

Essential Ingredients for Your Faith-Led Health Regimen

Note: This is the second of a two-part series. [Click here for part one.](#)

A recent study published in the *European Journal of Social Psychology* sought to determine how long it takes to form a new habit, like exercise or healthy eating. The study examined the habits of 96 subjects for 12 weeks.

Subjects chose one new habit they personally wanted to work on for 12 weeks and reported each day whether or not they performed the new behavior and whether or not the behavior felt automatic. New habits included consuming more water daily and starting a running program.

At the end of 12 weeks, researchers analyzed the data and found that it takes about two months to form a new behavior and for it to become automatic. So the first step to developing a habit of fitness is to write out a two-month schedule of how you plan to increase your physical activity level day-by-day, week-by-week. There are several good Christian fitness resources available to help you including *Faithful Workouts and Praise Moves*.

Make a commitment to the Lord. Do the best you can to take care of your body. *"What? Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God, and that you are not your own? You were bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:19-20, MEV).* God created our bodies, these earthen vessels, so that we might glorify Him in all that we do. It is our duty as followers of Christ to care for earthen vessels.

Realize that your body is not your own. As a Christian, it

belongs to Jesus 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. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God"* (Rom. 12:1-2, MEV). Our identity in Christ gives us the strength, courage and discipline to live a Christlike lifestyle. Seek Jesus in all you do!

Assess your readiness to begin. *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths."* (Proverbs 3:5-6, MEV). Exercise is extremely safe for everyone, as long as you go slow and listen to your body. If you are unsure of your current health status, it may be advisable to get a physical or at least check with your doctor before starting an exercise program. Know what your risks are and what you need to work on.

One step at a time; life is a long journey. *"Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me. For I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls"* (Matt. 11:29, MEV). Jesus was physically fit; His ministry and survival demanded it. Jesus walked virtually everywhere, often out of His way so He could share the Word of God with others. As followers of Jesus, we should all be inspired and encouraged to follow Jesus in His footsteps, walking with Him in our journey of faith and fitness.

Become active daily, exercise at least three times a week, more if you can. *"I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me"* (Phil. 4:13, MEV).

Sedentary behavior increases our chances of developing an array of chronic diseases and conditions that will kill us prematurely, even if we exercise. A recent article published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* on the effects of a

sedentary lifestyle found that after analyzing 47 studies of sedentary behavior, the benefits achieved from exercise and regular physical activity alone may not always outweigh the detrimental effects of a sedentary lifestyle, especially when considering prolonged periods of sitting. So the more exercise and daily physical activity you get, the lower the impact of sedentary behavior, the healthier you become.

Eat a health-supporting diet! “My soul will be satisfied as with marrow and fatness” (Ps. 63:5). “Therefore, whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). The Bible is full of helpful advice on eating healthy. As a general rule, our eating habits will be dictated by the patterns of what we have been exposed to in our lifetimes. If we are Christ followers, then the patterns of our eating should be guided by the Word of God.

The Bible encourages us to care for our bodies, and eating a health-supporting diet is part of that. Food provides life-sustaining fuel for our bodies. Food should not be used purely for pleasure or solace. A health-supporting diet should be plentiful in life-sustaining foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables, grains, legumes, lean meats and dairy products. Try to avoid eating junk foods as much as possible, namely those that are highly refined and processed, high in fat and calories and low in nutrients. Eat to glorify God.

Rest. “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me. For I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt. 11:28-29). God commands us to rest and care for our minds, bodies and spirits. Changes in health behaviors, including eating better and exercise, have to incorporate rest and relaxation to be successful. Incorporate daily devotionals into daily physical activity and rest periods. True rest (mind, body and spirit) is found by going to Jesus, surrendering our burdens and trusting in Him. “*And He said, ‘My Presence will go with you, and I will give you*

rest'” (Ex. 33:14, MEV).

Keep praying and saying to yourself, “Exercise (physical activity) is something I want to do, I need to do,” then you are on your way to a healthier future. *“Our thoughts become our words and our words become our actions”* (Gandhi). Having faith in God truly changes everything. Knowing the Word of God for ourselves, as well as a personal relationship with God and through His Son Jesus, deepens our faith to have freedom to live the life we were called to, a life of health and abundance, hope and joy.

A Christ-centered life is one that is abundant in the spirit of good health and well-being and in glorifying God in all we do. Make your body the best it can be, but accept the body style that God has given you. {eoa}

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