

Why You're Never Too Far Gone for Faith or Fitness

If you've read my book or followed me for a while, you probably know I'm quite fond of drawing parallels between faith and fitness, between lifting weights in the gym and bearing the burdens of life, between cheering on our friends during a workout and encouraging them during life's trials and storms.

A few of my faith/fitness analogies include:

- Warm up is to workout as this earthly life is to eternal life.
- Resistance training is to body as trials are to spirit.
- Healthy food is to body as God's Word is to soul.

Recently, I've made yet another comparison between our faith and fitness journeys, one inspired by the multiple passersby at our CrossFit gym who stop in, see the high-intensity workout underway, the sweat dripping, the weights hitting the floor, the music blaring and the adrenaline pumping. They definitely *seem* interested, even excited by what they see, but their bright eyes are quickly dimmed by thoughts of fear and doubt creeping into their minds.

"I need to get in shape before I do this," the curious spectators often say. I try to convince them that they can start CrossFit *any* time, that it's mine and the other coaches' pleasure—not to mention our job—to help them get in shape and that everyone trains at a different level and every workout is scalable.

Sometimes hope and confidence replace the worries and uncertainties, and the anxious onlookers become dedicated CrossFitters before week's end. But some continue to insist that they're "too old," "too fat," "too slow," "too lazy,"

“too weak” to stick around. They scurry away, defeated before they’ve begun.

This brings me to a fourth analogy:

- Fearful onlooker is to CrossFit as “unworthy” unbeliever is to Christianity.

You’ve most likely heard said or sung the phrase “Come just as you are.” It means that no matter how dirty we are inwardly, no matter how polluted our minds are or reprehensible our pasts, we can come before the throne of God without having done so much as washing the metaphorical filth from our hands.

There are no prerequisites for becoming a Christian. You don’t have to know the call letters of your local Christian radio station or be able to recite the lyrics to “Amazing Grace.” You don’t even have to know John 3:16 by heart. You just have to know three things:

- You’re a sinner.
- You need a Savior.
- That Savior is Jesus.

Then it’s up to you what to do with that knowledge and conviction.

The hesitant observers who stop by CrossFit have the choice to either walk out the door and try to forget what they’ve seen and felt, or take a step of faith and embark upon a life-changing journey, one that’s guaranteed to be tough but also more rewarding and full of joy than one could ever imagine.

For non-believers faced with the most important decision of their lives, the choice is often between continuing to blatantly lead a life of sin, selfishness and humanistic pride, and humbling themselves, acknowledging that they, like all of us, are sinners in need of grace; all they need do is confess they need Jesus Christ and then accept Him as Savior,

King, Healer and Friend.

“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved” (Rom. 10:9-10, NLT).

I love to see people come to embrace, enjoy and, for lack of a better phrase, “become addicted” to CrossFit, just as I love to watch new Christians fall more and more in love with Jesus. Those who have swallowed their pride, banished their fears, filled up their water bottles and laced up their tennis shoes for their first CrossFit workout have accomplished a tremendous feat.

One of the hardest things we do as human beings, I think, is explore the seas around the cozy-cool Island of Me. Trusting a strange new coach to help you reach your fitness goals, surrounding yourself with sweaty people who cheer you on like you’re an Olympic sprinter, performing exercises you haven’t attempted since your afternoons spent on an elementary school playground when you were seven—it all resides on a nearby island that seems miles and miles away. But you can get there. The seas are fair; the natives are friendly. All you have to do is trust the captain and the crew he’s provided to see you there safely.

I’d like to encourage you not to let anyone—most of all not the devil—tell you you’re too far gone to get fit. Remember, the enemy comes to steal, kill and destroy, and if he can keep you from eating right and exercising regularly, he’s gained a small victory in your life (John 10:10). If starting an exercise program seems frightening to you, pray and ask God to replace your fears and trepidation with peace about how you should proceed.

Everybody is different, just as every soul before it comes to

know Jesus is different. Some have old injuries—old aches and pains and scars they're frequently reminded of. Others have been worn down by poor choices, bad habits and ongoing stress. But just as God yearns to redeem and sanctify your soul and spirit, He wants your body to prosper too. Ask Him today to help you become fitter both spiritually *and* physically.

"Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well" (3 John 1:2, NIV).

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