

Discovering Physical Fitness Through Your Faith

Faith really does change everything.

Faith in God changes the way we look at life, how we relate to others, what we say, think and do, and the way we think about ourselves. Once we realize our identity in Christ as a child of God we are instantly and profoundly changed from the inside out ... our faith is born.

Faith makes discovering health and fitness possible, not necessarily easy, but possible. Growing in faith is a journey, a daily decision and responsibility, as are the daily choices we make regarding our health and fitness. The journey to better health and well-being is rarely easy. We are frequently faced with too little time and not enough energy, and let's face it, exercise in particular is for many, a difficult and uncomfortable endeavor. We know exercise is good for us, we know it is important but why is it so hard to do? There is hope, with God there is always hope. With God there is always a way.

So where to begin? In Matthew 6:33, Jesus tells His followers to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be given to you." Seeking God first, above all else, is what Jesus commanded us to do. The kingdom of God Jesus speaks about is referring to His reign in our personal lives, in the lives of spiritually born again believers.

This maturity in Christ leads us to discover who we are in Him and to live by faith. The pursuit of fitness is an exercise in faith. The greater our faith, the great things God can and will do with our lives. *"Faith is not the belief that God will do what you want. It is the belief that God will do what is*

right" (Lucado, 1999). We need to seek Jesus for all the guidance we need in life. Jesus, through His presence and power within us, transforms us in such a way that we begin to live, love and move toward being whole and holy.

The New Life in Christ

"I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service of worship" (Rom. 12:1 MEV).

Jesus' invitation to His disciples to *follow in His footsteps* applies to us as well today. 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). Jesus calls all of us to pursue a lifestyle of good health and abundance, not one filled with chronic health problems. A biblically grounded health supporting diet and lifestyle, including plenty of physical activity, fresh air and water, a balanced diet and avoidance of poor health habits is a Christ-like lifestyle. Invite Jesus into your health and fitness goals and challenges and He will begin to grow your faith in these areas and help you overcome any real or perceived barriers to change.

For most of us, the bottom line is that change is something we fear and try to avoid because it is hard and uncomfortable. We know we need to lose weight and exercise more although the immediate effort and difficulty involved far outweighs any potential future benefits! Normal human behavior strives to keep us in our comfort zone so that immediate experience often outweighs future rewards. Most people say they don't exercise because they have no time, energy or motivation, despite voicing their belief that exercise is good for their health.

The good news is that God has a plan for your life, hope, future and prosperity. If we trust in God and allow the change

to grow us to become more like Jesus Christ in how we respond and act, then we are promised that all things will work together for good for those who love Him and keep His commandments. Change is great on the outside, but real change comes from the inside out. It's more than cosmetic; it's more than a skinnier version of the same old you. God wants you to be made new from the inside out—spirit, soul and body. God puts them in that order in his Word: *“May the God who gives us peace make you holy in every way and keep your whole being—spirit, soul, and body—free from every fault at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Thess. 5:23).

Remember, we were designed to move. We were not designed to live sedentary lives. A good way to begin your journey of fitness through faith is to first realize what Jesus commands of us. *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind”* (Rom. 12:2), and *“with God all things are possible”* (Matt. 19:26). If we truly believe we are spirit filled, Christ-empowered people that are walking out and living in His power, then we can accomplish His purposes by His power. {eoa}

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