

Daily Spiritual Warfare Can Include Your Health

Excuses, excuses, excuses! I've heard them all as I've worked with people across the country to get healthy. I hate excuses, but I can tell you who loves them—Satan.

The enemy of your soul loves using carefully crafted excuses to cast doubt over the best of intentions. Just think about this: If you are stuck in the rut of average—unhealthy, not living the abundant life in Christ and not working to your full potential as a church leader—then the enemy is thrilled. He's getting his exercise doing a happy dance because you are compromised; you are not being as effective for the kingdom as you could be.

You know as well as I do that spiritual warfare is nothing to be taken lightly. What you may not realize is that your health is not exempt from the war. Satan will do anything he can to throw up roadblocks to your ability to live the life God has in store for you, and getting you to sabotage your own body is one of his most cunning tactics. As Jesus said: "The thief does not come, except to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

If Satan can steal your health, kill your drive and destroy your peace of mind, then your ability to do God's work well will be obliterated. Thankfully, there are things you can do to keep the enemy's schemes at bay. Start by surrendering your body to God, then stop making excuses.

The Most Common Excuses

When you make excuses for your weight or your poor health, you are reinforcing the very lies Satan wants you to believe. Those lies can be so subtle that you probably don't even

realize they are coming from him. You may have even grown up hearing them spoken over you, so you have accepted them as reality without giving a second thought to their true source.

Surprisingly, Satan isn't that creative in the excuses he feeds you and me. He doesn't have to be. Most of us are all too willing to latch on to the first excuse we can find to justify why our weight or our illness is beyond our control. Here are a few of the most common ones I've heard over the years:

- *I'm just big boned.*
- *I'm Italian/German/Irish/(pick a nationality)–I'm supposed to be fat.*
- *I don't like the taste of healthy foods.*
- *Obesity/diabetes/heart disease runs in my family. It must be genetic.*

That last one reminds me of a joke I heard recently: An overweight man goes to his family doctor for a checkup. When the doctor expresses concern over his weight, the man says, "Doc, the problem is that obesity runs in my family." To which the doctor replies, "No, the problem is that no one in your family runs!"

When you cut through all of the smoke screens and trick mirrors people use to justify their poor choices and bad behavior, most of the excuses out there can be filed under two main categories:

I don't have time and *I'm too tired*. Let's examine what really lies beneath each of these:

1. I don't have time—A lack of time is the No. 1 excuse people offer up for neglecting their health. Unfortunately for the excuse makers, it's never a valid claim. Now, don't misunderstand me. I know that we are all overwhelmingly busy.

There's always something else on the to-do list that has to be taken care of right away. But I would suggest to you that, no matter how busy your life is, you will always find time for what you consider to be most important.

Do you have time to get quiet before God each day? Do you have time to spend with your kids? Do you have time to connect with your staff about the weekend service? Of course you do, because you understand the importance of those things. When you understand the importance of being proactive about your health—and hopefully that won't be at the point of a life-or-death crisis for you—you will find the time to do it. Period. It's not a question of time; it's a question of priorities.

Still, those of us working in the ministry love the time excuse because it sounds so self-sacrificial. It allows us to play the holy victim. Part of our calling is to care for the needs of others. So, when we don't have time to eat well or work out because we are busy serving other people, well, that's just the price we pay for doing God's work, right? Wrong. This is nothing more than a righteous-sounding reason for taking our temple for granted.

In reality, failing to take the time to eat well and exercise today means that more of your time will be occupied by health concerns tomorrow. Waiting for doctor's appointments, having prescriptions filled and continuously checking your sugar levels and blood pressure take a lot of time out of your busy schedule. Those are precious hours spent away from your family and your ministry. Better to make time for healthy living now than to be forced to spend time (and money) dealing with health problems down the road.

Once I committed to making exercise and healthy eating part of my routine, I became addicted to the results. What it does for me physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually is hard to overstate.

Thanks to prioritizing my health, I'm now more efficient with my time and better able to help all of the other people I had been using as an excuse. I have a clearer mind and more energy to tackle every day's work. Healthy living is truly an investment of time rather than an expenditure—one that seems to multiply the hours exponentially. (Discover proven time management principles, you can start applying right away at .

2. I'm too tired—Poor food choices combined with a lack of physical activity are a recipe for constant lethargy, which makes this one a self-perpetuating excuse. If you are inclined to play the tired card, remember: The biggest reason you are so tired is because of your unhealthy lifestyle. The longer you subsist in this kind of lifestyle, the more tired you are going to be—which will make the excuse even harder to break free from. The only answer is to be intentional about taking a first step toward health. Make a healthy meal even though you are tired. Go for a walk even if you don't feel like it.

Over time, with consistent effort, you will have more and more energy and this excuse will begin to evaporate.

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