

Inviting Holy Spirit to Invade Your Every Workout

In the immortal book, *My Heart—Christ's Home*, author Robert Boyd Munger invites the reader to imagine what it would be like to invite Jesus into your home.

Munger symbolically equates the comforts and familiarity of our home with that of our heart, where Jesus lives when we invite Him in. The story is a powerful reminder of Paul's message in Ephesians 3:17 (NLT) "Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong."

Munger paints in vivid detail (emotionally and metaphorically) the experiences felt after inviting Jesus into his home (or heart) and then walking throughout each room (or emotion) of his house and reflecting on what he feels versus what Christ desires for him along the way. In the living room, we prepare to meet Christ daily; in the dining room, we examine together what appetites should and should not control us; and finally, the closets in our lives that Christ can help us clean out are exposed. Munger's simple and profound book gives us a view of how Christ wants control over all aspects of our lives, including our internal and external motives for exercising in and outside the gym.

Created to Glorify God

God created you and me for a purpose, for His own glory. In Isaiah, God says, "I have created him for my glory" (Is. 43:7). God tells us in Scripture that we were created to glorify Him, and that should be our purpose in all that we do in life. In 1 Corinthians 10:31, the Apostle Paul reminds us "therefore, whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God." We were created to glorify God,

and as believers, should strive to glorify God in all we do, in all aspects of our lives. So how then do we praise God and glorify Him through exercise?

First and foremost, we need to realize that as followers of Jesus, our bodies are not our own. In fact, they are temples in which the Holy Spirit resides” “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?” (1 Cor 6:19). The word became flesh—God took on a human body. If we believe our bodies are temples of God, earthen vessels housing the Holy Spirit, we should have a very unique and specific focus when we plan out all of life’s activities, including exercise.

In Ephesians 4:22-24, we are reminded to “put off the former way of life in the old nature, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that you put on the new nature, which was created according to God in righteousness and true holiness.” Since our bodies do matter to our faith, let us always be reminded to put God first in all aspects of our fitness and exercise plans. Fitness is not all about looks, so don’t believe the lies the enemy tells us day in and day out about how we should look. God loves us from the inside out not outside in. When we receive Jesus into our heart our lives are dramatically transformed, from the inside out. We reflect this new grace in all that we do as we leave the old life behind (habits and patterns) and walk in the glorious light of God.

Instrument of Service vs. Ornament of Desire (or Attraction)

What does it mean to glorify God? How do we glorify God with our bodies? It means to bring Him honor through what we say, how we act and how we think. To glorify God means to acknowledge His glory and to value it above all things. To glorify God means we have a heartfelt gratitude for all He has done and continues to do for us. We glorify God through our

faith (trust). We glorify God through our love. We glorify God through our desire to obey Him (our obedience). We glorify God through our desire to know Him. We glorify Him through treating and respecting our bodies as instruments of service to Him versus ornaments of attraction for others. God desires that we treat our bodies with respect and honor Him by caring for these earthen vessels that He has provided for us to glorify Him.

Checking Motives

The widely held belief that our bodies are our own to do with whatever pleases us is partially ingrained in the deeply fallen world we live in.

Everyone has a goal and reason for wanting to exercise and get in shape. For some, it is purely selfish. Others struggle with an incredible lack of desire but know they have to do it for a less selfish reason: their health.

Regardless of the reasons to join a gym: to feel better, look better, lose weight, get in shape or other, as a follower of Jesus (committed to living out, walking out all you do for Him) our goals and motivation and how we carry ourselves in all we do should reflect a life being lived out for Jesus. Going back to some of the thoughts and feelings of walking through a home with Jesus (the messes, the poor choices, things we don't want to share, and more.) how do we carry ourselves when we leave our homes and take Jesus with us everywhere else we go, including to the gym? It is now Christ living out His life in you. Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal 2:20). This is fact. Glorify God in all you do, in and out of the gym.

Starting Centered and Focused—in Him

A good way to prepare for a workout is to pray ahead of time for strength, focus and protection.

Nothing should draw our attention away from Jesus. Any object of extreme devotion apart from God is a false God. In Exodus 20:3 we are reminded "You shall have no other gods before Me." An idol is any person, object or activity you give a higher priority in your life than a relationship with God. An idol can be your home, your job, a vehicle, a relationship or even your body. An idol can be anything that you do that consumes all your energy and time, especially away from time with God.

God says He's a jealous God. He wants our time and attention. In the broken, fallen world in which we live, society glorifies the perfect looking body. The drive to look good at all costs contributes to a variety of psychological disorders, including; athletic amenorrhea and muscular dysmorphia. Don't be fooled by what the world says; be driven and inspired by the word of God, the truth.

Jesus at the Gym

In Revelation 3:20, Christ pictures Himself as standing at the door and knocking. He promises to come in and dine with anyone that opens the door. We are sanctified by faith in Christ (Acts 26:18). "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality, that each one of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor (1 Thess. 4:3-4)

Paul writes to the Roman Christians, "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).

Paul states that "You were washed, you were sanctified" (1 Cor 6:11a). As believers and as followers of Jesus, we have a responsibility to continue to perfect this holiness and grow in it day in and day out in all that we do. We carry the light

of Christ with us everywhere we go, even into the gym. So we dedicate our body to the Lord each and every day in all that we do. The word “dedicate” means that something is set aside for God. Sanctification is God’s responsibility, but dedication is our work, in and outside of the gym.

Christ-Centered Training Principles

- Instrument vs. Ornament
- Our Bodies in a Fallen World
- Holiness and Wholeness
- What is the fruit of a life submitted to God?
- We become like Him; one of God’s goals is to shape our character so that we will manifest His kindness, mercy, love, purity, wisdom etc. to all we encounter.
- Leaving it at the foot of the cross; Exercise for Him
- Avoid prideful thoughts and actions
- Be respectful and courteous
- Work hard
- Keep eyes focused
- Dress modestly
- Be the light at the gym
- Choose the right workout partners
- Choose your workout facilities carefully
- Pray before working out
- Keep Christ at the center

Know Your Boundaries

The following are taken from Steve Arterburn and Kenny Luck’s *Every Man, God’s Man*:

- We must plan ahead.
- We must know the environments that produce risk.
- We must know the strengths and strategies of our enemies.

- We must know weaknesses and install boundaries that demonstrate our awareness of them.
- We must respect the clear boundaries and warnings put forth in Scripture.
- Clearly see the value of certain limits to our freedom, limits that produce a greater good in our lives and the lives of others.
- We can't just show up and expect to conquer temptations and direct attracts against our faith.
- We have to train ourselves in spiritual disciplines.
- We have to plan for temptation and think through dangerous scenarios ahead of time.
- We have to form a network of support that follows us wherever we go.
- We have to cooperate with others who support our spiritual goals.

Pre-Workout Prayer

Lord, thank you for all you do for me and those around me. I know I am fully blessed. Lord, today I come to You and ask that You strengthen my will and desire to glorify my body, Your temple, in all that I do today. I know there are times when I exercise for selfish and prideful reasons and times when I have not honored You while working out. I know that no problem is too big or too small for you to handle, and I need to turn this day, this workout, over to you to help me with.

Lord, I just need to be able to focus. I need your help to visualize the reasons I need to exercise and care for my body and what I need to do to be successful. I need you to help me feel more confident going into my training session and learn

to relax so I can concentrate on glorifying you in all I do. Lord, please help the people around me to understand that I need to focus and that I'm working out for you, not for them or for myself.

Also, Lord, help me when I walk into the gym. Let there be a peace that flows over me, spiritual and physical protection so I will not be injured and that I will have the strength to overcome any and all spiritual warfare I may encounter. Lord, please let me walk in each room or area of the gym knowing that I represent and glorify you in all that I do. I pray, Lord, for Your guiding hand as I work out today and every day, and I ask for You to guide me in all that I do to help strengthen and maintain my body, keeping it holy and sanctified for your glory.

I dedicate my entire body (muscles, bones and organs)—every part of my body to You, Lord, as a living sacrifice to You as an instrument of service to Your kingdom.

Thank You for being here in this time when I feel a bit overwhelmed. Thank you for always being there and allowing me to rely on You. Praise your name. Amen. {eoa}