

Spiritual Fitness

1 Timothy 4:7-8

“Do not waste time arguing over godless ideas and old wives’ tales. Instead, train yourself to be godly. ⁸ “Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come.”

Paul was instructing Timothy in how to be a faithful and profitable servant of Jesus Christ. In the first five verses of 1 Timothy 4 Paul was pointing out to Timothy some of the errors and false teachings or doctrines that was being spread around the church. Then in verse 6, Paul says to Timothy that when he points these false doctrines out to the brethren then he will be a good servant of Jesus. And that we receive our nourishment from the words of faith and the sound doctrine that we have been taught from the Word of God. He then tells Timothy to *discipline* himself for the purpose of godliness. He goes on to say that bodily discipline or exercise profits for a time but does not bring lasting results but, *spiritual discipline* that brings godliness profits us not only now but on into the future.

Tonight, as we continue our study, we are going to look at what spiritual discipline is and also to set a goal that we what to reach in our Christian life. Without a purpose or goal to shoot for we will become discouraged and give up on the whole endeavor, we need to have a purpose in mind so that we will know that it is worth all the effort and time to become involved in spiritual exercise.

The word Paul uses here for “exercise” comes from the Greek “gumnazo,” (goom-nad-zo) from which comes our words for “gymnasium” and “gymnastics.” It means to train or to exercise. This word conveys the idea of rigorous, strenuous, self-sacrificing training an athlete undergoes.

I really don't have to tell you that our nation is caught up in a fitness craze. Physical fitness has become a billion dollar business in the United States and continues to grow. At any given time you can find the latest "infomercial" on television featuring the latest fitness product on the market. Whether it's "Sweatin' to the Oldies" with Richard Simmons or Billy Joe Jim-Bob's "Country Line Aerobics," they all promise the same thing: If you'll follow their training plan, you can be physically fit in a matter of days.

Most of you know that I am a big believer in being physically fit. But physical fitness doesn't happen overnight. It takes developing a personalized regular routine and staying with it. **And it's certainly not as complicated as all the "infomercials" make it out to be.** In fact, I have narrowed it down to just three things:

1. Watch what you eat.
2. Regularly Exercise to Build Muscular & Cardiovascular Systems.
3. Get Proper Rest to Recharge Yourself.

Look again at verses 7-8, "Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come." I like how the Phillips translation states verse 7, "Take the time and the trouble to keep yourself spiritually fit."

In other words, if it is good to be physically fit, it is even better to be spiritually fit. But just how do you get spiritually fit? Funny, but I haven't seen too many "infomercials" on spiritual fitness. **Hey, who knows?** Maybe we're on to something here! We could develop some training videos on spiritual fitness:

- "Prayers of Steel"
- "Sermons of Power"

So, what does it actually mean to be “Spiritually Fit”? And how do you get there? Well, I really don’t think it is all that difficult. In fact, I would like to suggest a very simple approach. And although I don’t plan on developing an “infomercial” any time soon, I think the following three steps can help you get spiritually fit.

First of all *Spiritual Fitness* requires the proper *Spiritual Nutrition*. Just as the body needs the proper daily nourishment of food, spiritual fitness requires the proper daily nourishment of spiritual food. In Matthew 4:4 Jesus stated, “It is written Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

In other words, man is more than just a physical being. He is a spiritual being as well as a physical being. And just as the physical side of him needs nourishment, so does the spiritual nature.

In the Old Testament there is a story about how God miraculously provided food for the Israelites during their forty-year journey from their slavery in Egypt to their entering the promised land. Exodus 16:11-35 gives us this insight, “The LORD said to Moses, I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God. That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, What is it? For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat. This is what the Lord has commanded: Each one is to gather as much as he needs. Take an omer for each person you have in your tent. The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little. And when they measured it by the omer, he who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little. Each one gathered as much as he needed. Then Moses said to them, No one is to keep any of it until morning. However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept

part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell. So Moses was angry with them. Each morning everyone gathered as much as he needed, and when the sun grew hot, it melted away. On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much - two omers for each person - and the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses. He said to them, This is what the Lord commanded: Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning. So they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink or get maggots in it. Eat it today, Moses said, because today is a Sabbath to the Lord. You will not find any of it on the ground today. Six days you are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any. Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none. Then the Lord said to Moses, How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions? Bear in mind that the Lord has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where he is on the seventh day; no one is to go out. So the people rested on the seventh day. The people of Israel called the bread manna. It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey.”

Notice some of the stipulations on the Manna or the “Bread of God that came down from heaven”:

- (1) It was to be gathered once a day.**
- (2) It was to be consumed for that day and not to be kept over ... it would spoil if kept.**
- (3) On the sixth day, they were to gather twice as much for the Sabbath.**

In the New Testament, while talking to some religious leaders, Jesus referred to this manna this way in John 6:48-51, “I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats

of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”

Notice what Jesus is saying:

- (1) “I am the bread (manna) of life that came down from heaven.”
- (2) “Whoever eats of this bread will live forever.”
- (3) “This bread is Christ’s Body which is given to save the world from their sins.”

After hearing the words of Jesus, verse 66 tells us, “From this time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.”

Now that brings me to an interesting question - “How do you ‘consume’ Jesus, the Bread of Life?”

I think there are three ways:

1. By believing in his death, burial & resurrection ... that He is God who came down from heaven.
2. By inviting Christ into your life (Partaking in his Body – Communion).
3. By daily reading His Word the Bible.

All three of these points are vital, but it’s this third aspect that I want to focus on concerning Spiritual Nourishment. One of, if not the greatest step to get yourself spiritually fit is to learn to feed yourself on God’s Word, the Bible. Listen to what we have been told in Job 23:12, “I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.” Jeremiah 15:16 says, “When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart’s delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God Almighty.” David said this in Psalm 119:103, “How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” And Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword,

it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

Child of God, I submit to you tonight that reading God’s word and combining it with faith is food for the soul!

I’m telling you it is better than Charles Stanley, John Hagee, Billy Graham, T. D. Jakes, and James Dobson all put together! It’s better than all of the great Commentaries ever written. I am telling you, you can surf the internet ... you can surf the oceans waves, but you will never find anything better as food for your soul than the Bible, The Word of the Living God!

**When You’re Down It’ll Lift You Up!
When You’re Lost It’ll Help You Find Your Way!
When You’re Fearful It’ll Give You Courage!
When You’re Weak It’ll Give You Strength!
When You’re Hurting It’ll Give You Healing!**

Therefore, in order to experience proper growth, you must regularly read God’s Word and listen to his voice.

Second, Spiritual Fitness Requires Regular Faith Exercise. Faith is like a muscle; it must be utilized and exercised in order for it to grow.

How do you exercise your “faith muscles”? I think there are three ways:

First you live by faith. Romans 1:17 says, “For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith.”

Second your life is sustained by faith. 2 Corinthians 5:7 says, “We live by faith, not by sight.” Hebrews 11:1 says, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”

Third we learn to serve by faith. Listen to what we have been told in Romans 12:3-8, “For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.”

Therefore, to grow spiritually we must exercise our faith on a regular bases.

Third, Spiritual Fitness Requires Spiritual Renewal. Being saved is just the first step in this wonderful and amazing journey called the *Christian life*. But as we travel on this wonderful journey, life, and the enemy, somehow takes their toll on our spiritual accomplishments and expectancy. And we are not aware of what is happening in our spiritual life, life and the enemy will literally “suck” the life out of us.

There is an interesting story found in Ezekiel 37:1-10, “The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. He asked me, Son of man, can these bones live? I said, O Sovereign Lord, you alone know. Then he said to me, Prophecy to these bones and say to them, Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin;

I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to it, This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet - a vast army.”

What does that story have to do with us today? Simply this – there is nothing quite like hearing from God to rekindle the life and fire of God in our every day living.

All of these things together make a great “spiritual exercise routine.”