

Samson and Self-Control

Bible Verse

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong.
1 Corinthians 16:13

Bible Story Reference

Judges 13—16

Teacher's Devotional

Self-control, put very simply, is just controlling yourself. But self-control is never simple. Samson may be the best (or worst!) example in Scripture of just how difficult self-control really is. Samson was a man of great strength, great gifts and great blessings. However, his tragic end was the culmination of a long-standing pattern of indulging, not controlling, his desires.

Today we are familiar with athletes who have disciplined their bodies and minds to excel at the rigors of their sport but whose personal lives show a great lack of simple self-control. We read of entertainers, politicians and even ministers who have practiced at great length to cultivate their gifts but who have failed to govern themselves. As a result, their gifts were squandered.

As Christians, we must allow God's Holy Spirit to develop His discipline in our daily lives. The Holy Spirit not only assists us in controlling our actions, but He can also change those desires and attitudes that seem appealing but which will bring us to failure.

Not a day passes without the opportunity to rely on the Holy Spirit to help us exercise self-control. The Holy Spirit's presence in our lives gives us the strength we need to face life's challenges with steady perseverance and commitment to do what is right.

At first glance, many of us would probably like to have the Holy Spirit serve as our personal deflector shield, keeping away all threats to our self-control, even to the extent of taking control for us. Instead, God's Spirit strengthens us, equipping us to live victoriously, developing our self-control from His abundant resources. In this way we experience firsthand the amazing miracle of God at work in our lives in the most practical of ways.

Character Builder

Depending on God for self-control helps us make good choices.

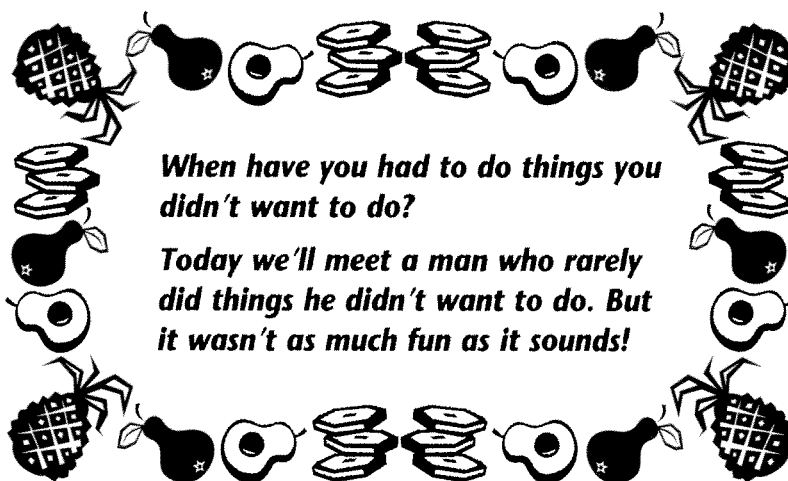
Bible Story Center

Materials

Self-Control poster from *Poster Pack*;
¼ cup (2 oz.) play dough and pencil
for each student.

Tell the Story

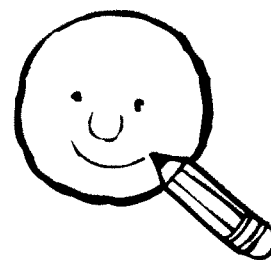
Follow along with me as we use our dough to tell today's story.



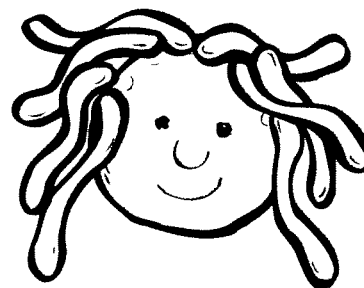
When have you had to do things you didn't want to do?

Today we'll meet a man who rarely did things he didn't want to do. But it wasn't as much fun as it sounds!

1. Divide your dough in half. Roll a ball from half your dough. Use a pencil to add a face. After God's people had moved into the land God had promised them, they forgot to obey God's instructions. As a result, the Philistines began to attack them. But God had a plan to help His people. God sent His angel to an Israelite woman who had no children. He told her that she would have a son who would help the Israelites defeat the Philistines.



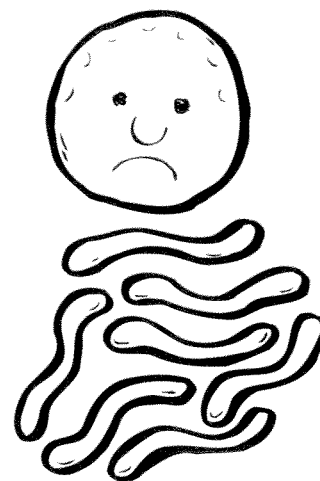
2. Make seven small ropes from the second half of your dough. Put the ropes on the head for hair. The angel said that her son was to follow some special rules: not to eat any grapes or drink any wine, not to touch anything dead and never, EVER to cut his hair. When this special baby was born, his parents named him Samson. Samson grew up to be VERY strong. Because he never cut his hair, it was very long. Samson wore his hair in seven braids. Although Samson was strong, he didn't always obey the laws God had made. God had given good gifts to Samson, but Samson didn't always use God's gifts to do right.



For instance, God had told the Israelites never to marry Philistines, because the Philistines worshiped false gods. But Samson wanted to marry a Philistine girl! Samson's disobedience led to lots of trouble with the Philistines. When the Philistines fought with Samson, he destroyed their fields. When their army came to kill him, he killed them all. He pulled down the gates of a town! No one could stop him! When Samson did what HE wanted, there was often lots of trouble!

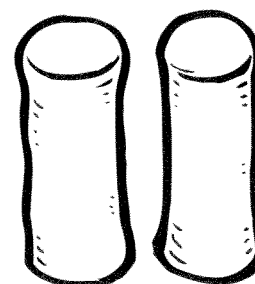
All this trouble didn't keep Samson from continuing to disobey God. Samson soon fell in love with another Philistine woman named Delilah. The Philistines paid her to find out how to make Samson as weak as other men. Delilah asked and asked, but Samson told her one false story after another.

3. Take the seven ropes from the head and make the face look sad. Well, finally Delilah nagged and nagged Samson so much that he told her the TRUE story: If she were to cut his hair, he'd become as weak as other men. Delilah told the Philistine officials all about what Samson had said. And as soon as Samson was asleep, Delilah called a man to SHAVE Samson's head! Now he didn't have any hair at ALL.



Because Samson did not have the self-control to stay away from Delilah and to keep his hair from being cut, God's power left him. He became as weak as other men. The Philistines tied him up and made him a slave. They even blinded him and forced him to grind grain every day in prison. But slowly, Samson's hair began to grow back.

4. Use all your dough to make two pillars. One day, many Philistines had a big party at their temple to honor their idol. They brought Samson into the temple and tied him between the two main pillars that held up the roof. The Philistines wanted to make fun of their once-great enemy. But Samson wanted to STOP the Philistines one more time.



Samson prayed, "God, let me be strong once more, so I can knock down this temple full of Philistines." He began to push on the pillars! Soon, WHAM! the whole BUILDING fell down! Samson died, too, but the Philistines left Israel alone for a long time.

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Focus on the Fruit

What were some things Samson was not supposed to do? (Eat grapes, drink wine. Touch anything dead. Cut his hair. Marry a Philistine.) **What happened when Samson didn't show self-control and disobeyed God's rules?** (Trouble came.) **What do you think might have happened if Samson had more self-control, acting and speaking in wise ways?** (Wouldn't have had so much trouble. Wouldn't have lost his strength.)

Samson shows us that self-control is not always easy to have. Show the Self-Control poster. **But God will help us have self-control if we ask Him. Asking God for help is a way to grow good fruit!**

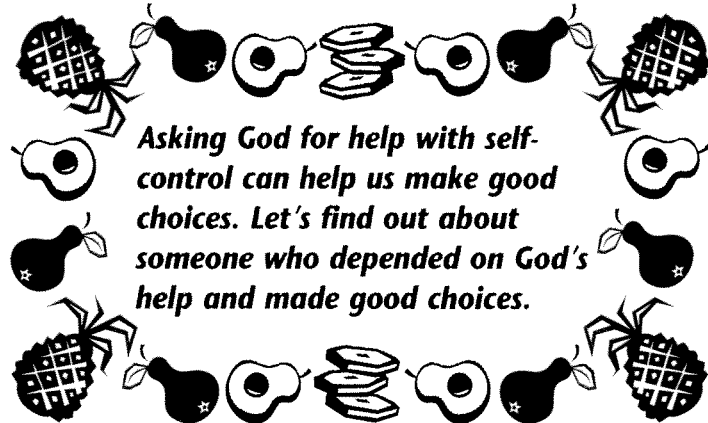
Fruitful Lives Object Talk

Bible Verse

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. 1 Corinthians 16:13

Materials

Bible with bookmark at 1 Corinthians 16:13, one or more ears of corn (if possible, bring corn still in its husk).



Asking God for help with self-control can help us make good choices. Let's find out about someone who depended on God's help and made good choices.

Lead the Activity

1. Show ear(s) of corn. **We usually eat the corn and throw the husk and the cob away. One man, Peter Cartwright, used an entire cornstalk to show self-control and to help another person do the same thing.**

2. **In the early part of the 1800s, many families in America lived far away from each other. One of the few times these families would get together was when a traveling preacher, like Peter Cartwright, came to visit. Each time Peter came to an area where several families lived, he led church meetings and talked with the families about God.**

After one of these church meetings, Peter was invited to dinner at a nearby home. One of the men at the dinner was angry with Peter, because he thought that Peter had treated the man's son unfairly. The man challenged Peter to a duel to the death!

Peter could have gotten angry with the man. Instead he just said, "According to the rules of honor, I have the right to choose the weapon. Isn't that right?" The man nodded. Peter smiled and said, "Let's go outside and grab a couple of cornstalks to fight with. I think that ought to settle things. Don't you?" The other man started to laugh and realized that he didn't need to be so angry. Soon the argument ended. At the next church meeting, the man became a member of God's family.

Conclude

Read 1 Corinthians 16:13 aloud. **How did Peter Cartwright obey this verse?** (Peter didn't get angry. He helped the other man do what was right.) **How did his self-control help to avoid trouble?** Students respond. **Let's ask God to help us have self-control and make choices to obey 1 Corinthians 16:13.** Lead students in prayer.

Discussion Questions

1. **When do you think a kid your age needs self-control?**
2. **When were some times you needed to have self-control? How did your self-control help the situation? What might have happened if you didn't have self-control?**

Lesson 19

Active Game Center: On Guard!

Materials

Masking tape, measuring stick, cardboard box, scrap paper in two or three different colors.

Prepare the Game

Use masking tape to make a 5-foot (1.5-m) square in the middle of the playing area. Place the box in the middle of the masking-tape square.

Lead the Game

1. Students form two or three teams.

Teams stand on different sides of the playing area. Give each team one color of scrap paper. Students wad paper into balls. Invite one volunteer from each team to be a guard. Guards stand inside the masking-tape square in front of any team except their own.

2. At your signal, students attempt to throw their paper balls past the guard and into the box, making sure to stay behind the masking-tape line at all times. The guards try to block the paper balls.

3. After a short time, signal students to stop throwing the paper balls. Ask another volunteer from each team to collect their paper balls from the box, counting how many balls of their team's color are in the box. A volunteer from the team with the most balls in the box answers one of the Discussion Questions below. Students collect paper balls and play game again, choosing new volunteers as guards for the teams.

Options

1. If you have more than 20 students, divide group into four teams.

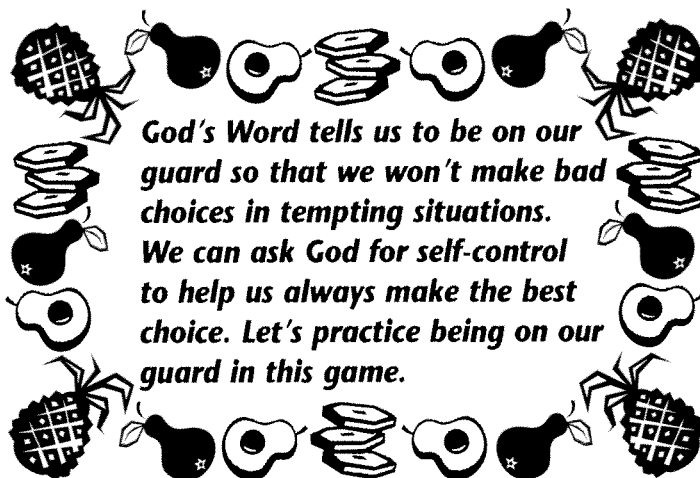
2. If it becomes too difficult for students to throw balls into box, use only one guard.

Discussion Questions

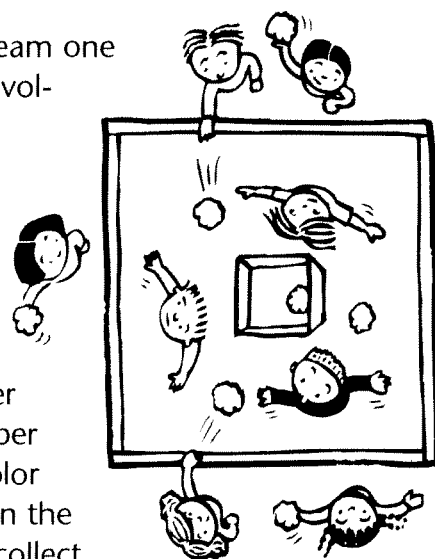
1. **When might you find it hard to show self-control and need to remember to be on guard? Why?** Volunteers respond.

2. **What might result if you don't have self-control when you are tempted to (copy someone's homework)?** Volunteers respond.

3. **What kinds of good choices might you make when you depend on God for self-control?** (You can control your temper. You can obey God's Word by treating others kindly and not lying or stealing.)



God's Word tells us to be on our guard so that we won't make bad choices in tempting situations. We can ask God for self-control to help us always make the best choice. Let's practice being on our guard in this game.



Lesson 19

Art Center: Reminder Bands

Materials

Yarn in a variety of colors, measuring sticks, scissors, tape.

Lead the Activity

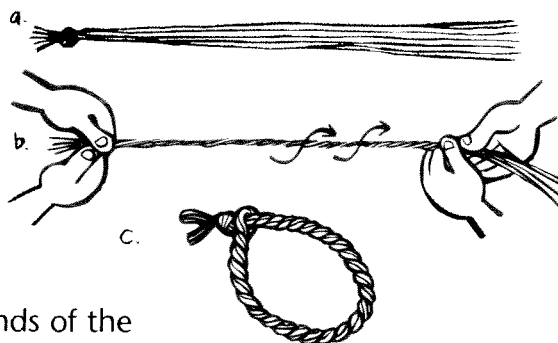
1. Students select colors of yarn and cut seven 3-foot (.9-m) pieces. Gathering pieces with ends matched up, students tie a knot 1 inch (2.5 cm) from one end (see sketch a).

2. Each student tapes the knotted end of the yarn strands to a table or asks a friend to hold it. Holding on to the other end, student twists yarn in one direction until tight (see sketch b). Then, holding the center in one hand, student brings together and holds the ends of the twisted yarn. Student releases center, and the strands will twist together.

3. To finish the wristband, each student threads the ends of the strands through the loop formed at the center and knots the other end (see sketch c).



We can depend on God to give us self-control and help us make good choices. Let's make wristbands to remind us to ask God for self-control and help in making good choices.



Options

1. Demonstrate how to make a wristband before giving materials to students.
2. Use three strands of embroidery floss instead of yarn and braid strands instead of twisting them.
3. Thread beads onto yarn before twisting yarn. Beads with alphabet characters can be strung to spell words or phrases from the memory verse: "On your guard," "Stand firm," "Courage," "Be strong," etc.

Discussion Questions

1. **What is something that might get a kid your age in trouble at school? At home? At the park?** (Cheating on a test. Fighting with a brother or sister. Not waiting for a turn on the swings.)
2. **What are some good choices a kid could make instead of (cheating on a test)?** (Studying for the test. Doing his or her best work. Asking the teacher for help.)
3. **What can you do when you need self-control and the ability to make good choices?** (Pray to God and ask for His help. Remember Bible verses that tell about God's help.)

Lesson 19

Worship Center

Bible Verse

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong.

1 Corinthians 16:13

Materials

Bible, *God's Kids Grow* cassette/CD or music video and player, "Self-Control" word chart (p. 485 in this book), large sheet of paper on which you have printed 1 Corinthians 16:13, masking tape.



Sing to God

Play "Self-Control," encouraging students to sing along with the music. **What examples of self-control are in this song?** (Not fighting. Saying what God wants us to say instead of saying bad things.)

Hear and Say God's Word

Display paper on which you have printed 1 Corinthians 16:13. Have a volunteer read the verse aloud. **What is this verse saying to guard against?** (People or things which might encourage you to disobey God and make bad choices.) **How does this verse tell us to be on our guard?** (Keep a strong faith, believing God will help you. Be courageous and strong about following God's ways.) Guide students to form four groups. Assign each group one phrase of the verse. Lead students in reciting verse, pointing to each group in turn to stand and say its phrase. Continue several times, varying the speed at which you point to each group.

Pray to God

When are some times kids your age need self-control to make good choices? Students respond. Volunteers pray aloud, completing this sentence: **God, help me have self-control to make good choices when . . .**

Options

1. Ask an older student to lead the verse activity.
2. Lead students in singing the "Self-Control" song again during the prayer time, explaining to students that some songs are prayers to God set to music. **This song asks God for His help in having self-control.**
3. As part of the prayer activity, ask an older student to read Psalm 119:9-11 aloud.

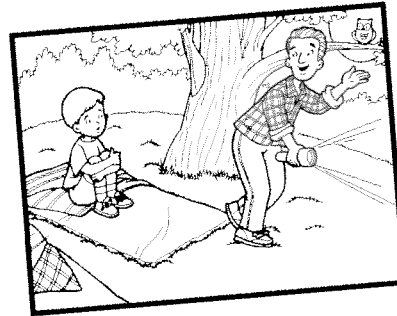
Lesson 19

Bible Verse Coloring Center



Materials

Crayons or markers, a copy of page 137 or page 138 from *Bible Verse Coloring Pages* #2 for each student.



Lead the Activity

Read 1 Corinthians 16:13. **This verse reminds us that we should guard against doing what's wrong. Who is like a guard in this picture?** Students color picture.

Option

Students add gummed star stickers to the sky.

Service Project Center

Materials

Materials needed for "Dexterity Balls" (p. 104 from *The Big Book of Service Projects*).



Lead the Activity

Students complete "Dexterity Balls" activity as directed in *The Big Book of Service Projects*.

What are some ways this project can help people be strong? What are some ways we can be strong and use self-control when we are trying to obey God?

Discipleship Activity Center

Materials

Discussion Cards for Matthew 6:19-21,24 (pp. 123-128 from *The Big Book of Christian Growth*), materials needed for "Determination Squares" or "You Blew It!" (p. 16 or p. 54 from *The Big Book of Christian Growth*).



Lead the Activity

Matthew 6:19-21,24 tells us that our actions show what's really important to us. Today as we play a game about these verses, we'll find out ways to show self-control by making choices that please God. Students complete activity as directed in *The Big Book of Christian Growth*.