time is the one thing that you need the most—time to stop and think. We tend to do things we regret when we don't take the time to think through what could happen.

Obviously you're not going to put an ice cube in your mouth when you start to get mad about something. But still—what if you could pause like that? What if you stopped long enough to think about the consequences that might happen? What if you took the time to pray and talk to God?

Whatever it takes to cool things down, do it. Because it's worth it. Like Solomon said, it's better to be patient. It's better to control your temper. It's better. It just is.

Stay cool this week, okay?



## READ PROVERBS 16:32

## DAY 1

Picture it. You've spent your entire morning making a domino line and you're putting the last few dominoes down, finally about to finish, finally about to see the glorious results of all your hard work. Then, your dog comes along wanting to play and knocks it all over.

What do you do when all your work is ruined? What do you do when you feel like you just wasted your entire morning? Do you feel the anger rising up inside you?

That's perfectly natural. But wait. What if you could find a way to control yourself, before you raise your voice at the dog? What if you could stop and think and realize that he was just trying to play? What if you could stop and remember that your dog is way more important to you than a bunch of dominoes?

That takes patience. That's why in Proverbs 16:32, King Solomon said:

*It is better to be patient than to fight. It is better to control your temper than to take a city. (Proverbs 16:32, NIV)*

Notice that Solomon isn't saying you can't feel angry. He's just saying you need to *control* your anger—not take it out on your best friend.

Other translations of this verse say that it's better to be "slow to anger." In other words, stop and think. Remember what's at stake if you lose your temper. Remember how much better it'll be if you can keep your cool.

PRETEEN

HEAR  
FROM GOD

WEEK 2



It's better to be patient than it is to lose your temper. So why is it so hard to actually do that? Why is it so hard to turn the hose on your anger when it feels like it's about to blast off into a fiery inferno?

There are a few good techniques you could try. Like taking a deep breath, or counting to 10, or even punching a pillow.

There is one BEST strategy, though. It's the perfect way to press pause on your anger and remind yourself what's most important.

## STOP AND THINK . . . AND PRAY.

That doesn't mean you have to go away by yourself and close your eyes. It could be as simple as talking to God in your mind, and saying:

**"GOD, PLEASE HELP ME!"**

**"HELP ME NOT GET MAD RIGHT NOW."**

**"PLEASE GIVE ME PATIENCE."**

Remember, God knows how you feel. He knows how frustrating it can be when you don't get what you want, when other people do things to annoy you or when they do something that messes you up.

God also knows that it's better to control your temper. It's not just that it's a good idea. It's actually *better*. It'll keep from potentially doing or saying something you regret.

Talk to God about the times when you're tempted to get angry. Ask Him to help you keep your cool.



**DAY 3**



## EVERYONE HAS THINGS THAT MAKE THEM LOSE THEIR TEMPER.

For some people, it's getting left out or not being invited to something.

For others, it's being treated unfairly.

For some, it might be that others don't appreciate the work they've done.

As you get older, you've probably noticed that a lot of anger and hurt comes from the way people treat each other. It isn't as much about things. It's more because we don't feel respected or valued. When teenagers and adults get mad at each other, it's usually over something like that.

Everyone can remember a time when they were tempted to lose control—when they had to make an effort to keep their cool.

Think of an older friend, or an older sibling, or maybe your leader at church. Tell them you want to ask them a couple of questions because you're learning about self-control. Write down some notes below.

## ASK THEM:

**1. CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOU FELT LIKE LOSING YOUR TEMPER, BUT YOU KEPT YOUR COOL INSTEAD?**

**2. WHAT HELPS YOU STAY IN CONTROL WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE THAT?**





## DAY 4

Think about one of your favorite songs right now. What do you like about it—the music or the words? Maybe a little of both?

Write down a few of the lyrics here.

Really good lyrics always make a song so much better. Words can do that. They have a lot of power!

Think about all the famous, most powerful words throughout history—not just in music, but in speeches, movies, and more.

**“FOUR SCORE AND SEVEN YEARS AGO . . .”**

**“I HAVE A DREAM.”**

**“JUST KEEP SWIMMING.”**

**“THIS IS THE GREATEST SHOW!”**

Your words have power, too. Your words are important and you get to choose if you want them to hurt or heal. You get to decide if you’re going to be reckless or careful with the things you say.

God has put you with the people around you on purpose. It’s not an accident. He knows that you have the chance, each day, to speak life—to make things better for you and the people you know.



## READ PROVERBS 12:18

## DAY 1

King Solomon strikes again! Another self-control mic drop. And He’s 100% right, you know.

*The words of thoughtless people cut like . . . what? **RIGHT. SWORDS.***

We tend to think of swords like something plastic your little brother would carry with his pirate costume. But in Solomon’s day, a sword was a very real weapon. It could hurt people in a very real way. You know how careful you have to be when you’re trying to cut something with a kitchen knife? It was like that.

So what was Solomon saying? When do our words cut like swords? When we’re *thoughtless*. When we just open our mouths and start talking. You’ve probably done that enough times to know that it doesn’t end well. And the real bummer news? You can’t take your words back. Even if you apologize, you can’t make those words you said go away. Thank goodness for the second part of the verse!

*But the tongue of wise people brings healing. (Proverbs 12:18, NIV)*

When we’re wise—use self-control—our words can bring healing. They can make things better. We can use our words to encourage someone, to defend someone, or even to forgive someone.

Be someone who heals and restores. **Use your words carefully.** Use them for good!





## DAY 2

It's funny—we tend to use our words pretty freely with the people we know best.

### “DON'T TALK TO YOUR SISTER THAT WAY!” SOUND FAMILIAR?

Chances are, if you ever need a reminder to use healing words instead of thoughtless words, it's probably with your close friends or family.

If there's a time we tend to choose really careful words, it's probably when we're talking to God.

There's a good reason for that, of course. He's God. He deserves all our respect, honor, and praise. Period.

At the same time, God also invites us to call him 'Father.' He *loves* us. We are His children! He knows the struggles we face each day. We can turn all our worries over to Him, because we know He cares. (See 1 Peter 5:7.)

We need to choose our words carefully with God, just like we need to choose them carefully with people. But remember that you can be real with God, too. You can talk to Him anywhere, anytime, about anything.

You can ask Him to help you use words that heal instead of words that cause pain. God knows the times that you struggle with your words. He knows when you tend to lash out without thinking. He knows the great potential you have to show love and encourage people, too.

Take time to thank God for knowing you so well. Ask Him to help you have self-control with the words you say.



**PRAY**  
TO GOD

## DAY 3

Here's a challenge for you to take on this week. Let's see if you can use some healing words in a few different ways.

### 1. ENCOURAGE SOMEONE.

Tell your P.E. coach that he always makes class really fun. Tell your sister that she always makes you laugh. Tell your friend that you love her new haircut.

### 2. THANK SOMEONE.

Take time to appreciate someone for something specific. Like thanking your mom for always planning your family's meals. That's a lot harder than you might think!

### 3. DEFEND SOMEONE.

The reality is, people talk behind each other's backs. The next time you hear a conversation like that, defend the person. Say, "She probably didn't mean to." "I think he's really cool." "You should get to know him. You'd like him."



**TALK**  
ABOUT GOD

# DAY 4

Sometimes we *want* to stop, but we don't know how. We don't want to get out of control with watching TV, or eating big snacks between meals, but it's hard to say 'no' when it's something we love.

If only there were a giant stop sign that would pop up in front of your face right when you needed it!

**ACTUALLY, YOU CAN SORT OF DO THAT. HOW?  
YOU CAN SET LIMITS FOR YOURSELF.**

Watching videos on your tablet? Before you start, set a timer.

Having a snack after school? Fill up a small bowl with the snack instead of just reaching again and again in the bag. Trying not to spend so much of your allowance? Only put \$10 in your wallet instead of every dollar you have.

When you find a way to limit yourself, self-control is built in. You'll know when to stop, because you won't have a choice!

Most important of all, pray. Ask God to help you. Ask Him in the moment, when you feel like saying 'yes' but you know you should say 'no.'

Remember that ultimately, your power of self-control comes from Him. He can give you the strength you need to stay safe, secure, and protected.



## READ PROVERBS 25:16

# DAY 1

It's pretty crazy that this verse is in the Bible, isn't it? It's not one that people quote very often. But they should! Maybe all of us don't struggle with eating too much honey. But all of us can struggle with having too much of *something*.

Notice that it says, 'you *will* throw up.' Not 'you *might* throw up.' If you don't know when to stop, you'll end up regretting it in the end.

In Solomon's day, they didn't have ice cream or sour gummy worms or chocolate chip cookies.

But they did have honey. For Solomon, honey was pretty much the BEST dessert. It was really rare, too. You had to *find* it. In a beehive, not the pantry.

Here's the thing. Right now you've got parents who tell you to stop. They tell you when you need to have self-control—when you need to take a breath and calm down, when you need to take a break from screens, and when you need to say 'enough is enough.'

As you get older, though, you'll see that the choice is yours. You need to be the one who can control yourself. And even though it's not easy, you can do it—with God's help. His Spirit gives you the ability to say, 'That's enough.'

You CAN have too much of a good thing. But you don't have to. You can get in the habit now of keeping yourself safe and protected—by knowing when to stop.

## PRETEEN

**HEAR**  
FROM GOD

WEEK 4



Take a minute to write down some of your favorite things. If you had a whole day completely free and you could do anything with your time, what would you do?

**WHAT WOULD YOU WATCH?**

**WHAT WOULD YOU LISTEN TO?**

**WHAT WOULD YOU PLAY?**

**WHAT WOULD YOU EAT?**

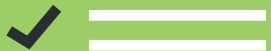
There's something important to know here. All those things you love? All of your favorite things? They aren't *bad* things. When we talk about self-control, we're not saying that God doesn't want you to enjoy those things.

In fact, God *gives* us those good things. He allows us to have them and use them and make the most of them. He also knows that we have our limits. That's the part that can be hard for us to understand.

It might seem like it's no big deal to watch one more episode of your favorite show, but what if your sister is hoping you won't because she wants to spend time with you? Did you know that she notices when you don't make time for her?

It's not about stopping something because you feel guilty. It's thinking through the consequences of your decisions—and deciding that it might be better to pay attention to her.

Today, thank God for the good things He's given you. Also, ask Him to help you stay in control and use them wisely.



**PRAY**  
TO GOD



**DAY 3**



**FRIENDS ARE GREAT BECAUSE THEY'VE ALWAYS GOT YOUR BACK. HERE'S A WAY YOU AND A FRIEND CAN HELP EACH OTHER WITH SELF-CONTROL.**

Have you ever heard the word 'accountability'? It means someone who knows what you're trying to do and is there to support you. They have permission to keep up with your progress. They can ask you questions anytime to make sure you're staying on track.

All it takes is finding someone who thinks something like self-control is important, just like you do.

Need an easy way to bring up the subject? Tell your friend that you're trying to get better in an area where you are tempted to overdo it. Then, ask your friend if they've got something like that too. Ask if you can check in with each other throughout the week.

When you see your friend, ask, "How's it going with \_\_\_\_\_ this week?" You have a lot better chance of being successful if you know there's someone tracking alongside you—someone who wants you to win.

Let them know you're with them, too. Say, 'I've got your back.' Remember, God can use your friendships to help you grow and live His way!



**TALK**  
ABOUT GOD