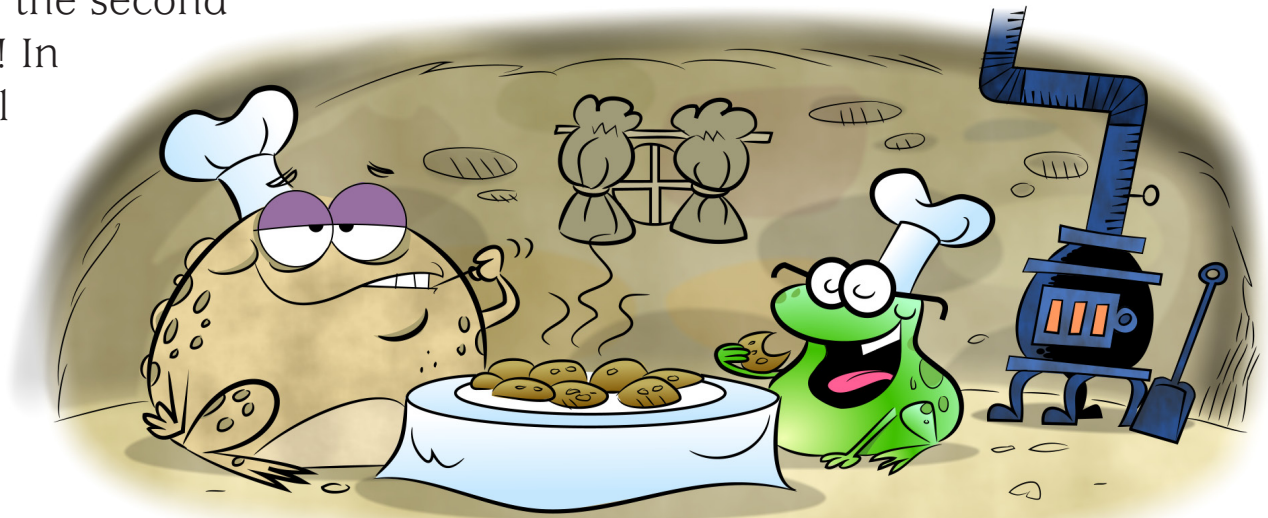


Spirit Fruit: Self-Control

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control”
Galatians 5:22–23 (NIV).

Frog and Toad and the Cookies

Once upon a time, a frog and toad decided to bake a batch of cookies together. Once the first batch of cookies was pulled out of the oven, they each tasted one to make sure the cookies came out right. After they ate one cookie, they decided they needed to try a second one to be really sure.—But after the second cookie, they wanted to eat another one! In order to stop themselves from eating all the cookies in one go and getting sick, they put the cookies into a box, and then put that box into a slightly bigger box, and then put the slightly bigger box into an even bigger box, and then finally they put the very big box in a high place so that they couldn't easily get into it.

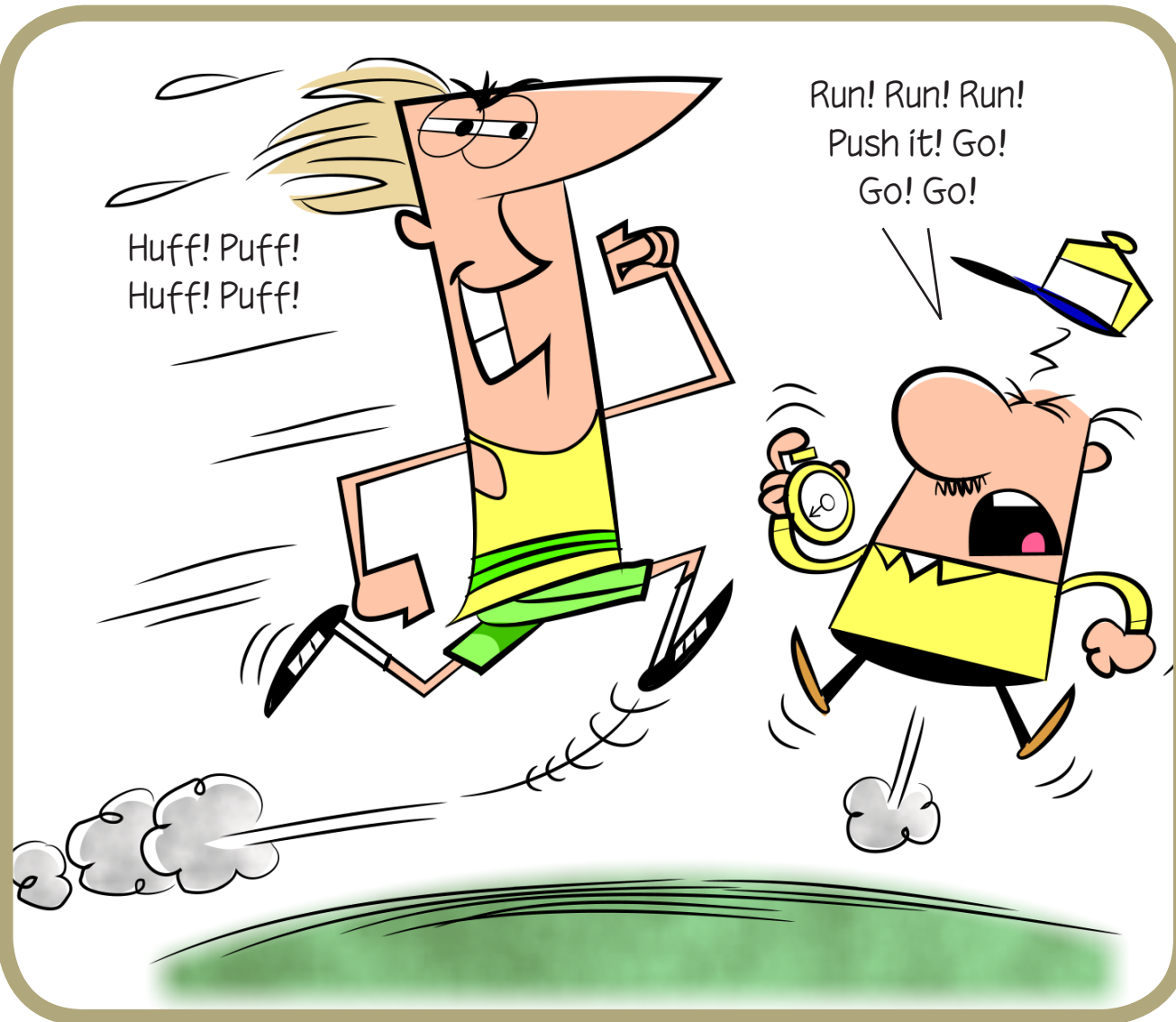


One dictionary defines “self-control” as “control over one’s own impulses, emotions, or acts.” In the story of the two friends and the cookies, we see that self-control is a trait that is helpful in daily situations. But self-control isn’t limited to controlling our desire for sweets. It also has to do with training our minds to do those things that will please God and be good for us and others, and not do those things that will hurt us or others.

If everyone only did whatever they felt like, or whatever they wanted to do, the world would be in a sorry state! King Solomon had this to say about the importance of self-control, “Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control.”¹ For thousands of years, a city relied on its walls in order to keep its citizens safe from marauding invaders and to protect its people and its assets—the walls were one of the most important features of any well-constructed city. In the same way, self-control guards and protects our hearts and spirits from bad actions and temptations.

¹. Proverbs 25:28 NIV





Self-control can also help you reach goals and achieve dreams.

The apostle Paul said, “Don’t you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the [ultimate] prize? So run to win! All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.”² Paul was trying to explain the importance of discipline and self-control for how we think and act, and he compared it to the discipline required of an athlete training to become great in his or her sport.

². 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 NLT



So, how do we get this wonderful characteristic? In Galatians 5:22-23 “self-control” is listed as one of the fruits of the Spirit. This means that those who believe in Jesus and who are trying to follow His Spirit will be capable of manifesting this trait. Paul, in a letter to the Romans, says, “You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you.”³

The more we read God’s Word, and are open to the voice of His Spirit, the easier it becomes to recognize in what areas God desires for us to manifest self-control.

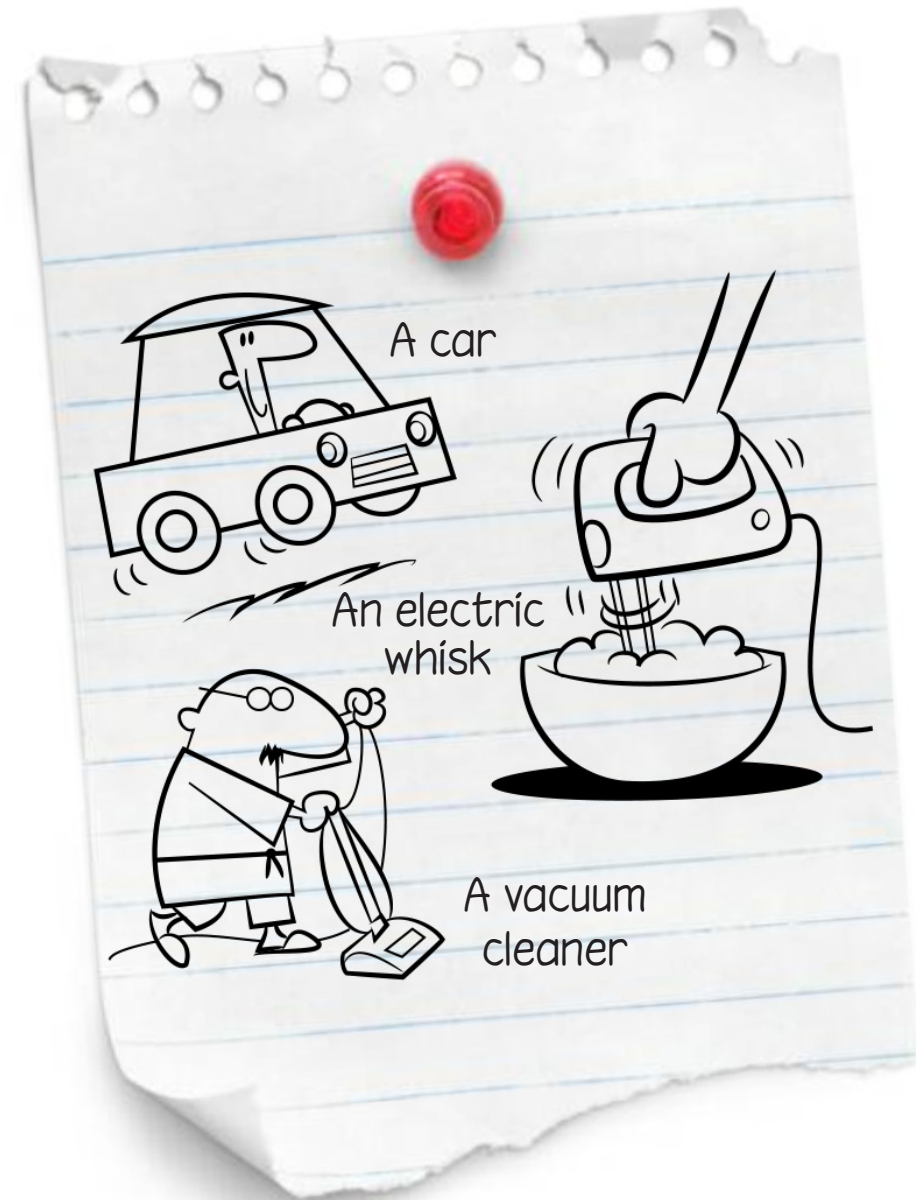
³. Romans 8:9 NIV

Make a list:

Bite-sized: Let Jesus' Spirit and your knowledge of His Word guide your actions to aid you in exercising self-control.

Memorize it: I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. (Psalm 119:11 NIV)

Action: Make a quick list of things that need someone controlling them in order for them to work properly. For example, a car, a handheld electric whisk, a vacuum cleaner, etc. Think of how these items are fun and/or useful when controlled properly. When you are in control of your spirit, your actions, and your thoughts, you can be a help and blessing to others. You are also more fun to be around.



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