

The H.O.N.O.R System: 5 Keys to Prioritizing Fitness

I conducted a survey earlier this year. My aim was to find out what, among women (Christian women, more specifically), are the biggest obstacles that hinder them from working out and eating right.

It will probably come as no surprise to you that half of the participants answered that “time” was the biggest hindrance. Twenty-five percent answered “kids” (or “KIDS!!!”), 15 percent confessed a general lack of motivation, and 10 percent said they were too exhausted to even think about exercising.

Next, I asked the respondents what their motivations are for wanting to be fit. Again, the results were not surprising:

- 50 percent wanted to **be healthy** for their kids/family.
- 20 percent wanted to feel more **confident**.
- 20 percent wanted to **look better**.
- 5 percent want to do a better job at **keeping up with their kids**.
- 5 percent want to be a **good example** for their kids.

What I *did* find surprising was the absence of one particular motivator, the most important one, if I may be so bold: *to honor God with my body*.

This survey was the catalyst for a message I’ll be delivering at my church’s women’s retreat next weekend. I blogged recently on the distinction between conviction and condemnation, and I wish to reiterate that though this talk may be hard hitting for some in the audience (and in the blogosphere!), it is certainly not my intention to demoralize or criticize.

On the contrary, I want to uplift, encourage, and inspire

women to embrace God's plan for their bodies by surrendering *all* to Him: their eating habits, their excuses, their schedules, their self-consciousness, etc.

Being challenged and urged out of our comfort zones isn't easy, and heaven knows it pains our egos. But in the end, it only strengthens and matures us in ways we never could have foreseen or imagined. But we must first cast aside our pride and let the Word of God and His Spirit minister to our hearts and, if needed, **transform our minds**.

My foundational verse for marrying faith and fitness is 1 Corinthians 6:19-20:

"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." (MEV, emphasis mine).

So, as you have probably inferred, the ". System" I've devised is in honor (no pun intended) of the latter part of the aforementioned passage. Below are five keys that I have found indispensable and truly life-changing when it comes to placing the Lord at the center of my fitness. I'm convinced that when He is Number One, all the workout/eating right obstacles you can think of will fall by the wayside, and more than that, you'll feel **more motivated than ever**.

H: Have Time with God Every Single Day

Think of your time with the Lord as a shower for your spirit and soul. Just as the accumulation of dirt and sweat and germs makes us filthy every day, so too does the muck of the world that enters through our eyes and ears, and even our hearts and minds when we allow sinful thoughts to enter in.

Our souls (mind, will, and emotions) are constantly bombarded, no matter how hard we try to guard them, by filth that builds

up over time and corrodes our motivation and desire to please God with our every action. His Word is the cleansing bubble bath, if you will, that we need to wash away the grime and begin each day fresh and invigorated to live life on purpose for the Lord.

*“For a day in Your courts is better
than a thousand elsewhere.*

*I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.*

*For the Lord God is a sun and shield;
the Lord will give favor and glory,
for no good thing will He withhold
from the one who walks uprightly.” (Psalm 84:10-11, MEV).*

0: Obey God's Word

When you renew your mind with God's Word and refresh your spirit by learning and meditating on His everlasting love for you, His Spirit will begin to move and whisper within your heart. It will encourage you to prioritize the things that matter most, such as spending more time with your family and your Savior and taking care of His dwelling place—that is, your body.

Here are a few practical tips when it comes leading a healthy lifestyle through everyday obedience:

Give yourself the same courtesy you would give others: The way we speak to ourselves can hold us back or move us forward. Don't marinate in negative thoughts. We are all beloved children of God. Each believer in Christ has the power of the Holy Spirit within him or her. We are all part of a mighty kingdom. Marinate in *that*! When your thoughts are full of optimism, hope, confidence, gratitude, and blessings, so shall your life be.

Don't make food an idol: It is very common to “overthink” food. Sadly, we give it a lot of power. It can generate

feelings of worry, stress, and guilt ... and who needs that? We are always searching for the next best diet or magic pill. We put a great deal of hope, energy, and faith into these fads when our time would be much better spent giving it to God. Don't let food become your idol! Stop overthinking it. Keep it simple by choosing the food God created for our bodies. And if you want a cookie from time to time, that's absolutely fine! But don't let it consume your thoughts. Don't waste energy on guilt. Food does not have power unless we give it power.

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21, MEV).

N: Negate the Lies of the Tongue

I hear many women complain about their appearances. From "flabby triceps" to "thunder thighs," no one seems to have anything positive to say about themselves. The good news is, God has plenty of good things to say! (Jeremiah 29:11; Psalm 139:14). I believe that if we could replace our complaints and curses with praise and thanksgiving, we wouldn't have the physical hang-ups many of us wrestle with. If you find that the last few pounds you need to lose are just "too stubborn to leave" or that your knees just "can't ever seem to feel right" while you work out, think back on how you've been talking; you may have inadvertently placed a curse upon your progress with your own tongue.

So what's the remedy? Praise! Begin praising the Lord for redeeming you, for giving you a second birth by virtue of His Son, for blessing you with gifts, friends, family, and for everything He's done, is doing, and will do in your life. These life-giving words agree with the Word of God and will replace the spirit of dissatisfaction, anxiety, and insecurity with assurance, peace, and confidence.

Hebrews 13:15 says, "Through Him, then, let us continually offer to God the sacrifice of praise, which is the fruit of

our lips, giving thanks to His name.” The key word in that verse is, “*continually*.” No matter the circumstance, no matter your feeling at this moment, praise God with your lips and taste the delicious fruit it produces!

0: Optimize Your Time

There are dozens, perhaps hundreds of ways to overcome the “I don’t have enough time” excuse and exercise, from aerobics to Zumba—even boot throwing, which turns out to be quite a popular sport in Finland, according to a trivia game I played recently. But lately, mounting research is showing that the ideal form of exercise is something known as “.”—“high intensity interval training.”

A . workout alternates between intense bursts of activity and fixed periods of less-intense activity, or even complete rest. An example is sprinting for one minute and then jogging or walking for two minutes. Repeat that three-minute interval five times for a very efficient, highly effective 15-minute workout.

The benefits of . training are many:

- Little to no equipment required
- Short duration
- Provides health benefits you simply cannot get from regular aerobics, such as a tremendous boost in human growth hormone (HGH), aka the “fitness hormone”
- Leads to significant reductions in total abdominal, trunk and visceral fat, but also can give you significant increases in fat-free mass and aerobic power
- Improves cardiovascular endurance
- Promotes weight loss without muscle loss
- Boosts metabolism thanks to the increased production of HGH

High-intensity exercise, like CrossFit, is tough. But like you read above, *the rewards make it more than worth it.*

R: Repeat! (And Respect the Process)

Show yourself grace in your fitness journey. There will be days, I assure you, when a lack of motivation or perceived lack of ten or fifteen minutes will easily dissuade you from working out or cooking a healthy meal. Don't let the enemy condemn you and tell you you've failed or that you're displeasing God. God loves you, no matter what, but because He loves you, He wants you to be healthy.

On the days your diet is full of sugar, soda, or processed foods, and the only exercise you get is carrying in the groceries, thank God for His grace in loving you with an everlasting love, in guiding you to be fit and strong, and then ask Him to help you get back on track tomorrow.

"Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ... For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities nor powers, neither things present nor things to come ..." (Romans 8:33, 38, MEV).

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