

Unit 1: Fruits of the Spirit

Lesson 1.9: Fruits of the Spirit – SELF-CONTROL

Teacher Preparation and Materials Needed:

Scriptural Reference:

No specified references at this time.

Activities:

**Choose based on time available. Instructions and supplies listed below.*

Opening Activity: The Freeze Challenge!

Activity 1: Self-Control Superhero Cape

Activity 2: Self-Control Scenario Cards

Words of the week:

ժուժկալըրթիւն - zhoozh-gal-oo-tyoon - self-control/temperance

սպասել spa-sel - to pause

անսանձ - an-sandz - uncontrolled

Objective:

Students will understand that self-control means making wise choices, even when our feelings or desires want to take over. They will learn that the Holy Spirit helps us grow in self-control, and that living with discipline honors God and protects our hearts.

Moral Character Focus:

Knowledge: Children will learn that self-control is a fruit of the Spirit and means stopping to think before acting or speaking.

Understanding: Children will understand that having self-control doesn't mean ignoring feelings, but choosing what is right even when it's hard.

Application: Children will identify daily opportunities to use self-control (with emotions, food, words, actions) and practice strategies like praying, breathing, and asking for help.

Values: Children will grow in the desire to live wisely and peacefully, trusting the Holy Spirit to help them make better choices.

Memory Verse:

**“A person without self-control is like a city
with broken-down walls.”**

— Proverbs 25:28

Lesson

Open with prayer:

Իմաստութիւն Յօր՝ Յիսուս, տու՛ր ինձ իմաստութիւն, զբարիս խորհել եւ խօսել եւ գործել առաջի Քո՛ յամենայն ժամ. ի չար խորհրդոց, ի բանից եւ ի գործոց փրկեա՛ գիս. եւ ողորմեա՛ Քո արարածոց եւ ինձ բազմամեղիս: Ամէն:

Eemasdootyoon Hor Heesoos, door eents eemasdootyoon uzparees khorel yev khosel yev kordz arachi ko hamenayn jham. Ee char khorhrtos, paneets yev kordzots prgya zeess yev voghormya ko araradzots eents pazmameghees. Amen.

Wisdom of the Father, O Jesus, grant to me the wisdom to think, speak, and do that which is good in Your sight. Save me from all evil and distracting thoughts, words, and deeds. Have mercy upon your creatures and upon me, a great sinner. Amen.

**Wisdom Prayer, written by St. Nersess the Grace-filled (Shnorhali).*

Lesson Body: Fruits of the Spirit - SELF-CONTROL

Opening Activity: The Freeze Challenge!

Instructions:

1. Begin by saying: “Before we even start today’s lesson, let’s challenge your self-control RIGHT NOW! Everyone stand up!
2. “When I say GO, freeze like a statue and don’t move for 30 seconds”
3. “No laughing, no wiggling, no scratching your nose—NOTHING!”
4. “Ready? GO!” (Set timer)
5. Say funny phrases, tickle their noses with something or make funny faces to challenge them.
6. Celebrate those who made it!

Transition to the lesson: “Do you think this was an easy or hard challenge? Your body wanted to move, laugh, or scratch, but you had to control it. This is what self-control is and today we’re learning all about it, this super-power that comes from the Holy Spirit!”

Q: *What do you think is self-control?*

Have you ever felt like shouting when someone made you mad? Or eating five cookies when your mom said just one? Or playing video games when you knew it was time to do homework? We all have moments like these.

That feeling inside you that wants something RIGHT NOW may be very strong. But God gave us something even stronger: the **Holy Spirit**.

Self-control is like being the boss of yourself instead of letting your feelings be the boss. It helps us press pause, calm down, and choose the right thing instead of just what we feel like doing. And for that we need to learn how to use the “Pause Button” (two hands held up flat one on top of another, fingers together, like pressing a large pause button).

Let’s say it together: *“When you need self-control, remember your pause button! Let’s all do it now—PAUSE!”*



Words of the Week:

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-self-control/temperance

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Memory Verse:

**“A person without self-control
is like a city with broken-down walls.”**

- Proverbs 25:28

What the Bible Says About Self-Control

Proverbs 25:28 says, “A person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls.”

Let’s see what this means by doing a special demonstration?

The Broken Wall Demonstration

** Feel free to make this a group project.*

Materials Needed: Blocks, Legos, or paper cups

Instructions for the teacher:

1. Build a small wall/city with the blocks:
2. Say: “This wall keeps the city safe from enemies, wild animals, and danger”.
3. Knock it down dramatically.
4. Ask: “Now what happens to the city?” (It’s unprotected! Anyone can get in!)
5. Explain: “Without self-control, our hearts are unprotected like that broken city. Bad choices can easily walk right in!”

Prayer for Self-Control

Dear Lord, grant the grace to pause before reacting in order to hear Your Holy Spirit guide me to make the right decision. Help me to glorify You in all that I do.

We practice a lot of self-control in our churches, too. One of the best examples is during Great Lent or Advent, when we say no to certain foods and yes to more prayer. This trains our hearts to say “no” to what we want and “yes” to what God wants. Another time we practice self-control is during the Divine Liturgy (Badarak). Here we learn to stand still, pay attention, and control our bodies and thoughts, even when we’re tired or distracted. During confession, we practice self-control by focusing on our wrongdoings, admitting our mistakes, and choosing to do better. These practices help our hearts become stronger and more peaceful. It is like adding more bricks to our wall!



Story of Self-Control: St. Ephrem and the Hungry Child

**This story is inspired by the life and character of St. Ephrem the Syrian, known for his deep compassion and self-control. There is no record of this story. It is simply an illustration of his character.*

St. Ephrem the Syrian had been fasting and praying for three days straight. By the third day, hunger had become his constant companion. His stomach ached with emptiness, his hands trembled whenever he tried to write his prayers, and each step felt like he was walking through deep sand.

Finally, a traveler noticed the holy man’s weakness and pressed a small loaf of bread into his hands. “Please, father, eat this,” the traveler insisted before hurrying on his way.

St. Ephrem held the bread and stared at it. The golden crust was still warm from the baker’s oven. The smell of it made his mouth water instantly. He had never wanted anything more in his entire life. Slowly, he brought it toward his lips. Suddenly he heard the sound of quiet sobbing. Across the street, a young boy sat hunched against a wall, tears streaming down his face. His clothes hung in tatters, and you could see his ribs through the holes in his shirt. The child looked like he hadn’t eaten in days, maybe longer.

St. Ephrem froze. He glanced down at the bread in his hands, then back at the boy. His stomach twisted with hunger, practically screaming at him to take just one bite. Surely he deserved this bread after three days of fasting? Surely God would understand? But something deeper stirred in his heart. A quiet voice that spoke louder than his growling stomach. St. Ephrem closed his eyes and took a slow, deliberate breath. In that moment of pause, he made his choice.

With wobbling legs, he crossed the street. He knelt beside the crying child and gently placed the entire loaf into the boy’s small hands. The transformation was instant. The boy’s tear-filled eyes widened in disbelief. Then, as reality sank in, his whole face lit up with joy. “Is this really for me?” he whispered, as if he’d just been handed the greatest treasure in the world.

“Yes, my child. Eat and be filled,” St. Ephrem said softly.

As the boy devoured the bread with grateful tears still on his cheeks, something extraordinary happened inside St. Ephrem. Yes, his stomach still ached. Yes, he was still weak from hunger. But his heart felt fuller than it had ever felt before. A warmth spread through his chest, a deep satisfaction that no meal could have given him.

In that moment, St. Ephrem understood something powerful: true joy doesn’t come from satisfying every craving we have. It comes from choosing love over our own wants, from listening to the Holy Spirit instead of just our feelings.

That’s what self-control really is. It’s not about never feeling hungry or angry or impatient. It’s about feeling all those things and still choosing what’s right. St. Ephrem pressed pause on his own needs, listened to God’s whisper in his heart, and discovered that giving can fill you up more than receiving ever could.

Activity 1: Self-Control Superhero Cape

Materials: Paper (8.5x11 or larger) or white garbage bags (permanent, if using a garbage bag), markers, crayons, tape, large stickers, letter stickers

Instructions:

1. Each student decorates a paper “cape” (just a rectangle)
2. They can write “Holy Spirit Power,” draw their pause button symbol, or write “Self-Control Superhero”
3. They can add their name and decorate with symbols of strength
4. Tape the cape to each student’s back
5. Take photos!

Activity 2: Self-Control Scenario Cards

Materials Needed: Index cards, markers, a small box or basket

Preparation: Write these scenarios on cards ahead of time:

- Your little brother takes your toy. What do you do?
- You feel angry during a game at recess. What do you do?
- You’re tempted to lie to avoid getting in trouble. What do you do?
- You’re full, but dessert looks SO good. What do you do?
- Someone at school calls you a mean name. What do you do?
- You want to sit down during Badarak but everyone is standing. What do you do?
- Your friend has a cool new toy and you feel jealous. What do you do?
- You want to yell at your brother or sister. What do you do?

How to Play:

1. Each student pulls a card from the box
2. They have 30 seconds to act out the SELF-CONTROLLED response
3. Class gives them “Holy Spirit Points” (thumbs up and applause!)
4. Discuss: “How can we use these strategies in real life?”

Review

Memory Verse Review:

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

Words of the Week Review:

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Lesson Review Questions:

1. What is self-control? (*Choosing to do what is right instead of just what you feel like doing*)
2. Who gives us the power to have self-control? (*The Holy Spirit*)
3. What does Proverbs 25:28 compare a person without self-control to? (*A city with broken-down walls*)
4. Name one way the Armenian Church helps us practice self-control. (*Fasting during Lent or Advent, standing quietly during Badarak, going to confession, etc.*)
5. What did St. Ephrem do when he saw a hungry child? (*He gave the child his only piece of bread*)
6. What are the three steps in our self-control catchphrase? (*Pause, Breathe, Pray!*)
7. Why did St. Ephrem feel happy even though he was still hungry? (*Because he chose love and helping someone else, which brought joy to his heart*)
8. What is one way YOU can practice self-control this week? (*Taking deep breaths when angry, eating only one treat, listening before speaking, doing homework before playing, using the pause button, etc.*)

Life Application

What are we going to do with what we have learned today?

Self-control isn't just for church or special occasions. It's a daily superpower that helps you live with strength and peace. When your brother or sister breaks your toy, it helps you pause instead of yelling. When you want to play but have homework, it helps you stay focused. When someone is unkind, it helps you walk away instead of saying something hurtful. Every day your feelings try to be the boss, but with the Holy Spirit's help, you can choose what is right. The more you practice self-control in small ways, like waiting your turn or speaking kindly, the stronger you become. Like St. Ephrem, you will find real joy in choosing what is right. Look for those pause moments this week, because each one is a chance for God to make you stronger.

** Departing Prayer, written by St. Nersess the Grace-filled (Shnorhali).*

Close with prayer:

Պահապան ամենայնի Քրիստոս, աջ Քո հովանի լիցի ի վերայ իմ, ի տուէ եւ ի գիշերի, ի նստիլ ի տան, ի գնալ ի ճանապարհ, ի ննջել եւ ի յառնել, զի մի երբեք սասանեցայց եւ ողորմեա՛ Քո արարածոց եւ ինձ բազմամեղիս: Ամէն

Bahaban amenayn Kreesdos, ach Ko hovanee leetsee ee vera eem; ee dveh yev ee keesheree, ee nsdeel ee dan, ee knal ee janabarh, ee nunchel yev ee harnel, zee mee yerpek sasanetsayts yev vog-hormya Ko araradzots yev eents pazmamyghees. Amen.

O Christ, guardian of all, let Your right hand guard and shelter me, by day and by night, at home and abroad, in sleeping and in waking, that I may never stumble. Have mercy upon Your creatures and upon me, a great sinner. Amen.