

God Uses This Type of Man

In his book *To Change the World*, James Davison Hunter says, “The passion to engage the world, to shape it and finally change it for the better would seem to be an enduring mark of Christians on the world in which they live.”

Throughout Scripture, we read of great men who, often through the unlikeliest of circumstances, achieved incredible feats and influenced the world in ways that can still be seen today.

Where do we really make our mark? Where do we fit? What have we been designed to do? We all ask ourselves these questions, and, some days, it feels like everything that we have worked so hard for, everything we are dedicating our lives to is all for naught.

We all want to make an impact on this world. We all want to do great things. We want God to use us in a mighty way, but, if you're like me, you often doubt if God could really use someone like you.

We know what the Bible says. We know what we are “supposed” to believe. But sometimes our head and our hearts do not align. I am prone to believe that I am not smart enough, funny enough, strong enough, loving enough or talented enough for God to do much of anything in and through my life. Simply put, most days, I just lack the faith to believe that God will use me to do anything of real consequence.

However, as God continues to make me more like him, I am learning a few things:

1. I would contend that whether or not God uses us in a mighty way has nothing to do with our talents and gifts. God does not need us to contribute anything. He is the one who is all-sufficient; He just asks us to be available.

2. My definition of “doing great things” and God’s definition of it differ greatly. Whereas I look at my life through worldly lenses, He sees my life as the intricate part of His grand story of redemption. What seems big to me is often of little consequence in the kingdom of God.

3. As I have heard one pastor say, “If you will get ‘blessable,’ God will wear you out.” This is not a legalist, pick-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps sort of exhortation; it’s truth. Once we become a part of the kingdom of God, much of the responsibility for holiness lies on us. We must be men after God’s own heart if we stand a chance of bringing great glory to the kingdom of God.

So, I’m going to write a series of articles on just this topic. What kind of man does God use? By looking at the story of Noah, a man whom God used profoundly, I’m going to unpack how the man that God uses is one of (1) integrity, (2) humility, (3) faith and (4) commitment. These are the men whose fingerprints remain long after they have died.

These are the men whom God has truly allowed to touch the world in some small way because they are the men who rely fully on Him and are willing to give him all the glory.

For the original article, visit .

Get Healthy: How to Bounce Back From a Food-Filled

Weekend

Hot dogs and burgers and pies, oh my! The 4th of July is a time of celebration, indeed. I don't need to remind you that on that momentous day 239 years ago, the Continental Congress approved the final wording of the Declaration of Independence. (The Congress actually declared independence two days prior. But surrounding the jubilation, the fired-up grills and fantastic fireworks, and the thanksgiving for our freedom, there is food ... *lots and lots* of food.

Did you know that just a few years ago, in 2013, The National Sausage and Hot Dog Council (I could hardly believe there's such a thing) predicted Americans would eat 150 million hot dogs over the July 4 holiday alone, part of the 7 *billion* hot dogs eaten over the summer season from Memorial Day to Labor Day? And that's just the hot dogs.

When you consider that most Americans also indulge in delicious sides like potato salad, chips and dip, French fries, lemonade, ice cream and apple pie, it's a wonder we are not in carb-induced comas by the time the fireworks start.

In this article, rather than filling you with remorse about any holiday indulgences, I'm going to give you a few tips on how to recover from it—how to de-bloat, regain your energy and get back on track with your healthy, God-honoring nutrition and exercise schedule.

Here are some tips:

1. Pray. I know that may sound trite, but it's important to remember that honoring our bodies isn't just a suggestion—it's a command. First Corinthians 6:19 explicitly tells us that as temples of the Holy Spirit, our bodies don't belong to us. Therefore, we're to be good stewards of them so that they're strong and fit to do the works God has prepared in advance for us (Eph. 2:10). And in our busy, fast-based Western society

where fast food chains and non-nutritive processed products abound, fueling up properly and working out regularly is no easy task.

Praying daily—not just when we need a little extra encouragement or motivation—is key to keeping Christ at the center of all that we eat, drink, and do.

“Therefore, whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).

2. Start each day off on the right foot. I should back up and insert a Tip No. 1.5: Don't box up leftovers to take home with you! Start fresh the following day by opening up a fridge full of your healthy meats, eggs, cheese, veggies and fruit—not round two of barbecue and star-spangled cookies! Even if you don't feel hungry, skipping breakfast is not advised as this could set you up to overeat later in the day. Cook a well-balanced breakfast composed of protein (for example, eggs and egg whites, turkey sausage), good-for-you fats (for example, almond butter, coconut oil, avocado) and healthy carbohydrates (for example, a half-cup of berries, a piece of fruit, no-sugar-added oatmeal, Ezekiel bread), and 16 to 20 ounces of water with it. Which brings me to Tip No. 3 ...

3. Drink lots of water. More than half of your body weight comes from water. So it makes sense that drinking water helps combat the bloating that swiftly follows a night of overeating. Water can be the cause of bloating and ultimately the cure for it. If you don't drink enough water, your body tries to retain as much water as possible, which causes dehydration ... and bloating.

After overindulging at the 4th of July barbecue, you may be a bit concerned about weight gain. When you drink water, your body works hard to warm up the water that goes into your system, making your metabolism work faster. At least two-thirds of Americans don't drink enough water, so strive be

among the third that does!

Water relieves bloating in two ways: 1) The boost in your metabolism causes your body digest the unhealthy meal faster. 2) Your body can remove the excess water in your belly through urination.

Aim to drink two to three liters throughout the day.

4. Breathe deep. Taking long, deep breaths will assist your organs in the detoxification process and stimulate them for digestion.

Take a few minutes to become quiet and focus on nothing but your breath. Close your eyes. Place your hands on your stomach and gently interlace your fingers. Begin to breathe deeply into your belly.

Practice breathing with a slow, controlled, deliberate breath so that you feel the fingers slide apart on the inhale and back together on the exhale. As much as you try to expand as you take in breath, see how much you can expel as you breathe out. You may find that your fingertips slide together farther than when they started. Notice where you tend to rush or lose control; then work on evening it out.

Breathe like this 15-20 times, as deeply as you can without force or discomfort.

5. Get some cardio in. Even if you're feeling bloated and sluggish, doing high-intensity cardio session to sweat things out is some of your best defense against your case of bloat and "blahs." I guarantee you'll feel 100 times better after you exercise! Check out last week's post for six less-than-20-minute workouts that are sure to help get you back into your fitness groove!

I hope these tips have been helpful! Please reach out to me with any questions or feedback you may have on Instagram

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For the original article, visit [.](#)

Do It for the Joy of the Journey

One summer my husband, Terry, and I decided to take up something new—tennis. Now for us, this is a stretch. We are not exactly whippet-agile, athletic, coordinated or cool.

Add to that, we don't even look like most tennis players, especially in dress. The first day we showed up at the upscale subdivision court, everyone was in starched tennis whites. I could testify that all activity halted as we came through the gate in scroungy black T-shirts and black cut-offs. Mid-game we met at the net, where Terry whispered, "Why do I feel that our presence could seriously affect the home buyers' market here?"

On our second morning at the court, I shouted to Terry, "The ball's in your court!" Actually, the ball wasn't *in* Terry's court. You might say it was slightly displaced, soaring high *above* it. Before Terry could race outside the court to fetch the ball, a big slobbering dog had the same idea and beat him to it. The dog won, and raced from view, with the ball in its

mouth. From the adjacent court, two players, our neighbors, halted all activity and began to belly laugh.

Terry and I met at the net, where I snorted, "This has to be the devil!"

Terry, not one to be out-snorted, snorted back, "It has to be God! Remember, Sandra Louise, it was the Lord's idea we do this!"

True. Terry Robert had a point. It was during this red-faced moment that it became clear to me—perhaps the Lord was directing us to try a new thing, like tennis, not to make us pros but to let us enjoy being ourselves! I was reminded of God's Word that promises us that He loads us with daily benefits (see Ps. 68:19). Why couldn't joy, smiles and laughter be part of that?

Why does everything we do have to be a serious attempt to out-do, out-shine or out-race everyone (and their dog)? I noticed that in these mornings in our new activity of tennis, I was smiling more, laughing more (probably more at Terry than at me, of course) and starting my day with increased hope and energy than in my pre-tennis days.

Over the weeks I came to see that worse than *losing at* something (or trying your hand at something and not looking like a pro or winner) is *losing out* on something—and missing the opportunity to receive new smiles, and joy and the satisfaction of trusting the Lord that you will benefit in some way from it.

Last week, we celebrated Independence Day. I challenge you to try something new and let yourself be stretched in the blessings and freedom that you might gain from stepping outside your box. Why not write and submit a book proposal or take up scrap booking, photography or even (starch whites optional) tennis?

If a merry heart does good like medicine (see Prov. 17:22), wouldn't that merry heart also strengthen you and bless you in your day?

I am convinced that at times, when the Lord asks us to tackle a mountain that we've never climbed before, He is not calling us to be the first or to be the best. He is simply calling us to the blessings that come from the adventure of the journey.

10 Things to Pray For and With Your Child

Although he lived more than 2,000 years ago, Jesus of Nazareth is on the front of every major magazine every year. He is widely considered the greatest leader in history.

Napoleon Bonaparte said of him: "I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is no mere man. Between Him and every person in the world there is no possible term of comparison. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I have founded empires. But on what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ founded His empire upon love; and at this hour millions of men would die for him."

One of the things Jesus emphasized was prayer and its vital role in our lives. Based off of his teaching, here are 10 things to show you how to pray for your children:

1. Pray that your kids connect with God. Relationships are what make life rich and full. No relationship does this more than our relationship with God. We were made for it.

2. Pray that your children honor God. It's important that kids learn to believe in the One who created them, a God of light and power who we are called to respect and honor. Prayer becomes more meaningful in the context of respect and reverence.

3. Pray they translate that honor into action. Kids who honor God are more inclined to participate in their Creator's work. It's the way "Thy will be done" turns into "Yes, and we'll do it every day."

4. Pray that they are well-equipped to meet every daily need. Prayer as a vehicle to honoring God is less concerned with "God, give me what I want," or "Me, me, me," as a matter of course. But it is absolutely appropriate to pray that our kids acquire the wisdom and the skills to live in freedom without going hungry and without fear.

5. Pray that your children forgive. Our kids certainly don't need to be saddled with the baggage so many of us carry around. So let's pray that they understand and live in the knowledge that forgiveness and hope are always on the table.

6. Pray that they avoid temptation. We already know how difficult it is to live with integrity in a world loaded with stumbling blocks that trip us at every turn. So pray with and for your children—that they have the necessary tools (faith, education, family support, good friends, tenacity, etc.) to resist. Here is a helpful All Pro Dad article teaching us [5 Ways to Help Your Kids Stand for What's Right](#).

7. Pray that they will have the resources to defeat everything negative. Evil is more than just temptation. Sometimes, evil is direct opposition, confusion, disappointment, worry, stress, people who hate, people who always try to break down what is right and oppose goodness. We need to be serious about our commitment to pray about these things: for ourselves as well as for and with our children.

8. Pray that they will develop relationships that serve to strengthen them. The Lord's Prayer suggests an approach to life that values balanced relationships. We were not created to live alone without support. So let's pray that our children develop the kind of relationships that will give them strength especially to choose well when it comes to a spouse.

9. Pray that love will define them. The reason we pray at all is the belief that our Creator cares. God cares because God is love. So we should pray that our children learn to live with love as their defining value.

10. Pray for the strength of the family. Our children are on the front lines of the new generation. Anything can be lost in one generation of disinterest, including the family. Pray that our children help to turn the tide.

What do you pray for your child?

For the original article, visit .

3 Reasons Married Sex Is Better

As I was driving to work this morning, I was listening to talk radio. The radio host had two lawyers on giving advice to the callers.

A married woman called in having recently been in a car accident. The fault of the collision was clearly the other driver and she was experiencing a lot of back pain as a result. The decision from there seems pretty clear—make the claim with the insurance company and inform them of the

medical component.

The problem is that in this situation she was not driving the car. The man she was having an affair with was behind the wheel. Incidentally, he was also experiencing back pain that needed medical treatment. Her fear was that as the case got more intense she would be unable to hide her infidelity from her husband. As the sad interview continued, the radio host asked her if better sex was the reason she had strayed from her husband. Her answer, "Well, there's nothing better than new and exciting."

This attitude is everywhere in the media from TV shows and movies to music. One night stands and hookups are romanticized, without any of the consequences or downsides. The assumption is that when you are married sex will eventually become predictable and boring.

That can happen, but it results from feelings of disconnection. When a married couple strives for intimacy, the experience of sex reaches a level of pleasure and enjoyment that unmarried sex never will.

Here are three reasons married sex is better:

1. Knowledge of one another. While there are times married couples experience ruts, I would argue that familiarity is very much a sexual strength. The parquet floor at the old Boston Garden was said to make the ball bounce differently on various parts of the floor. The Celtics knew the floor better than any visiting team giving them a tremendous home court advantage. They knew where to go with the ball while their opponents did not. That knowledge had power.

Every person is made uniquely different. We all have different preferences and tastes. Sex at its best stimulates on multiple levels: sensual, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. The ways these are stimulated varies from person to person. With more knowledge a couple has about one another comes a deeper

understanding and rhythm of how to awaken these facets. This brings a pleasure on multiple levels that only deepens as knowledge of one another grows.

2. Connection in friendship. It's always more enjoyable to do anything with someone with whom you share an authentic friendship. It's even more fun when it is someone you love. Sex with someone where friendship is absent reduces sex to merely a sensual and potential intellectual experience. When the emotional and spiritual connection is lacking, it all becomes empty. It is devoid of its design and purpose of greater intimacy. It also is most likely followed by the inevitable guilt. Although it is important to consider that guilt, confusion and hurt will still occur without the third and final reason.

3. Trust in commitment. In my opinion, this is the component of sex at its best that our culture misses the most. It's the same reason that sex in the context of "friends with benefits," dating couples and cohabitating couples falls short of marriage sex. When couples make a lifelong commitment to one another in marriage, it produces security and trust. Those two things allow for vulnerability. There's no holding back for the sake of emotional protection. Without that commitment, there will always be a higher degree of fear of being hurt, even for those couples that say they are "committed" but haven't gotten married. The doubts are there whether they admit it or not.

The higher the degree of doubt, fear and insecurity in a relationship, the more diminished the sexual experience. Married couples can certainly experience these fears and doubts.

However, making a strong public decision to commit for a lifetime and reaffirming that decision daily are important steps in eliminating those fears. The result is sex reaching its highest level of pleasure.

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6 Quick and Effective Vacation Workouts

In last week's article, I discussed ways in which we can all keep our health on track while still enjoying our vacation. From packing homemade meals and snacks for the road or plane to choosing active excursions while cruising, I explained how with a little prep work and self-control, we can all return home just as fit—or fitter—than when we departed.

In today's post, I want to give you six **total-body** workouts that will take you *less than 20 minutes* to complete. Before I go on, let me clarify that you won't be doing all six! The first set of three is for those of you who will have a gym at your disposal, while the second set is for those who won't have gym access. In other words, no matter what your accommodations, **there is no excuse for skimping on exercise!**

I recommend completing one workout every other day to give the body time to recover. Also, try to do these the first thing in the morning after a light breakfast, or with no breakfast at all. Here are a few benefits of early-morning, fasted workouts, especially quick, high-intensity ones like you will be doing:

- Research has shown that fasted cardiovascular workouts results in **more fat loss** than “fed” cardio routines. Stubborn fat is eliminated, in particular.
- An early trip to the gym has been shown to result in **fewer food cravings** throughout the day.

- Working out in the morning means that your body will **burn calories faster** and more efficiently throughout the day.
- There's **less risk of things "popping up"** when you do your workout early in the day.
- Working out in the morning can **increase the impact that exercise has on your heart**. Reason being, one of the ways that your body naturally wakes you up is by increasing levels of hormones like adrenaline, which causes your heart to beat faster. This means that you can **obtain extra cardiovascular benefits** when you work out in the morning.
- Exercise has been proven to **increase mental focus** and acuity for up to ten whole hours post-workout.
- Exercise **releases feel-good compounds like endorphins** that improve your mood and boost energy levels, an effect that can last well into the afternoon if you get your workout in early.
- Working out in the morning can **promote better sleep** since you're not getting that extra energy boost as you're trying to settle in for the night.

I hope you find the eight reasons listed above motivating! And now, for six total-body workouts for travelers.

Oh, one more thing I should mention ... Each of the six workouts are in the AMRAP format. "AMRAP" is an acronym for "as many rounds as possible." This means you will complete the workout's featured circuit as many times as you can within the given time period. The intent here is to *keep the intensity high* so you can incinerate body fat, build lean muscle, and challenge your heart in very little time. *Efficiency* is the name of the game.

In the Gym

Equipment Needed: A medium-weight pair of dumbbells (something

at which you can perform 8-12 reps) and a treadmill

Workout 1

Warm-Up: On the treadmill, crank up the incline to 3.0 and walk at a comfortable pace for minutes 00:00 – 5:00. For minutes 5:00-10:00, increase your speed so that you're jogging. Remain on a slight incline.

Off the treadmill, perform the following:

- 10 stationary lunges each leg
- 20 stationary butt kicks
- 10 air squats
- 10 push-ups
- 10 arm circles forward and backward

Workout

- 10 minute AMRAP
- Run miles on treadmill
- 10 push-ups
- 10 dumbbell stationary lunges each leg

Workout 2

Warmup

- Five-minute brisk walk on treadmill followed by a jog.
- 10 walk-outs/walk-ins
- 20 arm circles forward
- 20 arm circles reverse
- 20 mountain-climbers (right/left is 1 rep)
- 20 air squats
- 10 burpees

Workout

- 12-min AMRAP
- 8 dumbbell thrusters
- 10 oblique twists holding dumbbell (each side is one

rep)

- 12 bent-over dumbbell rows

Workout 3

Warmup

3 rounds

- 10 high skips (5 each side)
- 20 butt kicks (10 each side)
- 20 high knees (10 each side)
- 100 meter run (miles)
- 20 scorpions (10 each side)
- 5 jump squats

Workout

- 14-minute AMRAP
- Run miles on treadmill 200-meter run
- 20 reverse lunges with dumbbell (10 each leg)
- 12 renegade rows

In Your Room (Or Outside)

Equipment needed: Just you

Workout 1

Warmup

- 20 lunges (10 each leg)
- 10 walk-out/walk-ins
- 20 lateral lunges (10 each leg)
- 10 arm circles, forward and backward
- 20 scorpions (10 each side)
- 20 reverse lunges (10 each leg)
- 10 burpees

Workout

- 10-min. AMRAP
- 20 butt-kicks
- 10 push-ups
- 5 jump squats

Workout 2

Warmup

- 50 jumping jacks
- 20 air squats
- 20 lunges with oblique twist (10 each side)
- 5 jump squats
- 20 mock kettlebell swings

Workout

- 15-min. AMRAP
- 20 reverse lunges
- 15 air squats
- 10 mountain-climbers (right/left is 1 rep)

Workout 3

Warmup

- 20 lunges (10 each leg)
- 10 high knees (5 each leg)
- 20 butt kicks (10 each leg)
- 30 jumping jacks
- 10 air squats
- 10 arm circles forward and backward
- 5 push-ups

Workout

- 12-min. AMRAP
- 5 tuck jumps
- 10 pendulum lunges each leg
- 20 bicycle crunches (each side is one rep)

Exercise Instructions (in alphabetical order)

Air squats: Stand with your feet spread apart at a distance slightly wider than the shoulders. Position your feet so that your toes angle out. This angle varies from person to person, but should be about 30 degrees. Keep your weight on the heels to prevent yourself from rolling up onto the balls of your feet.

Keep your chest up, shoulders back, head up. This helps promote a nice, safe, intact lumbar curve.

Place arms straight out in front of your chest. The arms should be in a comfortable position as they act as counter balance to the motion of the exercise.

Bend your knees as you lower yourself down. Pretend there is a chair behind you that you're reaching back to sit on. Your knees should track over your feet and never jut out over them. In other words, your knees should be pointing in the same direction as your toes. If you find your knees starting to cave in, focus on pushing them out. A good way to achieve this is by imagining you are tearing the floor apart with your feet.

The push back up should be generated from your hamstrings and glutes. Your chest and head should remain pointing straight forward. As you rise, your arms will probably lower back to your sides naturally. Make sure your knees keep tracking with your toes and do not begin to buckle inwards. Also be sure and keep your lumbar curve intact (curved).

Generally speaking, if you have your chest and head up, your lumbar curve will be in the correct position.

Arm circles: Stand in a neutral position with feet hip-width apart. Your arms should be straight out to the sides so your body forms a "T."

Begin making slow circles in a forward motion with your arms, then gradually make larger ones and complete the given number of repetitions.

Repeat in the opposite direction.

Bent-Over Dumbbell Rows

1. Stand with knees bent and your torso at a 60-degree angle.
2. With the weights fully extended in your hands, bring them straight up to your chest, contracting your shoulder blades fully.
3. Slowly return to the starting position.

Bicycle Crunches

1. Lie flat on the floor with the lower back pressed into the ground.
2. Place your hands slightly either side of your head. Do not lock your fingers or pull your head up.
3. Lift your knees to a 45-degree angle.
4. Lift your head up and touch your right elbow to the left knee while pulling your knee up towards your head. At the same time, straighten your right leg, keeping it several inches off of the floor, similar to the motion you'd make while pedaling a bicycle.
5. Touch your left elbow to your right knee. At the same time, straighten your left leg, keeping it off of the floor. Don't forget to tighten your abs!

Burpees

1. Lower your body down using proper squat form. Place hands on the ground in front of you.
2. Jump your feet back to a plank position, then quickly lower your chest to the ground.
3. Push yourself back up to a plank position and jump your feet back in toward your hands.

4. Jump back up and simultaneously clap your hands behind your head. Stand all the way, extending the hips fully before beginning your next rep.

Butt Kicks

1. Begin by jogging normally, either in place or traveling for a short distance.
2. Then begin raising your heels up toward your bottom as you jog, using rapid, forceful movements. Again, you may either do these in place or traveling.

Dumbbell stationary lunges

See the instructions for lunges below, and simply add a dumbbell in each hand to perform the movement.

Dumbbell Thrusters

1. Hold a pair of dumbbells in front of your shoulders with bent elbows. Feet should be in your squat stance (see the description for "Air Squats" or "Dumbbell Squats" above).
2. Initiate the squat by pushing your hips back, then bend your knees as you lower yourself down as in a normal squat. Make sure your torso remains upright. Do not allow the dumbbells to pull you forward .
3. As you return to a standing position, explosively press the dumbbells overhead. Make sure your biceps are by your ears in the overhead position and that your legs are straight.
4. Lower the dumbbells to your shoulders and repeat for the given number of repetitions.

High Knees

1. Begin jogging, either in place or over a short distance.
2. Drive one knee up toward your chest and quickly return it to the ground. Follow immediately with the opposite

knee.

3. Continue alternating for the given number of repetitions.

High Skips

1. Begin by standing with feet together, arms at your sides.
2. Bend your knees and jump, moving your feet apart until they are wider than shoulder-width. (You should be on the balls of your feet.) At the same time, raise your arms all the way overhead.
3. Maintain a slight bend in your knees as you jump your feet back together and return your arms to your sides. Repeat for the given number of reps.

Jumping Jacks

1. Begin by standing feet together with arms at your sides.
2. Bend your knees and jump, moving your feet apart until they are wider than shoulder-width. (You should be on the balls of your feet.) At the same time, raise your arms all the way overhead.
3. Maintain a slight bend in your knees as you jump your feet back together and return your arms to your sides.

Jump Squats

1. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Start by doing a regular squat, then engage your core and jump up explosively.
3. When you land, lower your body back into the squat position to complete one rep. Land as quietly as possible, which requires control.

Lateral Lunges

1. Stand with your feet hip-width apart and make sure you have about two to three feet of space on either side of you.

2. Step sideways a comfortable distance, 2 or 3 feet, with one leg. Plant the heel of the lunging foot and keep the foot of the non-lunging leg pointed forward.
3. Sit back into the lunging leg to create a definite crease in your hip. Keep your weight in the heel.
4. Push off the heel of the lunging foot to bring feet together to the standing position. Repeat on opposite side and alternate for given number of repetitions.

Lunges (Reverse)

1. Stand with feet shoulder-width apart, torso upright with arms hanging straight at your sides.
2. Take a slow, controlled lunge backward with one foot.
3. Lower your hips so that your front leg becomes parallel to the floor. At this point your right knee should be positioned directly over your ankle and your front foot should be pointing straight ahead. Your left knee should be bent at a 90-degree angle and pointing toward the floor. Your left heel should be lifted.
4. Push through both feet to straighten your legs. Bring your left foot back to meet your right in the starting position. Repeat on the other side, and continue alternating for the given number of repetitions.

Lunges (Stationary)

1. Stand with feet shoulder-width apart, torso upright with arms hanging straight at your sides.
2. Take a slow, controlled lunge forward with one foot. As you lunge, lower your body and allow the lunging knee to bend until your thigh is parallel to the ground.
3. If performing a stationary lunge, push explosively off the lunging foot to return to the starting position. If performing walking lunges, push through the heel of the lunging foot to bring the back foot to meet it.

Lunges With Twist Over Lunging Knee

1. Stand with feet shoulder-width apart, torso upright with arms hanging straight at your sides.
2. Take a slow, controlled lunge forward with one foot. As you lunge, lower your body and allow the lunging knee to bend until your thigh is parallel to the ground.
3. In the lunge position, bend your elbows at ninety degrees and rotate your torso in the direction of your bent knee.
4. If performing walking lunges, push through the heel of the lunging foot to bring the back foot to meet it.

Mock Kettlebell Swings

1. Assume an air squat stance with feet shoulder-width apart, toes angled out slightly.
2. Keeping your chest lifted and your lower back arched, reach down to the floor with your fingertips.
3. Thrust your hips forward as you stand from the squat position. Your arms should be straight, as if your hands are holding an invisible weight.
4. Swing your arms overhead until your biceps are beside your ears.
5. Squat to lower your arms back down toward the floor.

NOTE: Fully extend or "open up" your hips when you stand.

Mountain-Climbers

1. Place your hands on the floor, slightly wider than shoulder-width. Step out with your feet to assume a plank position.
2. While holding your upper body in place, alternating bringing the right and left knees toward your chest.
3. Keep your hips down and increase the intensity by performing the movement faster as you feel comfortable.

Oblique Twists holding Dumbbell

1. Sit on the floor holding a dumbbell at your chest. Lift

your feet off the floor a few inches and cross your ankles.

2. Keeping your core tight, twist to one side, bringing the weight toward your hip. Repeat on the opposite side.

Pendulum Lunges

Perform a stationary forward lunge, immediately followed by a reverse lunge on the same leg.

Push-Ups (Traditional)

1. Get into a plank position on the ground: hands and feet slightly wider than shoulder-width apart.
2. Keeping your core (abdominals and back) tight, slowly lower yourself in a straight line. Make sure your neck stays neutral, naturally aligned with your spine. Don't let your hips pike up in the air or your lower back sag.
3. Continue to lower yourself until your chest touches the mat or floor or, for beginners, your arms form a ninety-degree angle.

Push-Ups (Modified)

1. Get into a hands-and-knees position on a mat or floor. Hands should be slightly wider than shoulder-width apart, fingers facing forward.
2. Keeping your core (abdominals and back) tight, slowly lower yourself in a straight line. Make sure your neck stays neutral, naturally aligned with your spine. Don't let your hips pike up in the air or your lower back sag.
3. Continue to lower yourself until your chest touches the mat or floor or, for beginners, your arms form a ninety-degree angle.
4. Keeping your spine rigid and tummy pulled in, press your hands into the floor to return to start position.

Renegade Row

1. Place a pair of dumbbells side by side on the floor.

Then get into a plank position with hands gripping either dumbbell, feet hip-width apart. Make sure dumbbells are about shoulder-width apart.

2. Bend your right elbow and pull the dumbbell until your elbow passes your torso. Keep the elbow tight and close to your body. Keep abdominals engaged and neck in a neutral position. Press the left dumbbell into the floor for balance.
3. Lower your arm and repeat on the opposite side.

Scorpions

1. Lie face down on a mat or on the floor. Stretch your arms out to either side, forming a T.
2. Lift your left leg away from the floor as far as you can, then move it to the right, crossing it over your right leg. As you do this, twist your hips to the right, allowing the left leg to touch the ground on the right side.
3. Return your left leg back to starting position and repeat the movement with your right leg.

Tuck Jumps

1. Stand with feet under hips.
2. Jump up, tucking your knees into your chest.
3. Land softly with feet under hips.
4. Immediately explode into another jump.

Walk-Out/Walk-Ins

1. Begin in a standing position. Bend over to touch your toes and walk your hands out until you are in a plank position.
2. Walk the hands back in to your feet keeping legs as straight as possible, and repeat for the given number of repetitions.

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Diana Anderson-Tyler is the author of *Creation House's Fit for Faith: A Christian Woman's Guide to Total Fitness*, *Perfect Fit: Weekly Wisdom and Workouts for Women of Faith and Fitness*, and her latest book, *Immeasurable: Diving into the Depths of God's Love*. Her popular website can be found at [and she is the owner and a coach at CrossFit 925](#). Diana can be reached on [Twitter](#).

For the original article, visit [.](#)

10 Texts to Send to Your Husband in the Next 10 Days

I recently challenged husbands with 10 texts for husbands to send to their wives in the next 10 days. Today's challenge is to the ladies.

So here are 10 texts to send your husband in the next 10 days.

1. Just wanted you to know that you are on my mind today. I'm your No. 1 fan and cheering you on. Go get 'em!
2. We have made some great memories together. Thinking of them and thankful for you today.
3. I appreciate your hard work and tenacity even though I may not say it often enough.
4. If there were more men like you in this world, it would be

a better place. Glad we are on the same team in life.

5. If you feel really burdened today, remember that I want to help you. Let me know how.

6. I'm looking forward to having some time alone with you soon. Let's plan on something!

7. You are really skilled at _____. I'm honored to be married to you and I believe in you.

8. If you asked me again today, even after all we've been through, I'd still say, "I do!"

9. I appreciate that you try to show me you love me in different ways. Thanks for _____ which I know means you love me.

10. The day's been rough, the week's been long, but I'm still so glad we're in this adventure together. I love you.

Bring a smile and a little encouragement to your spouse.

Mark Merrill is the president of Family First. For the original article, visit [.](#)

12 Tips to Prevent Fireworks-Related Injuries

Fireworks safety is personal to me. When I was in junior high school, one of my classmates had to have his hand amputated because he was holding a firework that exploded too soon, right in my classmate's hand. He was just 13 years old.

Earlier, when I was a little girl, I was badly burned by a

sparkler. For some reason the general public commonly regards sparklers as benign, and therefore safe for children. But they can burn as hot as 2,000 degrees, which can catch clothing on fire.

Fireworks mishaps are at their peak on the Fourth of July, but as well all know, people get a bit antsy and start with the fireworks before the Fourth and continue for about a month. More than 600 people will be treated on the Fourth of July for fireworks-related injuries. Aside from that spike on the Fourth, every day during the first three weeks of July over 200 people are treated in hospital emergency rooms for fireworks-related injuries.

Some of those injuries are fatal. In 2013, the most recent statistics available, there were eight deaths due to fireworks-related injuries. There were more than 11,000 injuries, which was an increase of about 3,000 over the previous year. Many of those injuries resulted in the amputation of fingers and hands. Injuries also affected the head, face and ears as well as the torso, legs and eyes.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission has issued these tips on how to stay safe around fireworks-related products:

1. Make sure the fireworks you want to buy are legal in your area before buying or using them.
2. Never allow young children to play with or ignite fireworks, including sparklers.
3. Always have an adult nearby to supervise fireworks activities if older children are allowed to handle devices.
4. Avoid buying fireworks that are packaged in brown paper, which is often a sign that the fireworks were made for professional displays and could pose a danger to consumers.
5. Never place any part of your body directly over a fireworks

device when lighting the fuse.

6. Back up to a safe distance immediately after lighting fireworks.

7. Keep a bucket of water or a garden hose handy in case of fire or other mishap.

8. Never try to relight or handle malfunctioning fireworks. Soak them with water and throw them away.

9. Never point or throw fireworks at another person.

10. Light fireworks one at a time, then move away from them quickly.

11. Never carry fireworks in a pocket or shoot them off in metal or glass containers.

12. After fireworks complete their burning, douse the spent device with plenty of water from a bucket or hose before discarding the device to prevent a trash fire.

Fireworks-related items can permanently damage your hearing. We should only be exposing our ears to sounds that are below 85 decibels, which is about as loud as someone shouting across a room. Anything above that can damage the inner ear and lead to hearing loss. Fireworks are far above the safe level, at 162 decibels.

The best way to protect your ears from noise damage is to separate yourself from the noise, and if that's not possible, wear personal protective equipment like noise-cancelling headphones.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives encourages the public to report the manufacture or sale of illegal fireworks to your local law enforcement agencies or to the ATF hotline at 888/ATF-BOMB (888/283-2662).

For the original article, visit [.](#)

Here's a Radical Idea in Evangelism

Yet another line in the sand has been drawn. The enemy and American culture have spoken loudly against Almighty God.

Friday's Supreme Court ruling to legalize same-sex marriage in all 50 states and make it the law of the land has projected a bold statement and attitude about this country. The Creator of the Universe, in the eyes of the United States of America, is insignificant.

Surprised? You shouldn't be. This has been coming down the pike for a long time. It's not like we didn't see this coming.

But you know what? For a child of God, it doesn't—and shouldn't—matter. Sounds reckless and callous? Let me explain, with a little help from my pastor, Ed Garvin, at Calvary Assembly in Winter Park, Florida.

When our society or our government behaves in such a manner contrary to the Word of God—like Friday's Supreme Court ruling—many believers in the body of Christ take major offense to it. We stew about it, we cry about it, we get on social media and blast our feelings all over Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. As anyone knows me from my past, I've been guilty of all of the above.

But, as my friend Lee Grady says, "I recommend we take the high road."

And as Pastor Garvin so eloquently reminded me—and I listened

as if he were speaking from the pulpit only to me Sunday morning—that attitude simply does not reflect the responsibility with which we, as citizens of the kingdom, have been entrusted. It shows only that we are more concerned about the things of this world than we are the things of the Spirit.

As Paul said in his Epistle to the Romans, “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit” (Romans 8:5, MEV).

Once we have said yes to Jesus, daily we must consciously choose to center our lives on God. We need to use the Bible to discover God’s guidelines and then follow them. When the Holy Spirit points out to us what is right, we need to do it eagerly. It’s a pretty simple concept.

Here’s the thing. As children of God, we know that He loves us. We mess up, we ask for forgiveness, repent and move on. But what about those—like those involved in homosexuality and same-sex marriages? Does God love them, too? You bet he does. He, as Pastor Garvin said Sunday, loves those who will NEVER follow Him.

God doesn’t force or coerce anyone into believing in Him. He has given EVERYONE an incredible gift—the gift of free will—and we can choose to do anything we want with it, especially as American citizens. If we want to live a life of indulgence and debauchery, then that’s our given right. If we want to live a life of holiness and purity and obedience to Christ, then that’s our given right, too.

But even though God loves all of us, that doesn’t mean the two groups of people are the same. As children of God, if we choose to live by the principles set down in His Word, then we can be assured that we will enjoy the benefits of the promises laid down in God’s Word. There are over 7,000 of them in the Bible, including John 14:13-14 (MEV), “I will do whatever you

ask in My name, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.”

However, those who choose to daily live contrary to the principles set down in God’s Word will not reap the benefits of those promises. “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9-11, MEV).

That’s the bottom line. As much as we, as believers in the body of Christ, would like for everyone in this dark, chaotic and selfish world to confess Jesus as their Savior, the reality is that is not going to happen. Just as we choose to embrace Jesus, they choose to reject him. We can witness to them in love and pray for them and plant seeds, but there is nothing that we can say that is going to change their hearts and minds. Only God can do that.

Our job is to reflect God’s love. Our job, as Pastor Garvin says, “is to be true to who God calls you to be.” We must love those who hate us and ridicule us for our faith. We must love those who chastise us for standing on the Word of God without compromise.

“We must love those who hate us and ridicule us for our faith. We must love those who chastise us for standing on the Word of God without compromise.”

We must live our lives as foreigners here on earth, knowing that we have citizenship in Heaven, but with a responsibility here on earth to represent the kingdom of heaven by living lives of Christlike purity and holiness. You don’t need to attend rallies. You don’t need to blast your opinions on social media. Let your actions—not your words—do the talking

for you. Take the high road.

In other words, stop being an angry Christians. As my friend Pastor Justin Lathrop says in his new book, *The Likeable Christian*, “We do we want to flip tables, and what does our anger do to help the situation? ... None of those responses to sin will gain us likeability; none will convince people of God’s love.”

Billy Graham once said, “It’s the Holy Spirit’s job to convict. It’s God’s job to judge, and it’s my job to love.” That’s about all their is to it, isn’t there?

The LGBT community has declared, “Love wins.” But it’s not their kind of love—it’s the love of Christ that’s victorious.

And as I always like to say, “there is that.” God bless.

Shawn A. Akers is the online managing editor at Charisma Media. He is a published poet and published a story about Dale Earnhardt in NASCAR Chicken Soup For the Soul. You can read his blog here.

Here’s a Strong Case for Strength Training

I am so excited to share this week’s guest post with you! It’s written by the man responsible for my inexhaustible love for fitness, and for strength training in particular.

Since I was 16 and first stepped foot into 360 Fitness in my hometown of Tyler, Texas, Michael Prince has been a fitness and nutrition mentor to me. He has taught me—and continues to teach me—everything I know about training safely and

effectively, with very specific goals in mind, and applying tried and true dietary principles that build a strong, lean, energetic body, as well as a clear, focused, and disciplined mind.

I asked Michael to write anything he wanted. Knowing that his mind is a virtual library teeming with vast amounts of information pertaining to exercise science, kinesiology, biomechanics, you name it, I knew that whatever he chose to write on would be insightful. I hope you enjoy what he has to say about what he and I believe to be the foundation of all types of fitness: strength!

And now, without further ado, here's Michael!

Michael Prince

Let me take a moment to introduce myself. I am a United States Air Force Paramedic, B.S. Registered Nurse, Certified Personal Trainer of 19 years, and co-owner of 360 Fitness Personal Training Center in Tyler, Texas for 12 years. I'm the father to three wonderful children and husband to a very patient and loving mother, wife, and business partner.

Dollars to doughnuts, my wife Melinda would acclaim to raising four children. However, this read is most definitely not about my life as much as what I've learned from the various hats having worn over the last 24 years.

Fitness is my life. From working with children, the elderly, bodybuilders, and rehabbing injuries, I've had the pleasure of learning from so many different and physically demanding modalities. Which is what brings us to the meat of this article: answering several questions.

- *What is the best workout?*
- *How do I improve my ability within a given activity or sport?*

Whether strength, endurance, cross-training, running, swimming, cycling, or yoga is your thing, you need to have a physically strong body for all of it. Which brings us to our next question:

What are your goals? I've learned that if you want to get better at cycling, you cycle. If you want to be an excellent swimmer, you must swim. The same goes for running, whether it is long distance or sprinting. The list goes on into including bowling, golf, football, CrossFit, baseball, etc.

Each activity above is a form of exercise, excellent forms that are great for heart health and attaining or maintaining a leaner healthy body. Now for the twist ... How do each of us not only perfect these forms we love, but excel within our chosen activity? There is a difference! Each one is a form, an art! The answer to each of these questions is strength training.

With strength training, we can focus on the factors that limit us.

Our bodies are our support, so we must support our bodies with nutrition and exercise. (We definitely do not have enough room in this article to cover nutrition, as straightforward and simple as it can be.) So what would this strength training program look like for each individual among the various activities? (Keyword, *individual*.)

There is no perfect workout plan. Each of us has a vastly different genetic makeup. Also, when it comes to strength training, it is much more beneficial when your program changes from workout to workout, or from week to week. Our bodies have an adaptive mechanism that will kick in and essentially keep us from moving forward with our goals. We have to be smarter than our bodies and keep them guessing.

So does this make coming up with an individualized program more difficult? Absolutely not! That makes it more fun and

interesting! Within this article, it is not my goal to attempt to condense 20-plus years of experience into a few hundred words and bring light to the fact that we all need to strengthen our bodies for the activities that drive each one of us.

Now, I have been involved with weightlifting/strength training for many years. What I've found is that through the hundreds of people having worked with over the years, I have partaken in some activities that may not be on my personal menu of favorites.

However, due to the fact that strength training is my life, it doesn't ail me to attempt something new. As a matter of fact, I usually do quite well, minus the perfected technique of whatever it is I have agreed to participate in. But what about the activities that are on my menu of favorites? Well, as long as I stay active in these favorites, I can maintain a comfortable and sometimes impressive level of competitiveness.

My suggestion: Scout out your local fitness centers. Some may even specialize in personal training. A good fitness facility will interview you to find out our goals and needs at the same time you are interviewing them to make up your mind if they are right for you.

Now, if you have spent time in the weight room, have the knowledge/experience and are comfortable with designing your own comprehensive roadmap to get from point A to point B, what are you waiting for?

But, like so many people that walk into a fitness center and are intimidated or confused with the sea of exercise equipment, I would take advantage of sitting down with one of their professional fitness trainers and let them cross-examine your desires and match them up with a dynamic strength training program that will get you on the path to creating a more competitive platform so that you can enjoy your favorite

activities even more.

Strength training coupled with athleticism really is the iron that sharpens the iron!

Diana Anderson-Tyler is the author of *Creation House's Fit for Faith: A Christian Woman's Guide to Total Fitness*, *Perfect Fit: Weekly Wisdom and Workouts for Women of Faith and Fitness*, and her latest book, *Immeasurable: Diving into the Depths of God's Love*. Her popular website can be found at [and she is the owner and a coach at CrossFit 925](#). Diana can be reached on [Twitter](#).

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