

“Spiritual Exercises for a Healthier Life”

A Talk Outline

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Our Nation Remains in a Health Crisis

- Chronic diseases accounted for 5 of the 6 leading causes of death in 2002 in the US
- 66% of adults are overweight (50% of these are obese)

During the past 20 years there has been a dramatic increase in obesity in the United States. In 1991, four states had obesity prevalence rates of 15–19 percent and no states had rates at or above 20 percent.

In 1995, obesity prevalence in each of the 50 states was less than 20 percent. In 2000, 28 states had obesity prevalence rates less than 20 percent.

In 2005, only 4 states had obesity prevalence rates less than 20 percent, while 17 states had prevalence rates equal to or greater than 25 percent, with 3 of those having prevalence's equal to or greater than 30 percent (Louisiana, Mississippi, and West Virginia).

- 17% of children and adolescents in the US are overweight
- 60% of adults do not get the recommended amount of regular physical activity; and 25% are not active at all (Center for Disease Control and Prevention)
- About 550,000 Americans die of cancer annually. 33% of these deaths are linked to poor diet, physical inactivity, and carrying excess weight. (ACS)
- 75 to 90 % of all physician office visits have stress-related components. (American Psychological Association)

"I find that my patients with the highest levels of stress and anxiety tend to have the most physical problems. A mind weighed down with cares and concerns may be the greatest threat to our health."

Kenneth Cooper, M.D. Author, *Faith-Based Fitness*

Physical Fitness

We all know that physical exercise is a key aspect of helping us to have good health.

What are the benefits of physical exercise? Why might we be motivated to engage in physical activity?

Motivation to Exercise/Benefits of Physical Activity:

Manage weight manage stress maintain our function maintain or manage our health Others?

Obedience to God: **1 Corinthians 6: 19-20** ¹⁹ Or don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, ²⁰ for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.

The Faith and Health Connection

The research shows that faith impacts positively on health in the following areas:

Cancer, Hypertension, Heart Disease, General Health, Longevity, General Well Being, Substance Abuse, Suicide and Life Satisfaction

In 1992, 3 of 125 Medical Schools in the US surveyed included courses on spirituality and health.

In 2002, 72 of 119 schools offered courses on this topic.

Polls

83% of Americans believe their faith beliefs are closely tied to their mental and emotional health
79% believe faith can help people recover from illness, injury or disease

"The medical research is clear that the deeper your true spiritual faith, the more likely you are to have a better mental and physical health outcome. You are much more likely to cope well with illness and to recover from disease." Walt Larimore, M.D. *God's Design for The Highly Healthy Person*

A Few Questions to Pose

- Might we as individuals apply our faith in a deeper way to take better care of our health?
- Could more of God be a partial answer to improved spiritual health and the resulting improved emotional and physical health?

Spiritual Exercise

"Spend your time and energy in training yourself for spiritual fitness. Physical exercise has some value, but spiritual exercise is much more important, for it promises a reward in both this life and the next. This is true, and everyone should accept it." **1 Tim 4:7-9 NLT 1st Edition**

For Discussion at Tables:

If aerobic activity, resistance training and stretching are important components of physical exercise, what are some key spiritual exercises that, if practiced regularly, might impact on your health in a favorable way?

Consider this definition for spiritual exercise: Any belief or intentional behavior that helps one become more like God, draw closer to Him, know Him better or that follows the principles or commandments of God.

Pass out paper with scriptures and places to record disciplines/practices and scripture references as the basis.

After Table Discussion

Ask "What are some 'spiritual exercises' that you came up with at your tables?"

Have some discussion about what they came up with then suggest that the following are worthy of looking at more closely.

Let's Look at a few key Spiritual Exercises to help us live a Healthier Life

(Select appropriate exercises to talk about based upon the group that you are talking to and their life circumstances. Refer to the booklet provided in the workshop for references to health and related scriptures.)

Exercises Related to Your Beliefs and Attitude

Believe in God
Believe God Forgives You
Believe God's Spirit Lives in You

Exercises Related to Your Relationship With God

Read and Study the Bible
Believe In & Receive God's Love
Love God
Pray and Meditate
Obey God
Cry Out to God
Surrender to God/Let Go
Abide in God's Presence
Have Faith & Trust in God

Exercises Related to How You Practice Your Faith

Confess Your Sins
Forgive
Attend Church/Worship with Others
Be in Community with Others
Love & Serve Others
Think Spiritual Thoughts/Renew Your Mind

What are the Rewards of Spiritual Exercise?

1 Tim 4:8 says that spiritual exercise promises a reward in both this life and the next.

John 3:16 ¹⁶“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

John 10:10 ¹⁰“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

2 Peter 1: 3-8 ³ As we know Jesus better, his divine power gives us everything we need for living a godly life. He has called us to receive his own glory and goodness! ⁴ And by that same mighty power, he has given us all of his rich and wonderful promises. He has promised that you will escape the decadence all around you caused by evil desires and that you will share in his divine nature. ⁵ So make every effort to apply the benefits of these promises to your life. Then your faith will produce a life of moral excellence. A life of moral excellence leads to knowing God better. ⁶ Knowing God leads to self-control. Self-control leads to patient endurance, and patient endurance leads to godliness. (the term used in 1 Tim 4:7-8 in many translations) ⁷ Godliness leads to love for other Christians, and finally you will grow to have genuine love for everyone. ⁸ The more you grow like this, the more you will become productive and useful in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The more we practice Spiritual Exercises the greater the likelihood we will experience the Fruits of the Spirit mentioned in

Gal 5:22-23 ²² But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control.

As you experience improved spiritual health you will likely experience improved emotional and physical health.

Just as the benefits of physical exercise might motivate you to exercise, so might the benefits of spiritual exercise motivate you to put those disciplines into practice more regularly.

Pray

“Examples of Spiritual Exercise”

Handout for Discussion in Small Groups

1 Tim 4:7-9

New Living Translation 1st Edition “Spend your time and energy in training yourself for spiritual fitness. ⁸ Physical exercise has some value, but spiritual exercise is much more important, for it promises a reward in both this life and the next. ⁹ This is true, and everyone should accept it.”

New King James “Exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.”

King James “Exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation.”

New International Version “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.”

At your tables: Discuss what spiritual exercise means to you. If engaging in aerobic activity, performing resistance training and stretching are behaviors/practices/components of physical exercise, what are things we are instructed by God to do as “Spiritual Exercise?” Spiritual Exercise might be defined as any belief or intentional behavior that helps one become more like God, draw closer to Him, know Him better or that follows the principles or commandments of God.

List 5 that represent those at your table agree are *most* important and scripture references as the basis.

| Spiritual Exercise | Scripture References |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. | |
| 2. | |
| 3. | |
| 4. | |
| 5. | |

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Notes

1 Timothy 4:7-8 New Living Translation(1st Edition) “Spend your time and energy in training yourself for spiritual fitness. ⁸ Physical exercise has some value, but *spiritual exercise* is much more important, for it promises a reward in both this life and the next.”

Examples of Spiritual Exercise for a Healthier Life:

(Provides blanks for participants to fill in the name of the spiritual exercises you will talk about and a listing of related scriptures.)

EXAMPLE for “Love and Serve Others”

_____ and _____ Others Mark 12:28-31; Gal 5: 13-15; John 13: 34-35; 1 John 3: 14

Some benefits of spiritual exercise:

Salvation (John 3:16), and **an abundant life** (John 10:10) as evidenced by the Fruits of the Spirit love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23) and likely **improved health**