

More than a Health "Kick"

A Spiritual Training Program

1 Timothy 4:7-10

⁷ Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. ⁸ For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. ⁹ This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance. ¹⁰ That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe.

Instead of occupying himself with fruitless activities and "fables," Timothy is urged to keep on disciplining himself toward godliness, to keep on seeking to please God in all his activities.

1. What are your thoughts concerning the concept of exercising your spiritual life in the same way you would exercise your physical body?

Why do you think Paul thought it was important?

† Philippians 3:7-8, 12-14

Christianity doesn't deny the body as a negative. The Bible celebrates the body and sexuality and food and wine and everything we enjoy because of the body. It's not like the eastern religions that deny the body and think it unimportant.

Paul holds up spiritual training because as important as physical exercise is and it is, our spiritual life is so vastly more important and with pay offs that are not worth comparing.

2. Take a moment to estimate how much time you spend each week on health and exercise. And how much time do you spend in "spiritual training?"

Y Exercise

Y Body & Skin care

Y Healthy Eating?

† Worship

† Devotional time & Bible Study

† Prayer

This Bible study is written as a practical application of the importance of being in the Word. At the Renewal is will follow a speaker & sermon focusing on that importance.

Therefore, we touch only briefly on the Gospel and Biblical encouragement for a sanctified life.

Mainly, we will focus on developing a personal training program for our spiritual life.

People who run races, whether they are a 5K, marathon, or triathlon, often put a lot of work and effort into training for their race. Even if they aren't in it to "win" the race, training still helps the participant enjoy the race and have a good experience.

3. What are some things that get in the way of putting time and energy into "spiritual training?"

Probably many of the same things that get in the way of our exercising!

4. With physical training, you have a certain goal you want to achieve usually; I'm going to lose 10 pounds or be able to run or play with my kids or grandkids without cardiac arrest.

What does the world hold out as goals for you life or things you should pursue?

Success at work. Wealth. Power.

5. The Bible uses the picture of the Christian life being a race. What is the purpose of this race? Why are we running it? How should we run it?

† Hebrews 12:1-3

† Ephesians 2:10 *This defines the race marked us for us, good works we are to do.*

† 1 Corinthians 9:26 *Intentionality*

This is a pretty important race. So it seems our training program for it should take priority, as Paul suggests in 1 Timothy 4.

6. Why do we get in Spiritual Shape?

Consider the incredible "flabbiness" of Israel after leaving Egypt. What happened to them in the desert? How did they react?

† Exodus 16:2-3 *They complain and want to go back to Egypt and the food of Egypt.*

† Exodus 17:1-4 *The people suggest God is doing this to kill them. (Felt that about a few coaches!)*

† Exodus 32:1-6 *They turned quickly to a god that would fit their conceptions. A much easier god to deal with.*

† Numbers 13:26-32, 14:5-10 *Refused to go into the Promised Land. Ironically they didn't think they were strong enough physically when it really was that they were not strong enough in their faith. (i.e. trusting God)*

Fatigue makes cowards of us all. When we're not in shape and we are tested, it's so much easier to just give up.

7. Have you ever noticed a difference in how you are able to handle difficulties and stresses in your life when you are regularly “in the Word” as opposed to when you haven’t made as much time for study?

8. In 1 Kings 18, Elijah is given a major victory over the prophets of Baal. God sends fire to engulf a water drenched altar on Mount Carmel. But now Ahab and Jezebel are even more determined to kill him. What does God do for Elijah? Why?

Read 1 Kings 18:44-46

It’s about 25 miles, almost a Marathon!

To show Ahab the power of God? Or to show Elijah that the Lord is his strength – to give him courage for what is to come? Probably both.

The very next day Jezebel would threaten Elijah. And what would Elijah do? He would run again, in fear, and without the power of God. He would run across Israel and then across Judah and then into the desert and lay down to basically die! That’s where his human strength left him until an angel gave him some energy bars! I think the message for Elijah was that it wouldn’t matter if all of Ahab’s army was after you, they can’t touch you! He knew that later when a son of Ahab send army troops to bring Elijah and Elijah doesn’t run but those soldiers die!

We are so tied to God and his power. Without him all our plans fail. And particularly our spiritual training plans. We cannot think we are going to do this and jump in and forget the source of our power and life!

9. Do you know any “full time” runners? What is their attitude about running?

(Use this question as the transition. It will be easy to want to do better and be law motivated. As a result we may start strong but will not measure up and may end up quitting in frustration or burning out trying to keep whatever schedule we have set.)

Training for a marathon is work. It hurts and it’s tough. For people who choose to train, it’s something they want to do. And if you talk to runners, they get to a point where they long to run. They love it. They enjoy it and want to be out there running.

This is not a guilt motivated! *It's not "I need to do better," but "I'm free. So let's run!!!"*
The law is not an overlord or win at all costs coach any longer, we have Jesus as our victor.
Now we can run and enjoy the run, because we have the victory!

I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free. **Psalm 119:32**

We often think of keeping the law as a burden and an obstacle to our desires. But we are free; not running in fear or from God. The commands of God are like a beautiful trail that cuts through thorn bushes and brush and rocky ground—and we can with joy run on the trail because we are free!

- ³³ It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect.
³⁴ He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he enables me to stand on the heights.
³⁵ He trains my hands for battle; my arms can bend a bow of bronze.
³⁶ You give me your shield of victory; you stoop down to make me great.
³⁷ You broaden the path beneath me, so that my ankles do not turn. **2 Samuel 22:33-37**

Run uphill and see what kind of shape you are in and how hard it is. Yet a deer runs up hills with such ease. With God we can run up any obstacle. He cares for us so that even our path is such that we will not sprain an ankle, and what is more, HIS victory is our shield!

So no guilt training, let's look at ways we can get out there and start running!

10. Let's take a look at some things you can do to develop a better "exercise schedule" for your spiritual life.

Marathon Training - Your Training Schedule

This section is an overview of the things we will be considering when creating our own Spiritual Training Schedule during the break out to follow.

Set Goals - *If you're going to run a marathon, you need to set goals. Not just the final goal of running 26.2 miles, but benchmark goals to help you achieve various levels of success as you work toward the final distance.*

- Υ What are your benchmarks? What short term improvements would you like to work toward?
- Υ What is your long term goal? Where would you like your faith life to be eventually?

This could be as simple as wanting to get into a Bible study or making devotional time during the week.

It could involve your emotional or knowledge level. You might have a goal to learn your Old Testament more. Or find more strength and comfort in the Lord and "go to Him" for support more regularly.

The Right Shoes - *With anything, the right equipment is essential. With running, it's the shoes that will carry you on the road and across the finish line.*

Υ What equipment will you need:

- † Hebrews 12:1 - *This is about what you will not need! Don't bring along weights, the refrigerator or piano! We strive for light shoes and clothing and bikes and equipment. Get rid of sin, quit picking it up!*
- † Ephesians 6:10-18

Nutrition and Hydration - *Our bodies aren't going anywhere without the fuel we need. "Athletes are like machines and every machine needs good fuel."*

Υ What fuels our faith?

Υ How do we re-hydrate?

Training – make the commitment!

Running - *Step one, get out there and start running. Start small. Some days are shorter runs. Other days are longer runs. But the only way to prepare your body for the marathon is to get it going.*

- Υ What opportunities do you have to “be in the Word?” At home? In your church? With friends?
- Sunday Worship
 - Bible Studies
 - Devotional Time
 -

Υ Which of these opportunities do you want to commit to?

Start small. Do something and succeed. Rather than trying to do everything and fail. Start jogging before you try to run 10 miles.

Some days should be more “in depth” time in the Word.

Other days will be lighter, chances to “touch base” with God.

Strength & Cross Training - *Working out your other muscles further strengthens your body and ability to perform.*

Υ What opportunities do you have to serve and share your faith?

- With your family?
- In your church?
- At school?
- In your community?
-

Again. Start small. Often, much of our service is with our own family. Laundry and lunches are a huge service to your children as well family devotions and prayer. Besides all that you do to help your husband. Taking care of him and his needs has a huge impact on his ministry.

But if you have the opportunity and time to also serve outside your family, that is definitely something to take advantage of. And service comes in lots of forms, from watching someone's kids so they can run errands, to making meals, to mowing someone's lawn or volunteering at a shelter.

Rest Days - *"Rest is critical to your recovery and injury prevention efforts, so don't ignore rest days."*

‡ Set aside time to pray, to turn to your Lord and Savior. Cast your cares on him.

Prayer time and rest in the Lord is vital. This is our chance to talk to him. Make time for this. Put it on the schedule so you don't forget.

Training Partner - *Overwhelming scientific evidence shows exercising with a friend or in groups generates motivation not found in working out alone and will help people not only meet but exceed their goals. You always do better and run faster with a partner. When you're alone, it's always easier to hit the snooze or decide "not to go" today.*

‡ What did God do for Elijah? *1 Kings 19:15-16*

‡ What did God do for Moses? *Exodus 4:14-15*

‡ What did God do for Barnabas?

‡ Can you think of other "work out buddies" in the Bible?

‡ Who else does God give to encourage us in our race? *Hebrews 12:1*

‡ Who do you know? Who would be a good "work out buddy?" Even for just one or two of your goals?

‡ Who's going to e-mail you in a week and ask if you've done these steps?

‡ Can you Skype with one of these ladies here? Do online studies together?

- *I found 3 other ladies who wanted to join me for a monthly Bible study. We meet the 2nd Tuesday of every month at a coffee shop and study together. I thrive on the time in the Word with these ladies. And they'll know if I didn't do my homework. ☺*
- *Or find a prayer partner. Share your prayers and record the outcomes.*

Develop a Training Schedule - *Actually plan out your runs, cross training, and rest days. Those training for marathons and other races, create a schedule that starts 3-6 months out sometimes. It helps them stay focused and gives them a way to measure their progress.*

Υ The Training Page. Now make it a reality. What are you going to do?

Break out Time. Give ladies 15-20 minutes to work on their Training Schedule.

Υ *Even if they won't have anything concrete by the time the session is over, this will give them time to consider their options. Or find a "work out buddy" among the ladies here.*

Υ *Some ladies may already have a full schedule. They will be a great encouragement and resource to others. Encourage them to help and offer advice.*

Coming Back Together to wrap up the study:

You may offer to discuss any thoughts on the "schedules" and/or training partners. Or just jump into the last two questions.

Suffering - "No pain, no gain."

11. God is involved in this training. He's the coach. And coaches bring suffering. Why do coaches make their runners work hard? Why do they push runners to pain and exhaustion?

When you have suffering, it's all a part of the training.

Closing Thought

In 490B.C. the Greeks were being invaded by the mighty Persian Empire. The Athenians faced the Persian army at Marathon and though outnumbered won a great victory.

The story goes that Pheidippides was sent to run with the news to Athens. This was after he had been the messenger to Sparta and fought in the battle. He ran. And when he got to Athens he shouted out one word, Nikomen (we get the name Nike from it), "We have won!" And then he died.

Somewhere along the line people looked at that and thought, "That's a good idea! I wonder what will happen if I run 26 miles?" The Great Theologian Bill Cosby would say this is an example of what he termed "the Brain Damage" we all suffer from!

We say life is like a Marathon and we say true. It's not a sprint. It is a race that if run, and run right, is tough and grueling. What is more, we run with a cross and that isn't easy. Finally in the end, with a broken body, we will collapse and die. But when we do, we can

have that same word on our lips. Nikomen, We have won! And we have. Jesus is our family, he won for us, as surely as the victory of the Athenian army belonged to every person of Athens. His victory is ours, we are on his team, and we have won.

We train, not because it means we will not struggle or have pain. We will. It may be almost beyond enduring where every inch may become a battle. But we train so that we are rooted in this truth. So that we can run and be empowered by God to run as long or as far as he wishes. We train so that we can shout to everyone we meet and at the very end have it be our last word, "Victory in Christ!" Luther, in the great struggles, would say Vivit, He lives!

Christianity isn't about our victory and strength over every trouble in life but ultimately and finely it's about Jesus' victory and his victory for me. That is what sets our hearts free. It's why we run and why we run with him as often as we can!

Close with Prayer

Books and Studies

If you're looking for further reading and study on this topic, here are a few books I studied and drew from in the writing of this study.

Pursuing Godliness; 1 Timothy by Elizabeth George

A Woman After God's Own Heart Series. Harvest House Publishers. Eugene, OR. 2001.

A Bible study on the book of 1 Timothy. 155 pages

Fix Your Eyes of Jesus; Running the Race Marked Out for You by Kirkie Morrissey

Faithful Woman; Cook Communications Ministries. Colorado Springs, CO. 2001

A Twelve week Bible study. 155 pages. (Chapter 7 on prayer really gets away from Scripture. So read that one with lots of discernment. Otherwise, the rest of the study can be very encouraging.)

Running the Race of Faith; 8 week devotional journal by Pam Aussenhus

Living A Live of Faith and Purpose.

Concordia Publishing House. Saint Louis, MO. 2001

175 pages