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INTRODUCTION

There are many children who don't know how to care for their body and they are overweight, unhealthy and lack energy. For the first time in history, the life expectancy of children is less than that of their parents. What is even sadder than the health problems facing children, is that so many do not know Jesus. They don't know that He is there for them.

I want to make sure you are not one of those children. When you finish this course you will know how to effectively exercise and eat healthy, you will know Jesus better and, my hope, is that you will be super excited to tell others about Him.

So here is how to best use all the resources:

1. Commit to doing our workout videos at least three times a week (Daily would be even better!) We recommend doing a workout even on the days that you are not reading from the curriculum. There are currently nine exercise videos that you can choose from. They are between 15 minutes to 25 minutes long. Before you begin exercising I advise that you consult with a physician. Also, read Appendix A: Exercise Fact Sheet found on page 120.
2. You can set aside 3 days a week to do the material and each day do a faith, fitness and food section OR you can choose to do all three sections in one day.
3. Within your readings, you will be directed each day to watch short video clips. Some of the video clips will require you to get up and move. On the days that you will be studying from this program, wear clothes and shoes that allow you to move. Please make an effort to do the **BURST (Building Up Really Strong Teens)** videos during your readings. The plan is you do a BURST (7 min. Short workout), Workout Video (a complete workout), or a Fitness Test each day! It's so important for our emotional health that we get moving each day. Getting outside and playing also counts for a workout!
4. You will also be asked to set weekly goals. When setting faith, fitness, and fuel goals, focus on your actions rather than on your results. Instead of a goal of losing five pounds, have your goal be to eat no more than 24 grams of sugar daily. Instead of a goal of losing three inches in your waist, have your goal be about exercising four times a week for 45 minutes.
5. You will take tests every three to four weeks covering your weekly readings. You can use your Bible, weekly readings, and the computer when taking the tests. The answer key is found on pages 121-123.

6. You will take a fitness test on week one and then every three to four weeks. It will be exciting to see how you improve. Before your first fitness test be sure to watch [Video #2](#) that explains how to do these tests properly.

This program is about helping you incorporate healthy habits that you can use the rest of your life. It's about caring for the amazing body God has given you!

I hope this program inspires you to make changes in your life that help you get physically and spiritually stronger!

Week 1

Welcome video for Parents: [Video #1](#)



FAITH

What are the benefits of knowing God loves you and why is it important that you have a relationship with Him?

It's an incredible feeling when you really understand that the God who created and designed the entire universe also created you. He knows you better than anyone else and loves you more than you could ever imagine. When you really get that Jesus is the Son of God and that he died on the cross so that you could have eternal life, it's life changing.

There are so many reasons why you should take the time to get to know God. Some have to do with your life on Earth and some have to do with where you spend eternity.

Benefit #1

Your life on earth will have more love, joy, excitement, and peace.

Think about it. Wouldn't you love your life to be characterized by love, joy, excitement, and peace? God doesn't guarantee that if you believe in Him you'll have a problem-free life – just a life filled with more love, joy, peace, and excitement!

When you believe in Jesus He sends the Holy Spirit to guide you. God actually puts part of Himself in you to help you through life. Paul, the guy who hated Christians until he had an amazing conversation with Jesus that changed him into a Christ follower, says in [Galatians 5:22-23](#), that when you let the Holy Spirit control your life you will have more love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (These 9 attributes are called the Fruit of the Spirit). God created you and knows what is best for you, and the more you let Him guide you the more your life will be characterized by these attributes.

Jesus said, "I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world." ([John 16:33](#)). Jesus is saying that if you follow Him and His teachings, the cares of everyday life will not overwhelm you.

Stress can have severe effects on your health such as depression, heart problems, difficulty sleeping, stomach issues, and others. One of the greatest ways you can reduce stress in your life comes from having a close relationship with God.

When you really believe God loves you and that He has a plan for your life, you will feel more peace when dealing with life.

Paul said “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.” (Philippians 4:11-12)

Now that’s a lifestyle you should strive for – contentment in ALL situations. Some people think that when you follow Jesus you will live a boring life. Not true! Ever since I decided to let God lead me, my life has been so much more exciting. When you have the Father of All guiding your days, you know some amazing things will happen!

Benefit #2

After you die, you’ll spend eternity with God in heaven.

Jesus said, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16) God promises that when you believe in Jesus and you chose to follow Him, you will go to heaven when you die. Heaven is a real place where all Christ followers will spend eternity. It’s an exciting place unlike anything you can imagine! In Revelation 21:4 John tells us, “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

Can you imagine living where there are no tears, pain, death, or mourning? God did an amazing job when He created the world with so many interesting things in it. Just imagine how awesome heaven will be! John 14:2 reads: “In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.”

How cool is it that Jesus is in heaven preparing a place for all who believe in Him!

Some of you reading this might not really understand what it means to believe in Jesus. Don’t be afraid to talk to your parents, pastor, or youth group leader about what it means to “be saved.” Let them walk you through this and then pray and ask God to help you understand. One of the best ways to learn more about God is to read your Bible!



FITNESS

What does the Bible say about exercise?

Here is what God says, through His words in the Bible, about caring for your body.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 it states, “Don’t you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.”

If you are honoring God with your body you are taking proper care of it. You should be careful what you put into it. You should exercise so that it can function properly. You should watch what you put into your mind too!

At the same time, the Bible warns against vanity. When exercising, your goal should be to get healthy, not to get a perfect-looking body. When you exercise and eat healthy your body will get to a healthy weight and look stronger. Don’t make your physical appearance be your main focus. In 1 Samuel 16:7 the Lord says, “People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” 1 Peter 3: 3-4 reads, “Don’t be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God.”

Your goal from exercising should not be to improve your appearance so that other people will notice and admire you. Rather, your goal while exercising should be to improve your physical health so you will have more energy and strength to live the adventure God has planned for you.

Again, the natural outcome of paying attention to your fitness and fuel is that your body will look healthier. Of course there is nothing wrong with having a body that looks physically fit, but you should not make the focus be your outward appearance.

If you get caught up in exercising so that you have the perfect body, you will most likely be let down. So few people ever look in the mirror and see perfection. Too often we look in the mirror and start to criticize how we look. Most supermodels will tell you that the pictures you see of them in magazines are air-brushed and they don’t even look like their pictures.

The other problem with exercising just so you can get a perfect looking body is “pride.” God says over and over in His word that He does not like pride. Proverbs 16:5 explains that the Lord detests the proud of heart.

Your body needs exercise to function optimally, but more importantly you need to train for spiritual fitness. 1 Timothy 4:8 conveys, “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.” Notice that the verse does not say that exercise is not important. Rather, it says that exercise is valuable, but it prioritizes exercise correctly by saying that Godliness is of greater value.

Paul mentions physical training often to explain a spiritual truth. In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, he equates the Christian life to a race we run to “get the prize.” But the prize we seek is an eternal crown that will not tarnish or fade. In 2 Timothy 2:5, Paul says, “Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules.” Paul uses an athletic analogy again in 2 Timothy 4:7: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

While the focus of these Scriptures is *not* physical exercise, the fact that Paul uses athletic terminology to teach spiritual truths indicates that Paul viewed physical exercise, and even competition, in a positive light. While the spiritual aspect of your being is more important, you can't neglect your physical health.

One last verse on this is found in 3 John 3:2, “Dear friend, I hope all is well with you and that you are as healthy in body as you are strong in spirit.” As a responsible Christian, you should neither neglect nor indulge yourself but care for your physical needs and discipline your body so you are at your best for God's service.

When working out with your DVDs, pay attention to the song “Hallelujah Praise the King” (1st song in Session 3) and take a moment to thank God for your health. Be thankful that you are healthy enough to exercise. Ask God to help you stay motivated to take proper care of your body.



Fuel

What does The Bible say about nutrition?

First of all, have you ever really thought of food as fuel for your body? At the end of the day have you ever asked yourself the question: Did I put the right food into my body so that it can function properly? God created your body to function best when it gets exercise and when it is properly fed. God created food for your health and for your enjoyment. He created foods that can help you live longer, healthier lives. He created awesome tasting food to make your taste buds happy!

God created your body in such a way that you need to use self-control and discipline when it comes to taking care of your body. Let's take a look at what God says about this.

He says in His word that Gluttony is a sin. Gluttony is defined as habitual eating to excess. Too often, the sin of gluttony is ignored. You can't choose which sins are okay and which sins aren't. If you take the entire Bible as the Word of God you must try and repent from anything that He sees as sinful. Repent means to turn away from. Just saying sorry for your sin isn't enough you need to try and turn away from what you are doing and go in a different direction.

So when caring for your body the way God wants you to, the first thing is to be careful that you are NOT overeating. The other part of healthy eating is to eat the right foods. This is a huge challenge for so many of us. We want to eat what tastes good and we don't think about what it does to our bodies. What makes this even more challenging is that often the food that is the worst for us tastes good, is easy to make and inexpensive. This is where self-control and discipline come in.

God not only talks to you about what you eat, He also has much to say about what you drink. There are many verses in the Bible that talk about drinking alcohol. [Ephesians 5:18](#) says it quite clearly, "Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life". You must be so careful about what you put into your body. Not only can alcohol hurt your body physically but God says it can "ruin your life".

Paul says in [1 Corinthians 9:27](#) "I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should." If you feel you are lacking self-control, draw closer to God and ask Him to help you. Earlier in this weeks' reading we talked about the fruit of the spirit. In [Galatians 5:22-23](#) it is taught that one of the fruits of the spirit is self-control. So when

you believe in Jesus and repent of your sins, the Holy Spirit comes into you and helps guide you through life. One of the blessings that comes from having the Holy Spirit in you is that you will have more self-control.

Additional verses that address what we are to eat can be found in Genesis 1:29, Genesis 9:3, and Ezekiel 4:9. These verses include a few of God's guidelines for healthy eating. If you grasp the following statements you will be on your way towards a healthier eating plan:

1. God created you.
2. God created food.
3. Eat the foods that God created in their natural state.

In the United States, about one-third of kids are overweight. If you are overweight you can tackle this problem with God's help and He will give you the power to get to a healthy weight.

Here are steps to overcoming unhealthy eating habits:

(1) First, admit that you can't do it alone and ask God to help you to have a healthy relationship with food.

(2) Then, ask God for the power to overcome any specific unhealthy eating habits you have. Talk to Him about what you need to change.

(3) Next, ask for God's plan for your weight loss. Allow Him to lead you. He knows your body and He will direct you as to how you are to eat. Ask Him to remove your cravings for unhealthy foods. 1 John 5:14-15 teaches us, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us — whatever we ask — we know that we have what we asked of him."

(4) Daily, thank God for helping you eat healthier. Don't be discouraged if it takes a while to make healthy changes. Old habits are hard to break. If you really mess up one day – don't worry. Start fresh the next day!! Above info from *Overcoming Life Digest* (Nov. / Dec. 1997)

It can be extremely challenging to break old habits. Set goals for yourself each week. Little changes can lead to big results! I think the toughest challenge is that you cannot just stop eating; you need to learn to eat in a healthy way. Using moderation can be more challenging than just quitting. Remember, God loves you, cares for you, and wants to help you.

STOP HERE! Go answer this week's questions.

Week 2



FAITH

God Loves You

Everyone has in them the need to be loved.

I know I have days where I don't feel so lovable, but I still want to be loved. One thing I want you to get is that ***God loves you***. Even when you behave in a way that you know goes against God's desires ... He still loves you.

The Bible tells you over and over that God loves you. You have probably heard this verse before ... but really let the words come into your heart: "For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16

Can you imagine this?

Think about the person you love most in the world. Now imagine coming up with a plan that requires that person to be ridiculed and then killed so others can be saved. God wanted you to realize that there was a huge price paid for your salvation. In order for His plan to be carried out, His very own Son would die a painful death. That just blows me away – that's an amazing kind of LOVE. That's God's love for you.

Add to this the fact that God didn't just do this for "mankind," he did this for YOU. Yes, you! He knew you would make mistakes ... he knew you would never be perfect. Your mistakes, your sins, separate you from Him. God loved you so much that He sent His Son to die for you. All you need to do is believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that He died on the cross and rose three days later. You need to ask Him to forgive you for your sins and then you will be made perfect in God's eyes.

God *is* perfect and heaven is perfect ... you are not perfect and that's OK. Jesus came to Earth and died on the cross so that you would be forgiven for your sins. When you believe in what Jesus did on the cross and you repent of your sins you DO look perfect to God. On your own you will never be perfect but through your faith in Jesus God sees perfection! In the song, "You are my King" they sing,

"Amazing love, how can it be?

That you, my King, would die for me.

Amazing love, I know it's true,

It's my joy to honor you ..."

God wants you to feel His love **right now** ... you don't need to fix something about yourself before you can feel His love. Sometimes people say to me, "I can't do your workouts because I have to get in shape first." I tell them, "That's not how it works. Just start doing them and they will help you reach your fitness goals, you don't need to be in shape before you begin."

I know you might think you need to fix things about yourself before you can talk to God, but that's not how it works. You don't need to stop lying, talking behind someone's back, or being disrespectful to your parents before you can talk to God. Just like you don't need to be in shape before you do the Faithful Workouts' program, you don't need to be perfect to connect with God. If you needed to be perfect before you could ask God to help you through life, then why would Jesus have had to die on the cross?

"This is real love - not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins." 1 John 4:19 He loved you *before* you loved Him.

God forgives all sins. Your sin does not make you unlovable to God. Remember the words of Psalm 139: 13-14, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well." God wants you to understand that you are wonderfully made and that He created every part of you. He calls you His "masterpiece". He loves you in spite of all your mistakes.

God loves you so much that He promises to never leave you. Some of the last words Jesus spoke to his disciples in Matthew 28:20 were, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." In another verse God promises, "Don't be afraid, for I am with you (Isaiah 41:10).

I don't know about you, but these verses sure make me feel loved and cared for!

Check out the I Am Second web site and listen to Bailee Madison's God Story **[Video #3](#)**



BURST: [Video #4](#)



FITNESS

The Benefits of Exercise

Want to feel better, have more energy, perform better in sports, and perhaps even live longer? If so, the best place to start is to get some exercise. “Exercise is so good for you.” I’m sure you have heard that before! Look at all the benefits and anytime you can’t get motivated to workout, read through the following facts:

1. **Exercise boosts your energy level.** One of the main reasons I exercise is so that I will be physically ready if I hear God’s call to take action. I know real joy in life comes from doing God’s work, so I want to be in shape so that I have the energy to be used by Him in any way he sees fit. I hope that you can look at exercise this way. You desire to be fit so you can be used by God rather than being fit to impress others.

Physical activity delivers oxygen and nutrients to your tissues. In fact, regular physical activity helps your entire cardiovascular system work more efficiently. Big deal? You bet! When your heart and lungs work more efficiently, you’ll have more energy to do the things you enjoy.

2. **Exercise improves attitude.** Physical activity stimulates various brain chemicals that may leave you feeling happier and more relaxed than you were before you worked out. As I mentioned above, you will have more energy, which will help you take on activities with a better attitude. Regular physical activity can even help prevent depression. When you combine your exercises with fun, Christian music, and God’s word, it’s a winning combination!

3. **Exercise helps fight disease.** You might not be worried about heart disease, cancer, and blood pressure right now, but it’s something you will think about when you get older. Regular physical activity can help you prevent — or manage — many different types of health problems. For the first time, your generation is expected to live shorter lives than your parents. The main reason is because of your lifestyle. Too many hours sitting in front of a TV, computer, or phone means you aren’t getting exercise. Too many easy-to-grab, unhealthy food options mean you are going to put on unneeded weight. Heaven is going to be awesome, but the longer you live the more time you have to tell people about God’s amazing love for them.

4. **Exercise helps you sleep better.** Struggling to fall asleep? Stay asleep? It might help if you boost your physical activity during the day. A good night's sleep has many health benefits. And you guessed it — physical activity is sometimes the key to better sleep.

Regular physical activity will help you fall asleep faster and deepen your sleep. Try not to exercise too close to bed time, however, as you might be too energized to fall asleep.

5. **Exercise can add fun to your day.** Seriously, it can! Physical activity doesn't have to be drudgery. Take a dance class, check out a local climbing wall, play tennis, go for a walk, or put in a Faithful Workouts DVD and get moving. Find a physical activity you enjoy, and go for it!

Get the rest of your family to exercise with you. If you do a workout together you will not only get in shape, you will also connect with God and most likely have some good laughs too.

6. **Exercise helps you manage your weight.** Want to get to a healthy weight? Trade some couch time for walking or other physical activities. This one's a no-brainer. When you do physical activity, you burn calories. The more intense the activity, the more calories you burn — and the easier it is to keep your weight under control. When you burn off more calories than you take in, you lose weight. It really is that simple. You don't always need to set aside major chunks of time for working out. Dedicated workouts are great, but physical activity you accumulate throughout the day helps you burn calories, too.

7. **Increased Learning Capacity:** Studies show that exercise and nutrition affect your ability to learn. When you are hungry it is hard to focus; therefore, it is important to start your day with a good breakfast. In order to function properly, the brain needs a constant supply of healthy fats, proteins, carbohydrates, water, vitamins, and minerals, all of which are found in healthy foods. Exercise has been proven to help you learn! (more on this later)



FUEL

Benefits of Proper Nutrition

You have probably heard that you should eat healthy. Here are some of the reasons why:

Weight Management: It is important that we stay at a healthy weight. What is healthy for one person can be different from what's healthy for another person even if they are the same height and age. We never want to get so caught up in what the scale says, but it is important to maintain a health weight.

There are calories in the food we eat. A calorie is actually a unit of energy. Different foods contain different amounts of calories. Calories play a role in our weight but it's

even more important that we pay attention to what vitamins and nutrients are in the food we are eating.

If you want to be healthy, you have to pay attention to what you are eating. You probably already knew that healthy eating is important and that it's important to be at a healthy weight – but trying to figure out what it means to eat healthy can be confusing. There are so many different theories, plans, and diets available. How do you know which is the best for you?

We will be talking a lot more about what a healthy diet looks like over the next few weeks, but here is some basic information so you can get started now. Eat the foods that God created. Eat fruits, vegetables, nuts, beans, lean meats, chicken, and fish. And, drink lots of water.

Increased Energy: When you properly fuel your body, you will have more energy. You need to think of your body as a machine and, in order for it to function properly it needs the right kind of fuel. A plane can't fly on gasoline meant for a car and your body can't function optimally without the right kind of food. You might be thinking, "I'm doing okay. I don't need to change what I am eating to have more energy." For some of you, that might be true. I can imagine, though, that quite a few of you don't really know what it feels like to be properly fueled. Start journaling about how you feel when you eat different foods and take notice about what foods give you energy.

Here is the tricky part, some foods give you a boost of energy, but it only lasts for a short time. Things with sugar can give you energy but, after a short time, you crash. You are left without energy. You want to learn how to fuel your body so you can stay energized all day!

Prevent Diseases: It has been proven that eating the right foods and the right amount of food will keep you healthy. Most of you know it's no fun to be sick. If you want to avoid illnesses start eating properly. Studies prove that a healthy diet can protect you from heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, cancer, and more.

Better Skin: When your body is properly nourished your skin will show it. If you want clear skin, try and stay away from junk food and eat more of what God created. If you want your skin to look good, drink lots of water (for most of us about 8 cups a day is the right amount).

Fad Diets: Finally, another way to stay healthy is to avoid "fad diets." As you get older you will hear about all sorts of different diets. Don't fall for any of them; just eat healthy.

You'll be surprised — after a while, healthy eating will come naturally to you, and your unhealthy cravings will lessen.

Pray that God will help point you toward a healthy lifestyle!

STOP HERE! Go answer this week's questions.

Week 3



FAITH

Give God Control

Here's a weird concept: The best way to keep your life in control is to stop trying to control it and allow God to lead you.

If God loves you (*He really does!*), and He wants you to live with lots of joy, AND He is all-knowing, doesn't it make sense to let Him have complete control of your life? You can be guided through your days by the Creator of the universe ... the One who created the intricacies of your body ... the One who designed how babies are formed ... the One who conceived plants providing oxygen so we could breath. That same God wants to lead you!

I was about 40 years old when I finally understood what it meant to be a Christian. When I became a believer in Jesus, I really wanted to try and follow the path God had planned for me. I wanted to discover my "[Ephesians 2:10](#) calling." I knew that if I wanted to really live life to the fullest I would need to find the good works that God had prepared in advance for me to do.

It was very hard for me to completely turn this over to God. I thought I knew myself well enough to figure it out. When I finally did say, "God, I want so badly for you to use me for your purpose, and I want you to guide me to your calling for my life," the pieces began falling into place.

My daughter, Denika, used to be a competitive gymnast. One year, when she was at the last meet of the season, she realized she had one last chance to qualify for the state championships. She went into her final performance, which was a floor routine. She needed an 8.35 to qualify for state. She performed her best; yet, when the score was posted, she received an 8.25. She had just barely missed qualifying for state.

When they posted her score, she had a big smile on her face. Initially, I thought, "She must not realize she just missed qualifying." When I talked to her after the meet, she explained it to me. She said, "Before I performed the floor routine I prayed and asked God if it was my time to go to state if He would give me the right score. If it's not my time, then it's okay because it's in His hands."

She had peace about the outcome of the meet because she had turned it over to God. She made it to state the following year!

Giving God control of your life doesn't mean you sit and do nothing. You need to be an active participant! I once heard a great analogy about this: "In order for the wind to move a sailboat you need to put up the sail. Only then can wind push the boat." In order for God to guide you, you need to be involved in the process.

The more you are able to give God control, the more your life will be **defined by love, purpose, peace, and joy, instead of worry.**

Jesus promises this in the Book of John: "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly." ([John 10:10](#)) Jesus wants you to have a more satisfying, loving, peaceful, and contented life. The only way to reach this is to let Him control your life. Our human attempts to control life's every detail can often backfire. God is the only one who sees the big picture so only when you allow Him to lead your life will you be truly content and at peace.

The song, "So Good" by Ken Reynolds (awesome song!) begins with these words, "So good to know that our God is in control." If you believe that Jesus came so that you could live more abundantly then you need to let Him control how you live. Let him guide you down the path that leads to an abundant life.



BURST: [Video #5](#)



FITNESS

How to add fun to your fitness routine

How can you make your workouts FUN? Really, exercising can be fun. For your fitness routine to succeed it's important that you find a program that you look forward to – something that's fun! Sure there are certain things you need to do that aren't your favorite, but parts of your routine should be fun.

Here are some ways to add fun to your routine:

Music

Research proves that listening to music can have positive effects on your body, both physically and mentally. When you exercise things are going on in your brain that help you learn and retain information. It is VERY important that when you are exercising that you are listening to music that is encouraging. Pay attention to the lyrics of the songs that

you listen to. You don't want to put negative thoughts into your mind so use music with encouraging lyrics. Integrating music into your exercise program:

- **Reduces stress.** Music can relax your muscles and reduce your breathing rate, both of which are directly related to stress. Get music that calms your nerves or lifts your spirit and you'll start reducing stress and enjoying your workout more.
- **Makes you happy.** Music can stimulate your body to produce serotonin (the happiness hormone) and elevate your mood.
- **Alters your brain waves.** Music can alter your brain wave patterns and elevate your mood even after you stop listening.
- **Motivates you.** Something I am sure you have experienced before is that listening to certain songs can make you become motivated and excited to take on life!

Not only does listening to music make your workouts more fun, it can also help you connect with God. When you work out with the Faithful Workouts DVDs, many of the songs include Bible verses in the lyrics. For most kids, it's easier to remember the words of a song than it is to memorize a few sentences. Hopefully, you will start to put Bible verses into your mind when you memorize the words to the songs on the DVDs.

Buddy Up

Another way you can add fun (and accountability) to your workout is to do it with others. Working out with someone is not only more fun, it can also motivate you to push a little harder. You will have someone there to moan with and someone to encourage you to continue.

Variety

Boredom is one of the top reasons people quit working out. Variety not only adds more fun to your workouts but also it makes your workouts more effective. Rotate the workout you do from your Faithful Workouts' DVD so that you don't always do the same one. Add things like basketball, dancing, hiking, and swimming to your routine. Playing sports can be a great way to get exercise. Doing a full body workout, like the Faithful Workouts' DVD, will also make you stronger in other sports. Mixing it up will keep you from getting bored.

No matter how fun, simple, and effective your workout strategy is, there is no better motivation for complete fitness than envisioning the ideal life you want to live as well as understanding how your body and spirit have to be in top shape to attain those dreams. So keep your goal in mind, and go find a workout that excites you!



Designing Your Plate

I am sure you know it's important to "eat healthy", but what does that really look like. This is the tough part. There are a million diets out there that promise you will get healthy if you eat the way they suggest, but what eating plan will really help you to stay healthy?

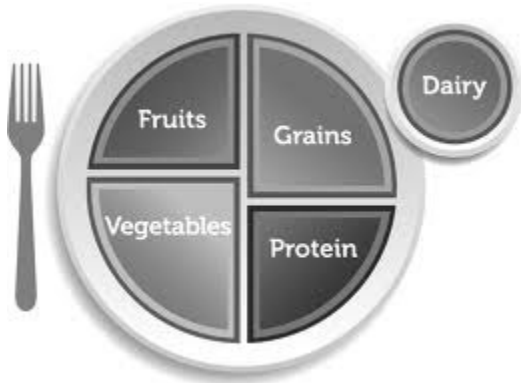
My suggestion is to not follow any fad diet. You will hear me say this over and over because I have seen so many people get excited about a new "diet", then they lose weight and then they gain back more which isn't healthy. You need to be careful about the type of foods you eat and drink. Your nutrition will affect your health.

Here are two basic principles when it comes to eating healthy:

Eat a variety of foods. A balanced diet is one that includes all the food groups.

Eat less of some foods, and more of others. You need food from all food groups but you need more from some groups and less from others.

The US department of Agriculture is now using a dinner plate to help you visualize what your body needs.



Fruits and Vegetables: Half of your plate should be filled with fruits and vegetables. Is that how your plate looks? When choosing fruits and vegetables try and change it up. Pick fruits and vegetables with a variety of colors to help your body get properly nourished. It's easy to get into a rut try something different. If you drink juice and plan on including it as a fruit serving be sure it is made from 100% juice. (on average you need 1.5 – 2 cups of fruit and 2-3 cups of vegetables.)

Grains: As you can see from the above plate grains should be included when designing your plate. It is important that you include healthy grains in your menu plan. Whole grains are better than while refined flour. Have at least half our daily grains come from whole grains (on average you need 3-4 ounces daily)

Protein: Protein comes from meat, poultry, seafood, beans, peas, eggs, processed soy products, nuts, and seeds. When selecting protein sources it is important to mix it up. It is best to select lean protein sources. (on average you need 5 – 6.5 ounces of protein).

Dairy: All milk products and products made from milk are part of the dairy category. Dairy provides your body with calcium which is needed to build strong bones. It is best to select low-fat or fat-free milk products. Although, some manufactures of yogurts and cheeses add other fillers when they use fat-free milk. Always read the ingredient list! (on average you need 3 cups of dairy)

How many servings you have of each of the above food groups varies lightly depending on your sex, age, current weight, ideal weight and activity level. When planning your daily fuel intake remember the design of the above plate. Remember though that these are only guidelines. Listen to your body and continually strive for a well-balanced nutrition plan that gives you enough fuel for your activities and allows you to maintain a healthy weight.

STOP HERE and answer this week's questions.

Week 4



FAITH

Replacing Stress with Peace

One of the biggest challenges in this crazy world is to be content and at peace. One definition for the word content is “desiring no more than what one has; satisfied.” Do you feel like you are content? When you really believe that God loves you and you know in your heart of hearts that He has a plan for your life, you CAN replace some of your stress and worries with peace and contentment.

Think about the last time you felt stressed out.

What was the source of that feeling? Was it because you had too much to do? Or, was it over money? Concerned about grades and homework? Peer pressure? Performing in sports? Parents’ expectations? Getting along with your siblings and friends?

Did you know that you can turn all of the above over to God? You can ask Him to help you deal with all of it. Usually, when you are stressing about something, it’s because you are not completely trusting God. One of the best ways to learn how to handle your stress is to read the Bible and let God guide you.

God says He is the Alpha and the Omega, the all-knowing. He sees the past, present, and future so he knows the best path for you. He loves you so much and wants to help you through the challenges of life.

Here are some verses and quotes to help you with some of the more common sources of stress:

Too Much To Do

The Devil (I know this is a bummer, but the Devil *is* real) is trying to pull you away from God in any way possible. He wants you to be busy so that you don’t have time to read your Bible and pray. Here is an acronym for busy.

B - being

U - under

S - Satan’s

Y - yoke

A yoke is a term that can mean to “join together”. Two oxen will be harnessed in one yoke to work together to pull a cart. If we are yoked with Satan it means he can guide us. If you are too busy, you should look at your schedule and see where you can make cuts. We allow so many things to get in the way of our relationship with God. The truth is *Nothing* should be more important than your relationship with God. Nothing!

Financial

God has so much to say about money. Here are a few of the verses.

“The borrower is slave to the lender.” (Proverbs 22:7) If you can’t afford to buy something, the Bible lets you know that you have to be careful about borrowing money. 1 Corinthians 16:2 states, “On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up.” It is important, even at your age, to get into the habit of giving some of your money away (tithing) and saving part of your money.

Here is one suggestion to help you with this: Have three jars in your room – one for spending, one for saving, and one for giving. Whenever you take in money, whether it’s from a job, birthday money, or anything else, put your money into the three jars. You might want to put 70 percent in spending, 20 percent in savings, and 10 percent in giving. This will help you get on a great plan for how you should handle money when you get older!

Grades and Homework

For some of us, studying and learning is really difficult. Here is a verse you should memorize: Colossians 3:23, “Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.” When you do your best (you know in your heart when you have really given something your all) you can find peace in the grade you receive. Most kids feel stressed about grades when they know they didn’t really study properly. In all you do, give it your all!

Peer Pressure

If you can put this verse into your mind and your heart your life will be so much better. Most kids and adults really struggle with worrying about what people think about them. If you follow this verse, you can avoid many of the stresses of the world: 1 Thessalonians 2:4, “Our purpose is to please God, not people.” This verse does not give you permission to be unkind to people or treat them harshly. It means you don’t have to concern yourself with pleasing everyone, BUT you do need to live in such a way that is pleasing to God. If

you want to live a life that is pleasing to God you have to know what that looks like. Once again, it's time to pick up your Bible!

Another great verse is from Romans 12:2 which states, "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect."

These verses can remind you that you don't have to do what everyone else is doing and they can prevent you from feeling like you have to follow the crowd.

Sports

There are quite a few verses in the Bible that talk about competing. Often, the verses have a double meaning, but you can still use them to help you learn about competing in sports.

Hebrews 12:11: "No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening — it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way." So much of what we do in life requires training and discipline. If we want to be good at something we have to put in the effort. At times, giving 100 percent is difficult but very worthwhile.

1 Corinthians 9:25: "All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize." Again this verse talks about being disciplined and that you need to train. It's important to remember that winning is not everything. All the prizes we win from our sports will fade away. It is of more importance that we do all things in life to win the eternal prize. When performing in sports, always try and act in a way that is pleasing to God.

Michael Jordan, one of the greatest basketball players of all time, said this: "I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

Don't be afraid to go out and have some fun playing sports. It's not about winning or losing. It's about going out, giving it your all, getting healthy, having fun with friends, and shining God's light on all those you play with!

Parents' Expectations

If you feel you aren't living up to your parents' expectations and it is causing you stress, go talk to them. Now, here's the tricky part: Don't come at them in anger; just explain

how you feel. Then, be “quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.” ([James 1:19](#)) Parents do not want their kids to be feeling overwhelmed and stressed, so they will often listen.

When they give you their response, you must be respectful. God says throughout the Bible that children must respect and obey their parents. [Colossians 3:20](#), [Ephesians 6:1](#) and [Proverbs 1:8](#) are just a few of the verses that explain the importance of respect.

Getting Along with Others

Many stressful relationships evolve from an unkind word said. God challenges us when it comes to dealing with people. When someone is mean to you, the first thing you probably want to do is be mean back. However, that’s not how God’s word instructs us. [Romans 12:17](#) tells us to “never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone will see you are honorable.” God never said that obeying Him would be easy! [Ephesians 4:32](#) teaches that we should “be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” I’m sure you want God to forgive you for your sins. Well, He says in this verse that you also need to be forgiving to those who wrong you. [Ephesians 4:26](#) puts it this way, “In your anger, do not sin.” Have you ever tried to rationalize your sin by saying you did it because someone made you mad? I know. I hear this often from my kids: “I said that because he made me mad.” God never said obeying Him would be easy.

You might be thinking, “All these verses are great, but they were written a long time ago and they don’t really apply to me. God can’t really expect me to find peace in the crazy world I live in. God can’t really expect me to be kind and forgiving to my brother because he’s impossible!” But remember, God wrote the Bible for you – to help you through life right where you are. The Bible is your instruction manual for life. You also have to remember that God knew you wouldn’t be perfect. He knew you would try to control areas of your life. He knew you would get angry and make mistakes. That’s why He sent Jesus.

The “world” is constantly going to challenge you to live differently than the way God directs you. Do these phrases sound familiar? “Happiness can be bought.” “Live for the moment.” “You deserve to think only of yourself.” “Don’t help others, they don’t deserve it.” God says, though, that if you want to live a life filled with joy, don’t listen to these comments. Instead, listen to what He says in the Bible.

Watch how God helped Bethany Hamilton through crisis: [Video #6](#)



FITNESS

How often should I work out?

You should be involved in some type of exercise every day. Your body needs it!

You should include cardiovascular exercise into your everyday routine. Cardio is short for cardiovascular, which refers to the heart. Cardiovascular exercise includes all exercises that raise your heart rate and keep it elevated for a period of time. Another name for cardio is aerobic exercise. To get a cardio workout you need to keep your heart rate elevated without breaks. Some great forms of cardio exercise include biking, walking, running, swimming, basketball, and some exercise DVDs.

Remember, for it to count as cardio, you need to do the activity without taking breaks and your heart rate should be elevated. You can tell if you are doing enough intensity in your workout if it would be difficult for you to sing a song because you were out of breath. Ideally, you should perform cardiovascular exercises for no less than 20 minutes a day.

Benefits of cardiovascular exercise:

- More energy
- Produce more brain cells
- Strengthens your heart and lungs
- Reduces stress
- Reduces the risk of heart disease and some types of cancer
- Temporary relief from depression and anxiety
- Better sleep
- Increases the strength of your bones
- Maintains a healthy weight

You should also include strength training exercises into your routine. You should strength train about three times a week. You need to be careful to not lift too much weight when you are strength training. Until about the age of 15 years old, you don't want to do heavy lifting. You want to lift lighter weights with more repetition. It is also good to focus on

moves that use your own body weight, such as push-up, sit-ups, and squats. Exercise bands are also great for strength training.

Benefits of strength training:

- Increases your metabolism (we will get into this in future readings)
- Improves your posture (especially core exercises)
- Decreases your risk of injury
- Increases the strength of your bones
- Helps you maintain a healthy weight
- Improves your mood
- Strengthens your immune system to help you fight diseases

Benefits of stretching:

- Improves your flexibility which improves your athletic performance
- Decreases your risk of injury
- Allows joints to keep their full range of motion
- Increased blood flow to muscles
- May decrease soreness in your muscles

Look for an exercise plan that uses a combination of cardio, strength training and stretching. Here is an example of what your week should look like:

Monday: 30-minute exercise DVD that includes a warm-up, cardio, strength, and stretching

Tuesday: Play a sport that gives you a cardio workout, like basketball or soccer (finish with stretching time)

Wednesday: 30-minute exercise DVD that includes a warm-up, cardio, strength, and stretching

Thursday: 30-minute fast walk (and I mean fast) or jog and then 50 sit-ups, 20 push-ups, 30 squats, and 10 minutes of stretching

Friday: 30-minute exercise DVD that includes a warm-up, cardio, strength, and stretching

Saturday: Play a sport like tennis or Frisbee that keeps you moving and elevates your heart rate (finish with stretching time)

Sunday: Go for a 20-minute hike and stretch for 10 minutes

Consistency with your fitness program is so important when you are trying to achieve better health. So put it into your daily schedule!



FUEL

Food Labels

Food labels are helpful because they provide needed information to help you eat a balanced diet. It is important that you know how to properly read the label. I don't want to get too deep into all that is on the food label, but I want to explain a few basic things about it. Some of the information that you find on a food label we will talk about in more detail in future weeks.

Serving Size and Servings Per Container

When reading a food label, the first thing to look at is the serving size. For this label, the information is based on a serving size of one cup. If you were to eat two cups of this item you would need to double the other figures listed. So, for example, if you ate two cups of this item you would be taking in 22 grams of sugar. You might think the bag, bottle or container is one serving when it really contains multiple servings. Therefore, if you buy a bag of chips and there are two servings per container and you eat the entire bag, you will need to double all the figures listed on the label. When comparing products to see which one is healthier, be sure that the serving size is the same for both items.

Saturated Fat and Trans Fat

In a well-balanced diet, 30 percent of calories come from fat. We typically think of fat as bad and that we should avoid all fat. However, your body actually needs fat to function (more on this later). The important thing to pay attention to on the food label regarding fat is the percent sign (%). If you eat an item that has 60 percent of your total fat, it means that one item has 60 percent of all the fat that you should eat for the day. If you eat another item and it has 50 percent of your total fat, it means you have already gone over your fat intake for the day.

The other thing to pay attention to is the saturated and trans fat figures. There are different kinds of fats. Saturated and trans fat are fats that are bad for you and you should try to eat very little of these. If an item has six total grams of fat and zero grams of saturated fat and zero grams of trans fat, it would be healthier choice than an item that has four grams of total fat with three grams of saturated and one gram of trans fat.

I know this can be a bit overwhelming, so let me sum up this information about fat in these statements:

1. Your body needs fat.
2. Thirty percent of your calories should come from fat.
3. Trans fat and saturated fats are bad.

Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a waxy substance produced by the liver and found in foods from animal sources. Your body naturally makes cholesterol. You also get cholesterol from foods that you eat. Only food that comes from animals has cholesterol. Some animal products have more cholesterol than others. You want to keep your cholesterol intake under 300mg. Eating too much cholesterol can cause heart problems when you get older. Even some children are diagnosed with high cholesterol because of their diets and lack of exercise.

It's important to start healthy habits now so that you can avoid health problems later!

Sodium

Sodium is a major mineral found in the fluid surrounding the cells in your body. Your body needs sodium. The problem is that many of our foods, especially processed foods, have too much sodium. When you take in too much sodium you can have high blood pressure and your body won't keep the calcium it needs to make your bones strong.

When reading the food label, pay attention to the number of milligrams (mg) of sodium and the percentage (%) of sodium. You want to try and keep your sodium intake around 1,800mg. Very few people don't take in enough sodium, but it is something to watch so that you don't eat too much.

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates come from a wide variety of foods - bread, beans, milk, popcorn, potatoes, cookies, spaghetti, corn, and most desserts. They also come in a variety of forms. The most common and abundant are sugars, fibers, and starches.

Carbohydrates are somewhat complicated, but there are a few things you should know about them in regards to reading a food label:

- Approximately 50 percent of your calories should come from carbohydrates.
- Two hundred grams are recommended for a 2,000 calorie diet.
- Whole grains, fruits, and vegetables are the best sources.

- Whole wheat products are much better for you than white flour products.

Fiber

Fiber should be a part of your diet. Most Americans don't eat enough fiber. White flour has much less fiber than whole wheat. When Americans started eating more white flour, our fiber intake went down. It is important to eat enough fiber for several reasons. Eating enough fiber lowers the risk of cancer and heart disease, aids in weight loss, and eases gastrointestinal problems. Most American adults only consume about 10 grams daily, but we should be taking in 40 grams.

There are two types of fiber, soluble and insoluble, and you should eat both types. Good sources of soluble fiber include oatmeal, oat bran, barley, dried beans and legumes, and citrus fruits. Good sources of insoluble fiber include wheat bran, whole grain cereals, and fruit and vegetable skins.

Sugar

If there is one thing you should watch in your diet it is the amount of sugar you eat. Sugar is **not good** for you. I will spend a whole week talking about sugar, but for right now just know it is **bad** for you and you need to **cut back** on it. I challenge all of you who drink soda to go without it for two weeks. In place of it you can mix 100 percent juice with sparkling water.

On the food label is the amount of sugar in grams. Four grams of sugar is equal to one teaspoon of sugar. Starting today, I want you to really pay attention to how much sugar you are eating. Your body does not need added sugar.

Protein

Protein is required by the body for the growth, maintenance, and repair of all cells. Because of this, you should eat protein every day. About 20 percent of the calories you eat during a day should come from protein.

Protein is a major component of all muscles, tissues, and organs and it is vital for practically every process that occurs within the body such as metabolism, digestion, and the transportation of nutrients and oxygen in the blood. Protein also helps your body fight against infections and illnesses, and it is the main nutrient that keeps our hair shiny and healthy, our nails strong, our skin fresh and glowing, and our bones strong and healthy.

Middle and high school aged girls need between 35–50 grams daily while boys need 38–54 grams daily. Good sources of protein are lean meats, chicken, fish, and dairy.

Vitamins, Iron, and Calcium

At the bottom of the food label you will see vitamins, iron, and calcium listed. The label lists the percentage of each item that is contained in the product. From our example label, you can see that this product contains 30 percent of your calcium needs. Again, this is something to pay attention to. It's important that you get enough of these items in your diet. You should pay attention because you don't want to take in too much of certain vitamins. If you are taking vitamins, you should be careful that you don't overdose. For example, Vitamin A can be toxic if you take in too much of it.

Ingredients

Lastly, most food labels will list the ingredients found in the product. The order in which the ingredients are listed is important to pay attention to. The first item makes up the largest part of the product. The last item listed makes up the smallest part of the product. Try to look for products that have ingredients made from foods that God created. If you have never heard of most of the ingredients, don't eat it! Typically, the fewer the ingredients the better.

STOP HERE! Take your fitness test, answer this week's questions, and take Test One.

Week 5



FAITH

Obeying God's Commandments

When the Jewish leaders asked Jesus what was the most important law of their God, Jesus said: "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment." (Matthew 22:37-38)

Now wait a minute – loving God is most important? Does that sound egotistical? God says this is the greatest commandment not because He is concerned with Himself and He just wants everyone to love only Him, but because He knows that for you to fully comprehend His blessings, you must first obey Him, know Him, respect Him, love Him, and then He will be able to guide your life.

How can you show God love? How do you know you even genuinely love God? If you want to love God the first thing you need to do is get to know Him. Spend time in your Bible getting to know God.

Love can be a noun or a verb. Let's look at *Love* as a verb, because love as an action word implies that something is happening, something is being done. Two definitions for the verb *Love* are 1) to have a profoundly tender, passionate affection for (another person) and, 2) to have a strong liking for; take great pleasure in.

God wants you to find great pleasure from your *Love* relationship with Him. He wants you to love Him because you will be blessed by your relationship with Him.

Since love requires action, by what action does God want you to demonstrate your love for Him? The answer is found in **The Bible – God's inspired word!**

The scriptures show repeatedly that loving God and keeping His commandments are connected. In Deuteronomy 10:12-13 God says, ". . . What does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and *to keep the* commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good?"

Let's take a closer look at this verse. When it says you should *fear the Lord*, it does not mean you should be scared of Him it means you should have utmost respect for Him. The verse continues to say you should walk in all His ways, meaning, He wants you to live

life in a way that pleases Him because He is the only one who knows what is truly best for you. The verse goes on to say that you are to love and serve Him in all you do. The Lord states multiple times that you are to keep or obey His commands. He repeats himself because this is such an important way to show God you love Him.

It is important to not skip over the last part of these verses because this is where He promises that following His commandments is for your own good and will give you the most meaningful life. He tells you this because He loves you and wants the best for you!

The above verses about obeying His commandments are from the Old Testament. You might be wondering, “Well, didn’t Jesus and the New Testament change this?” You might think you don’t need to obey God because you can just ask Jesus to forgive you when you do something wrong.

You will actually see this same theme of loving God and obeying Him in the New Testament. In John 14:23-24 Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me."

The New Testament defines love for God the same way as does the Old Testament: “This is love for God: To obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.”(1 John 5:3) Please realize, though, that God knew you would make mistakes and that you would not be able to always obey His commandments and teachings.

When you believe in Jesus, you can ask Him to forgive you for your sins and for not obeying Him. You must continually pray and ask God to help you repent (turn away) from your actions that go against His desires for your life. You must ask the Holy Spirit, who lives in you when you believe in Jesus, to show you what actions you need to change in order to live according to His commandments and teachings. Remember, belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God means much more than just academic agreement. Belief means acting on that knowledge. When you believe, you must try to obey and change in the ways that go against His teachings.



FITNESS

Importance of Proper Form When Exercising

There are several reasons why you should always pay attention to form and technique when exercising. The most important and most obvious is that if you're not performing the exercise correctly, you risk the chance of hurting yourself either immediately or in the long term. Another reason proper form is important is that you will not get the full benefit of the exercise if you are not using proper form.

If you're just beginning an exercise program or if you are not familiar with a move, it is important that you learn how to properly perform the move. When you do an exercise program, it is helpful to have a mirror so that you can be sure that your body is in proper position. Pay close attention to the instructions on the DVD workouts and video clips that explain how to properly perform an exercise

Here are some general guidelines to consider for proper form and technique:

Start Slowly & Light

When beginning a new exercise, go through the motions of the exercise slowly. If the move requires weights, start light. You might even try doing the move without any weights. This way you'll gain an understanding of how it is to be performed as well as commit the movement to memory. Once you understand the basic movement, you may want to increase your weight and pick up the pace.

It is important for children under 15 years old to continue using lighter weights. You do not want to do maximum lifting. Maximum lifting is when you try and lift as much weight as you can for 1-3 lifts. You should stick with lighter weights with multiple repetitions. When an exercise becomes difficult, there is a tendency to slip into poor form or recruit other muscle groups to assist the effort. If you feel you are having a hard time completing the exercise with proper form, switch to a lighter weight.

Watch Yourself

If possible, look into a mirror and watch how you perform a move. You may think you're doing one thing but you're actually doing something else. If you don't have a mirror and you are working out with a friend, help each other with your form. I know it might be awkward to watch yourself in a mirror, but have some fun with it – make a funny face!

Positive and Negative Motion

When performing an exercise, you need to focus on both the positive and negative of the movements. For example, if you are doing a bicep curl, the positive is your arm lifting the weight or the exercise band up and the negative is the movement down. When exercising, many people forget about the negative. They exert all their effort on lifting the weight or exercise band up and then they just let their arms fall down. If you don't control the movement of the downward motion, you aren't getting any benefits from the negative portion of the exercise.

You should never swing your weights. Each move has a starting position and a stopping position. When you are letting the weight or the exercise band down, you should keep it under control and not let it swing.

Breathing

Don't forget to breathe. By holding your breath, you begin to deprive your body of valuable oxygen. You will experience muscle fatigue sooner. It is important to fill your lungs up all the way and then exhale completely out. It is best to breathe in through your nose and not your mouth. When you are doing intense cardio you might need to breathe through your mouth as well but this shouldn't happen during your entire exercise routine.

Muscle Isolation

Try to isolate the muscle or muscle group you are working out. If you are doing a bicep curl, think about the muscle and contract it while you are lifting the weight. Wikipedia explains it this way: "Muscle contraction is controlled by the central nervous system. Muscle contraction occurs as a result of a conscious effort originating in the brain." The first thing you need to do is to think about the muscle you are trying to exercise. Try to focus on that muscle and don't allow other muscles to help with the move.

Stretching

Stretching before and after a workout will help you avoid injuries. When you begin to workout you should start with some light cardiovascular activity to warm-up your muscles. Then you should do some stretches. You do not want to push too deep into your stretching at this time. You should also stretch at the end of your workout. At this time you can push the stretches a bit deeper.

When you stretch be aware of your body alignment. Try to keep good posture. Listen to the cues I give during the stretching section, are your knees locked or slightly bent, is your back flat or rounds, is your neck in the same alignment with the rest of your spine? Don't get lazy during the stretches continue to give it your all.

These are just a few pointers to help you incorporate proper form into your exercise routine. Really, in everyday life you should be paying attention to keeping good posture and form when you walk, sit, and lift things. All this will help you avoid an injury.



BURST: [Video #4](#)



FUEL

The Importance of Drinking Water

All living things require water. Your body is 50–65 percent water. Think about the fact that over one half of your body is made up of water. Without water your body can't survive for more than a few days.

Water is needed for so many of your body's functions. Without water your blood can't bring oxygen to your muscles so your muscles die. Water is also needed for your lymph system to fight disease, it's used during the digestion process, water helps regulate your body's temperature and it keeps your skin moist. In fact, every cell in your body needs water to function normally.

When you have enough water in your body, it is called "hydrated." When you do not have enough water in your body it is called "dehydrated." The best way to keep your body hydrated is by drinking pure water. You can get fluids from certain foods (like watermelon) and from other liquids, but the best source is plain water.

Some studies show that 75 percent of North Americans are chronically dehydrated and fail to drink enough water. Not good, considering water is the second most important nutrient to your body next to oxygen.

The question of how much is enough is not that simple to answer because it varies from person to person, depending on your activity level, where you live, and your size. In general, drink eight glasses of water a day. It has also been recommended to drink at least half your body weight in ounces of water. Therefore, if you weigh 140 pounds, drink 70 ounces of water. Many things can make your body need more water, such as, intense activities, hot climates and sickness.

Keep in mind that drinking too much water can also be harmful. It is rare for someone to drink too much water, but if you do it will cause your kidneys to work overtime to filter excess water out of your blood circulatory system. In extreme circumstances, forcing

your body to accept too much water within a short period of time can actually be deadly. Try to space out your water consumption throughout your day.

One way to tell if you are drinking enough water is by the color of your urine. Clear urine indicates that you are well hydrated, while a dark yellow urine indicates that you need more water in your system. Remember that some chemicals/medications (like synthetic vitamins) and heavily pigmented foods (like red beets) can add color to your urine.

Starting today – pay attention to how much water you are drinking. Stay away from sweetened drinks and focus on water!

STOP HERE! Go answer this week's questions.

Week 6



FAITH

Prayer

We discussed last week that you can show God love by obeying His commandments and teachings. One of the things God asks of you throughout the Bible is to pray. Praying is just a conversation between you and God. When you love someone you want to spend time with them and talk to them. Show God you love Him by spending some time talking to Him.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:17 we are told to, “Never stop praying.” It is easy to forget that when you are praying, you are truly talking to God. Don’t let yourself forget that. Don’t allow prayer to become just a habit you do without really thinking about the fact that the God who created you and everything around you is sitting and listening to you.

Reading Revelation 4:3-6 will remind you of God’s greatness. John describes God in these verses as covered in jewels. He says God’s throne has an emerald glow with thunder and lightning coming out of it. In front of His throne is a sea of shiny glass sparkling like crystal. The God you are praying to is Holy; He is set apart from anything else. The God that John describes in these verses, as great as He is, loves you and wants to talk to **you**. So don’t think for a minute that He doesn’t have time for you, that He doesn’t care about you or that your prayers aren’t important.

Often, when we pray, we forget that God wants to talk too. He wants to respond. When you pray, take time to sit quietly and ask Him to help you listen. God clarifies in

2 Chronicles 7:14-15 what we should do when we go to Him in prayer. “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear them from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place.”

God asks you to humble yourself by admitting your sins, praying to God, and asking for forgiveness. Seek God continually and turn from your sins. True repentance is more than just talk; it’s about a changed behavior.

A verse that should encourage you to spend more time talking with God is found in 1 John 5:14-15: "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask

anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us - whatever we ask - we know that we have what we asked of him.”

It’s important when you pray that you remember it is a time to connect with God, not just a time to throw up all your desires and then end the conversation.

This simple formula might help:

P – Praise God with a grateful heart for all the blessings in your life. “Thank you, God, for putting me in a family where I am loved and cared for.” “Thank you for sending your Son to die for me.” “Thank you, God, for helping me study for my test so that I could get a good grade.”

R – Repent of all the things you do that get in the way of loving and obeying God. Remember true repentance includes changing your behavior. “I am so sorry that I yelled at my parents and that I was disrespectful I want to treat them more respectfully. “I know I shouldn’t have lied to my teacher please help me to be honest even when it seems easier to lie.”

A – Ask God for His help. “Please help me control my anger so that I don’t yell at my parents.” “God, please help me do a good job on my test.” “God, please help me to be kinder to my big brother.” “God, please help me play well in my game tonight.”

Y - Yield to His will knowing that your needs may actually be wants and that He knows best. “God, you know I so badly want to get this summer job – but I also know your plans are better than mine.” “I really want my friend to fully recover from her cancer, God, but even if that is not what happens I will still love you and believe in you.”

It’s not like every time you go to God in prayer you have to walk through these steps, but it might be helpful when you don’t know what to say. Remember, first and foremost, to be grateful for His love. Too often we think of prayer as a 911 call. Don’t turn to God only in crisis situations; learn to talk to Him about even the small things in your life. Do not be afraid to ask for His help. And, lastly, realize He is God and He knows the best plan for your life.

One day my youngest son, Quinn, asked me to pray that he would get a position he wanted for his upcoming field trip. The next morning he asked me if I had remembered to pray for him. I told him I prayed for him, but I wanted him to know *what* I prayed. I explained, I first told God how thankful I was that you believed in prayer and you asked me to pray for you. I also told God about the position you wanted. I ended the prayer saying that I realized He knew the best place for you to be that day so that you could be used for His purpose and I asked Him to put you in that spot.

We finished our conversation realizing that the position Quinn would get was where God wanted him that day. If he didn't get the position he wanted, it didn't mean that God didn't hear his prayer. It meant that God would put Quinn where he was most needed.

I believe this is how you should go to God with all your requests.



BURST: [Video #7](#)



FITNESS

The Importance of the Warm Up and Cool Down

It may be tempting to ignore or cut short the warm-up and cool-down portion of your exercise routine – but don't.

Warm Up:

- Begin with light aerobic exercise (easy jog, marching in place, squats) for a few minutes to warm up the muscles. Then, move into easy stretches (do not push your stretches too deep during the warm-up section).
- The warm-up slowly raises your body temperature and will prepare it for more vigorous activity.
- Blood flow increases during the warm-up, which brings needed oxygen to your muscles.
- After light cardio/aerobic movements then it's time to stretch. Lightly stretching before the more vigorous part of your workout or before you play a sport reduces your risk of injury.
- The warm-up is a great time to get your mind in the right place. Be thankful that you are healthy enough to do the exercise. Remember that God created an amazing thing when He created your body and you should take proper care of it. Motivate yourself to give 100 percent!

Cool Down:

- The cool down/stretching will help prevent waste products, such as lactic acid, from building up in your muscles. This build-up of lactic acid can cause tightness and soreness in your muscles.
- The cool down also helps your muscles and tendons relax and loosen, stopping them from becoming stiff and tight.
- It will increase your range of motion in your joints.

- The cool down period is a great time to talk to God!

Proper Stretching Techniques:

- Perform balanced stretching. This means you should always stretch the muscles on both sides of your body evenly. If you stretch the muscles on the backside of your leg, you should stretch the front muscles as well. Don't stretch one side more than the other.
- Avoid over-stretching. Never stretch to the point of pain or discomfort. It is okay to feel slight tension or a pull on the muscle at the peak of a stretch, but it should not cause pain.
- Go slow! Always stretch slowly and evenly. Hold the stretch for at least 20 seconds during the cool down.
- Never bounce or jerk while stretching. If you stretch your muscle this way you can injure yourself. All stretches should be smooth and slow.
- Don't forget to breathe! Flexibility exercises should be relaxing. Deep, easy breathing is important. It is best to deepen the stretch when you exhale.



Fuel

The Importance of Breakfast

You have probably heard that breakfast is important, but if you were to look deeper into the research on this subject you would really be motivated to start eating a healthy breakfast.

The American Dietetic Association reports that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Yet, this is the meal that is often skipped. Breakfast is needed to get your body and brain going. The word "breakfast" comes from "breaking the fast." Your body went the entire night without food (fasting) and in the morning it needs to be refueled (break the fast). Eating breakfast is important, but in order to refuel your body you need to put the right food in it.

Here are some simple ideas for a healthy breakfast to fuel your body for your day:

- Whole-grain waffles topped with peanut butter
- Hot oatmeal topped with apples and cinnamon
- Low-sugar granola mixed with fresh fruit and a cup of plain yogurt (Try not to use fruit yogurt because there is quite a bit of added sugar in fruit yogurt. Greek low-fat plain yogurt is best because it has more protein and less sugar.)

- Peanut butter on a banana (Check the ingredients on your peanut butter and make sure it lists only peanuts and salt.)
- Breakfast smoothie (plain yogurt, fruit, 100 percent juice or skim milk all blended together)
- Eggs, tomatoes, cooked quinoa and black beans scrambled together
- Think outside the box. Eat leftovers from the night before. For example, take leftover meat, chicken, pork, or fish, dice it up, and add an egg. Voila! You have a breakfast burrito!

Now that you have some ideas as to what you should eat for breakfast here are some more reasons to take the time to eat in the morning:

- It will help you stay at a healthy weight.
- It will help you control yourself from overeating later in the day.
- It gives you energy.
- It provides better concentration and problem-solving ability throughout the day.
- You won't feel as tired and restless.
- It balances your glucose levels (important for the brain and muscles).

STOP HERE! Go answer this week's questions.

Week 7



FAITH

Hearing His Voice

Last week we talked about how you can show God love by praying. Have you been talking more with God this past week?

Don't feel like when you pray you have to use big fancy words. Just pour out your heart to Him. It might sound something like this. "God I just want to start by saying thank-you. Thank you for loving me. You know way more about how I should live my life than I do. Please help me learn to hear Your voice and Your thoughts on how I should handle the things going on in my life."

When you pray, aren't you really hoping for an answer? If you want to hear from God, you have to believe He will respond to your prayer. Psalm 91:14-15 reads:

“Because he loves me,” says the LORD, “I will rescue him;

I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.

He will call upon me, and I will answer him;

I will be with him in trouble,

I will deliver him and honor him.”

God says in these verses that you need to love Him and acknowledge Him and then He will answer. When you call out to God He hears you and He wants you to hear His reply. If you believe that Jesus is the Son of God and you repent of your sins, but you still don't hear God, it's probably because you aren't quite sure how to listen for His voice.

A question often asked is, “How do you know it's God? Does He speak with an audible voice?” Some will hear His voice loud and clear, but for most we “hear” His voice in other ways. Henry and Richard Blackaby's book, “Hearing God's Voice,” explains that people typically hear God speak through:

- The Bible
- The Holy Spirit
- Thoughts and Prayers
- Circumstances
- Conversations

Before you continue take a moment to listen to the song “Word of God Speak” by Mercy Me

The Bible

It is so important for any Christ follower to read the Bible. In 2 Timothy 3:16 it is written that, "All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness." You will be more motivated to read and follow the Bible when you believe everything in it comes directly from God.

The books in the Bible were written by different people, but their written words came from God. They didn't write their own thoughts; they only wrote what they heard from God. God is the real author of everything in the Bible even though He used different people to actually write the words on paper.

If you believe you are hearing from God, you have to realize that God would never contradict Himself. In other words, if you hear something you believe is from God but it goes against what He says in the Bible then it is not from God. He DOES NOT contradict Himself. In order to know if what you hear contradicts God character, you have to know God and the best way to know God is to read the Bible.

God tells you in the book of John that Jesus is God in the flesh. (The Trinity can be really difficult to comprehend, but God is God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.) Therefore, if you want to hear the voice of God, it is helpful to learn what Jesus taught, what He said, and how He lived.

Have you ever tried to carry on an in-depth conversation with a person you did not know well? It doesn't usually go very far. Take time to get to know God and study the Gospels to learn more about Jesus. The more you know about Him, the more meaningful and personal your conversations will be.

The Holy Spirit

Shortly before Jesus was crucified, Jesus met with His disciples to reassure them of what would happen after He was gone. He promised them a helper: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you." (John 14:16-17).

The Holy Spirit, then, is another way you hear God's voice.

"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." (John 14:26). That same Spirit is available to you today. His Spirit is that still small voice inside you... the One who will remind you of what God said. That same small voice will help direct you on God's path for life. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand a situation, to

give you the right words, and to bring clarity in any situation where you want to hear from God.

Thoughts and Prayers

“What God has to say to us is infinitely more important than what we have to say to Him, yet we generally monopolize the conversation” (from *Hearing God’s Voice*). When you pray, don’t go at it with a “to do” list. You must leave time to be quiet. During that quiet moment, listen for God. It is then that you might have a name come into your mind or a situation you feel the need to pray for. Don’t ‘blow it off’ and think, “I wonder why that came into my mind?”

I learned the hard way what can happen when you don’t take God’s voice seriously.

I awoke one morning with this strange feeling that I needed to pray for a friend. I remember praying, “God, I don’t know why I am praying about this person but I know you have put her name on my heart.” A few nights later I woke up dreaming of the same person. She was doing something I knew she shouldn’t be doing.

I talked to my friend and told her about my dream and she said she had the same dream about herself. We ended the conversation and I didn’t follow up with her; I didn’t continue to pray for her.

I wish I had taken God’s voice more seriously. A few weeks later, the dream I had about my friend came true and it caused so much pain in her life. If I could go back in time, I would have prayed more fervently for her, taken the dream more seriously, and stayed closer to her. God was speaking to me but I didn’t act the way I should have.

If you are praying and asking God for guidance and something comes into your mind, it’s a good chance it is God. Be ready because God wants so badly to speak to you. [Jeremiah 29:13](#) reads: “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

When you pray, seek God with all your heart and you will hear from him.

A great practice is to journal while you pray. Write down what you believe God is saying to you. This is one of the best ways to bring clarity to your thoughts.

Circumstances

God will use circumstances to communicate to you. This does not mean you need to read too deeply into everything that happens, but you should keep your heart and mind open to

hearing God speak through a situation. Circumstances can be very confusing at times. We need to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to interpret the circumstances for us. The truth is, some events occur and we don't really understand them until years later.

Conversations

The first examples of God using people to speak for Him were the prophets in the Bible. A prophet is any person who serves as God's spokesman to the people. God still uses people to speak His words to others. Christ can use anyone to be a messenger. One of the clearest ways to hear God through others comes from the Church. Since Jesus went up to heaven, the plan has been for Christians to gather together. You don't have to attend church to have a relationship with Christ, but you will be missing out on all God has to say if you don't gather with other believers on a regular basis.

You can also go to trusted friends, who you know are believers, and ask their advice on a situation. Ideally, ask them to pray and see if God gives them direction. Be careful, though, if anyone gives you advice that goes against who you know God to be – then you know that advice is not from God.

I might have told you this before, but I did not really believe that Jesus was the Son of God until 2002 when I was 40 years old!

I can remember the first time I really believed God was talking to me. I was sleeping one night when I clearly heard, "Feed the hungry." Was it an audible voice or was it in my thoughts? I don't know, but I had this overwhelming feeling that it came from God.

In the morning, I mentioned it to my close friend and she replied, "I was at a meeting last night and Loaves and Fishes, a local food bank, announced it was trying to find someone to cook a hot meal for their shoppers." That night I went to a party and there was the woman in charge of Loaves and Fishes. (I had never met her before.) I went up to her and mentioned all that had happened. She said, "We've been praying for someone to come along who could cook a weekly meal."

Being a new believer at the time, I was so thankful that God made His voice clear to me. I had read in the Bible that Jesus wants us to care for the poor. God gave me a love and a passion for cooking, He put the thought, "Feed the hungry," in my mind. In a conversation with my friend, I heard about a need. In a circumstance (the party), I came in contact with the organization in need. It hasn't always been that clear, but in this situation I knew it was time to start cooking!



BURST: Video #5



FITNESS

Muscle Confusion

Muscle confusion is simply the process of working your muscles in a different way than they are used to, causing them to utilize more resources (including calories) in order to do any given activity.

For example, if you are a jogger and you frequently run three or four miles per day, that's great. However, your body will get used to that activity after awhile, and you will stop getting as much out of it. Possible ways to confuse your muscles could include:

- Running shorter distances, but at higher rates of speed.
- Running longer distances than you are presently used to.
- Stopping during your run to do strength training exercises such as push-ups, squats, or lunges.
- Running at intervals where you run at a certain speed, then speed up, then slow down, speed up, slow down, etc.

That same principle of muscle confusion can be a part of any fitness routine. Not only will it keep your caloric burn at an all-time high, but you will get the most out of your workouts as well. Muscle confusion has the following benefits, in addition to a higher calorie burn:

- Decrease your risk of injury. Muscle confusion allows your muscles to be used from several different angles, rather than repetitively working them from the same angle all the time. This prevents overuse injuries and strengthens those tissues for different lifestyle activities.
- It keeps you from getting bored with the same routine over and over again. By incorporating muscle confusion into your workouts, you will enjoy the change of pace, and will also modify your mindset when exercising, rather than just looking at the same boring routine all the time.
- Muscle confusion cranks up your metabolism. (I will explain more about metabolism later.) Your metabolism - simply put - is the rate at which your body utilizes calories. By constantly confusing your body about how much energy is going to be needed, your metabolism will go up to higher levels during your

workouts and stay cranked up longer. When adding muscle confusion to your workout you commonly will add strength training which is the best way to increase your metabolism!

The only way that you can stop your body from adapting to your exercise program is to change up your exercise routine on a regular basis. Never give your body the chance to adapt to what you are doing. You should have several Faithful Workout routines so change the session you use and add other activities to it. Mix it up!



FUEL

Sugar

Enjoy a bowl of sweetened cereal for breakfast, a cup of fruit yogurt for a snack, and a scoop of sherbet for dessert, and you've just had more than 20 teaspoons of sugar without opening the sugar jar.

Sugar is a short-term source of both energy and pleasure. Sugar is being added to more and more of your foods and you could be unaware of all the sugar you are consuming. On average, Americans consume 170 pounds of sugar a year. Is that crazy? If you are like the average American and you are eating 170 pounds of sugar (I hope not), listen carefully to the dangers of eating too much sugar.

According to the World Health Organization, no more than 10 percent of calories should come from sugar. Their advice lines up with the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture), which reports that a *maximum* of 12 teaspoons daily, based on a 2,200 calorie diet, can be consumed. Don't misunderstand these statements, you do not have to have 10% of your calories come from sugar and you don't have to have 12 teaspoons of sugar – you should *not exceed* that amount.

You might think, “There is no way I consume 170 pounds of sugar a year or even eat 12 teaspoons a day.” Even if you don't eat sweets, the amount of refined sugar you may be consuming would no doubt shock you. Over two-thirds of the refined sugar used in this country is added to processed foods. For instance, did you know that a tablespoon of ketchup contains a full teaspoon of sugar? Think about that, one-third of ketchup is sugar. Foods like breads, soups, cereals, cured meats, hot dogs, lunch meat, salad dressings, spaghetti sauce, crackers, mayonnaise, peanut butter, pickles, frozen pizza, canned fruits and vegetables, tomato juice, and lots of other products all contain sugar.

This doesn't even take into account the obvious sugary products like candies, cakes, ice cream, cookies, doughnuts, and soda.

It can be challenging to limit the amount of sugar you eat. One thing that will help you track how much you consume is to know that four grams of sugar equals one teaspoon. If the food label states that there are 24 grams of sugar, that equals six teaspoons of sugar.

If your recommended calorie intake is 2,000 calories and you eat a candy bar and soda that is loaded with approximately 400 calories and 16 teaspoons of sugar, you have just used up one-fifth of your calorie quota for the day without moving you closer to your daily goals for minerals, vitamins, and other nutrients. You have also gone well over your maximum allowance for sugar.

Artificial sweeteners, although they do not have calories, are not good for you. There has been quite a bit of research on artificial sweeteners and some conflicting information. Most research shows that they are not good for you and can actually make you gain weight. Please listen to this – if a drink is sweet and it says it has zero grams of sugar, that means it contains artificial sweeteners and you are better off not drinking it.

Extra weight isn't the only possible consequence of too much sugar. Sugary drinks and foods can cause cavities, especially in children. Some studies have found that diets high in sugar can quickly boost triglycerides, fats in the blood that can clog the arteries, and cause heart problems.

Sugar is thought by many scientists to be addictive. We have enough scientific evidence now to tell us that we can train ourselves to crave, to build tolerance, and to experience withdrawal when we ingest a lot of refined sugar. These are the hallmarks of addiction: craving, tolerance, and withdrawal.

It is strongly recommended that you keep a watch on how much sugar you are eating. Other than what is already mentioned above, additional studies show that sugar can cause problems with brain function, irritability, diabetes, and anxiety – just to name a few.

My recommendations:

- If you are craving something sweet, go for fresh fruit.
- If you want chocolate, eat dark chocolate and only a small amount.
- Start looking at food labels for the hidden sugars.
- If you are a soda drinker, cut way back. Or, better yet, QUIT!!
- Mix three-fourths sparkling water with one-fourth 100 percent fruit juice for an alternative to soda.
- Mix low-fat plain yogurt with fresh fruit instead of buying fruit-flavored yogurt.

- Educate the rest of your family and encourage them to cut back on sugar. Your parents will be so impressed when you start educating them on better nutrition choices. You can teach them how to properly fuel their bodies!

I hope this story hits you as much as it hit me. There was an awesome boy in our community who was diagnosed with cancer. After one of his surgeries we were looking for things to give him or do for him to cheer him up. The doctors told us not to give him anything with sugar because they believe sugar is a breeding ground for cancer cells. Think about that, his doctors who specialize in cancer said he shouldn't eat sugar because it can make the cancer cells multiply.

Don't wait to be diagnosed with a disease before changing the way you eat. Sugar might taste good at the moment but it is doing really bad things for your body. Using a little discipline in what you eat may greatly affect your quality of life!

Watch this video on Sugar: [Video #8](#)

STOP HERE! Go answer this week's questions.

Week 8



FAITH

Worship

If you were asked what the word “worship” meant, how would you reply? Take a second and think about that. What do you think the word “worship” really means? Most Christians would say something along the lines of “to sing or play music that praises God.” If you asked a Non-Christian group what “worship” means, they might say “to admire or idolize something or someone.”

According to the true Hebrew definition of the word worship (shachah), both groups would be wrong. It means literally “to lay prostrate before”. Prostrate means to lay face down in a submissive way. When you lay prostrate you are submitting. Some of you might be thinking this is way too deep. Just stay with me for a bit longer and you can learn how this applies to you.

One definition for the word *submit* is “to yield or surrender yourself to the will or authority of another.” God wants you to worship Him in this way because when you completely submit (turn over control in all areas) to God only then can you receive the abundant life He wants for you.

Some of you might be thinking, “Submit? No! Anything but that.” It’s a difficult concept. To submit is to get completely “off your agenda” and get onto God’s. There is something about the human part of you that might get uncomfortable when you think of submitting. It seems so passive. It might even feel like you’re giving up. But here’s the catch that should make you willingly submit to God: God loves you and wants the best for you and can help you more than you can help yourself.

You have to choose to submit to God on a daily basis. For most, this just doesn’t come naturally. Start your day asking God to keep you open to His guidance. Ask Him to help you put aside your own plans and to keep you open to His calling for your day.

God does not ask you to submit because He is a tyrant, but because He is a loving Father and He knows what is best for you. The blessings and peace that you gain from humbly surrendering and submitting yourself to Him daily will bring you such blessings that nothing in this world can compare.

You may be saying, “Okay, I can buy that. But once my heart and ego are submitted to God, what do I actually *do*?” Read the New Testament and study how Jesus lived his life. In [John 5:19](#) Jesus answers, “I assure you the Son can do nothing by himself. He does

only what he sees the Father doing.” If Jesus believed He could do nothing without God, doesn’t it make sense that you need God? When you really get that God’s plans are better than yours, you will be able to start submitting and worshipping God.



BURST: Video #7



FITNESS

How hard should you work out?

The best way to answer this question is to teach you how to listen to your body. If your muscles are getting really tired and you are losing proper form, slow down. When you want to give 100 percent of what you are capable of, you are the only one who knows what 100 percent feels like. 100 percent for you is different than 100 percent for someone else.

I know for some it can be quite challenging to listen to your body and know when it is time to push a bit harder or to back down a bit. One way to judge how hard you should work out is by a target heart rate test. This test lets you measure your fitness level and monitor your progress during your fitness program. This approach requires measuring your pulse periodically as you exercise as well as staying within 55 to 85 percent of your maximum heart rate. This range is called your target heart rate.

To figure out your target heart rate, the first thing you need to know how to do is to take your pulse. Your pulse is the number of times your heart beats in one minute. Follow these directions to figure out your pulse:



1. Place the tips of your second and third fingers on the palm side of your other wrist below the base of the thumb.
2. Press lightly with your fingers until you feel your blood pulsing beneath your fingers. You may need to move your fingers around slightly up or down until you feel the pulsing.
3. Use a watch with a second hand, or look at a clock with a second hand. Count the beats you feel for 10 seconds. Multiply this number by six to get your heart rate (pulse) per minute.

Count your pulse: _____ beats in 10 seconds x 6 = _____ beats/minute

Now that you know how to find your pulse, here is how the target heart rate test works:

220 minus your age = maximum heart rate (MHR). So, if you are 15 years old, your MHR is 205 ($220-15=205$).

Your target heart rate zone, during exercise, should typically fall between 55-85 percent of your MHR. Your target heart rate would fall between 113 and 174 ($205 \times .55 = 113$) and ($205 \times .85 = 174$).

During most of your workout you should stay within your target heart rate. It is okay to elevate your heart rate above your target rate but you don't want to keep your heart beating that fast for longer than about two minutes.

When you first begin an exercise routine, take your heart rate several times during your workout. Use the above formula to then figure out if you are in the target heart rate. This will begin to help you get a feel for how hard you are working.

After you have worked out for a while, you can feel how hard you are working just by listening to your body. Another way to judge how hard you are working is to do the "talk test":

1. Can you sing a song without a problem?
2. Can you easily say a full sentence?
3. Is it difficult for you to say a sentence without stopping to breathe?
4. Is it hard to say even a word?

If you feel you are always able to accomplish number one, you need to do something to make the workout more challenging. If you are continually at number four, you want to ease up.



FUEL

Whole Grains

Okay, I must confess that I was a white refined flour person most of my life. Although I still love a fresh French baguette, in the last few years I've switched to whole grain breads, pastas and rice. The reason I switched over is because research has shown that whole grain consumption can lower your risk of several serious health problems. The risk of many diseases, including heart disease and diabetes, is markedly lower in people who consume whole grains instead of refined ones.

Let's begin by explaining the difference between white flour and whole grain flour. A grain has three parts to it: the bran or outer shell, germ which is the embryo, or reproductive part of the seed, and endosperm, the tissue that feeds the germ and represents the bulk of the grain. Whole grain food products use the *whole* grain. In contrast, white flour uses only the endosperm; the healthy germ and bran are thrown away. When you eat white flour you are missing out on the incredible health benefits of the germ and bran.

Researchers believe that the benefits of whole grains come not just from the bran and germ, but also from the health-promoting phytochemicals (plant-based nutrients) located throughout the seed.

Whole-grain foods include products such as 100% whole-grain bread, whole grain or whole wheat cereal and pasta, oatmeal, brown rice and quinoa (one of my favorites), and barley, just to name a few. The great thing about these products is they are also high in fiber and therefore help you feel full longer. If a product is truly whole grain the first ingredient listed should be 100% whole grain or 100% whole wheat.

One evening my son, Quinn, made up a great batch of tomato sauce for our pasta. I cooked up some whole wheat noodles to go with the sauce. It tasted awesome. When you put a flavorful sauce on the noodles, you can't tell the difference between white and whole wheat noodles. My daughter tasted the pasta to see if it was finished cooking and she said she actually liked the taste of the whole wheat noodles better than the white noodles.

Look at the difference between white and whole wheat bread: A slice of commercially prepared white bread has 66 calories, 1.9 grams of protein, and 0.6 grams of fiber. A slice of whole-wheat bread has 69 calories and provides 3.6 grams of protein and 1.9 grams of

fiber. It's pretty obvious which one is better. Even though white bread has slightly fewer calories the whole grain bread is the healthier choice because it has more fiber and protein. The best option isn't always the one with the fewest calories.

Often in the process of making white or refined flour, food producers will add nutrients back into the flour. When they add nutrients they typically call it "enriched flour". What I am learning more and more, though, is that there is nothing quite like the real thing. I encourage you to make the switch to whole wheat. I'm still struggling to break my ties with white flour. Will I still eat a French Baguette with olive oil every now and then? Probably. Will I try to add more whole grains to my diet? Absolutely!

STOP HERE! Take your fitness test, answer this week's questions, and take Test Two.

Week 9



FAITH

Loving Others

After Jesus says in Matthew 22:37-39 to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” He goes on to say “A second commandment is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

In Romans 13:8-10 Paul tells how Jesus “rolled up” all the 10 commandments into loving God and loving others. If you love others you won’t kill them, you won’t steal from them, and you won’t be jealous of them. When you love someone, you’re less likely to wrong him or her.

Loving, serving, and caring for others requires a level of selflessness that is hard to achieve. It’s very easy to be selfish. It’s very easy to put your own needs and desires before others. It’s especially difficult to put aside your selfishness and love those that are not very easy to love. Unfortunately, Jesus doesn’t say it’s okay to not love certain people. He does not say if someone is really mean you don’t have to act lovingly towards them. He doesn’t let you off the hook that easy! (It’s probably because they need love more than those who are easy to love!) In fact, Jesus says in Luke 6:27-28, “But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”

A great verse to put to memory is Roman 12:17: “Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable.” This verse makes it clear that it is not okay to “hit back.” You have to take the high road even when people are treating you unfairly. When you really take to heart that it is not your job to judge, and disburse punishment on others, you will find it easier to act lovingly towards them.

I find Galatians 6:9 to be very encouraging: “So let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t give up.” It’s tough to continue to try and do what is right when so many around you aren’t. God promises if you hang in there and continue to live the way He wants you to you will be blessed because of your commitment to kindness.

A quote by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow might help you deal with those who are hard to love. “If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility.”

The reality is that many of the people you interact with have a story that you don't know about. When it seems like they are angry and treating you unfairly, it might be because of something from their past or something that is going on at the present time. It is when you interact with someone who is challenging to get along with that you can really let Jesus' love shine through you.

When someone treats me harshly I try and turn my anger towards them into sympathy. I think about how sad it is that they are so full of anger. I wonder what made them so mad at the world. When I feel sorry for them, and I let go of the anger I felt because of the way they treated me, it is easier for me to act kinder towards them.

In the second part of [Galatians 6:9](#) we are told that when we continue to do what is good, we will receive blessings. Those blessings might not come from the person we are trying to be kind to, but they will come from your Heavenly Father. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see people the way He sees them.

[1 Corinthians 13:4–8](#) gives us a picture of how we are to love others: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”

Francis Chan, in his book called “Crazy Love,” suggests filling in your name for the word “love” or “it” in the above verse. Reread the verses above and try substituting your name for “love” or “it.”



FITNESS

Metabolism

Metabolism is the amount of energy (calories) your body burns to maintain itself. The number of calories you use during a day will fluctuate depending on your activity, but your metabolism is based on what your body uses when stationary.

If you would like to increase the amount of calories you burn during a day so that it is easier to maintain a healthy weight, the best thing to do is to increase your metabolism. The best way to increase your metabolism is to exercise.

When you are doing cardiovascular activity and strength training (lifting weights, using the exercise bands, doing push-ups, squats, etc.) you are using more calories than when you are sitting still.

When you strength train properly, you develop more lean muscle mass. When you increase your lean muscle mass, your metabolism will increase because muscle tissues use more calories than fat tissues. You do not only burn more calories during the exercise; you burn calories all day and all night.

Cardiovascular (or aerobic) exercise allows you to increase the amount of calories you burn both during the workout and for about four hours after you stop exercising. Strength training has a greater long term impact on metabolism, but cardio exercises also help you burn through more calories, as well as benefiting other body functions.

A combination of cardio and strength training is best for optimal fat burning and metabolism boosting. Exercise any time you can fit it into your day and you will start to look and feel healthier.



BURST: [Video #7](#)



FUEL

Healthy Snacks on the Go

Snacking has gotten a bad reputation but actually eating many small meals throughout the day makes sense, both for your schedule and your nutrition. The key to snacking, say the experts, is to think ahead.

As with any good eating plan, planning ahead can make all the difference. Typically, when you want a snack, you want it now. You'll walk into the kitchen and grab whatever you can put into your mouth. So here's where planning ahead comes in – have foods ready to eat that are healthy. My daughter was helping me cook the other day. She was slicing up peppers for a stir-fry. She would cut one for the stir-fry and put the next one in her mouth. She said if peppers were sliced up and ready to go, she would always snack on them. Have healthy snacks available.

Remember, a smart snacking menu requires the standard nutrition essentials — a balance of carbohydrates, protein, and fat, plus vitamins and minerals. It also needs two other elements — variety and moderation. Mix it up when snacking. Include fruits, veggies, dairy, meat, and grains. Just like your meal planning, include foods from all the food groups in your snacking options. Moderation can be so tough! It tastes so good; it's hard to stop. When snacking, set out a certain amount and then put the rest away.

How often should you graze? Everyone's different, so it's important to listen to your body to determine how often — and how much — you should eat. Every day brings about a new schedule. If you know you have to go to a sports practice and won't be home until 7:00 p.m., bring a snack so you don't get too hungry. If you let yourself get too hungry, you will overeat when you do get around food.

Remember that to stay at a healthy weight you need to burn off all the calories you are taking in. When snacking, pay attention to what you are eating. Sometimes we snack in such a rush that we don't even remember eating.

When eating a snack that comes with a food label, read the label to be sure that what you're calling a serving matches with what is on the package. Snack foods are notorious for piling up the calories, and your idea of a portion might be several times bigger than the manufacturer's.

I know people who love to snack on energy bars and energy drinks, but I'm not a big fan of most of them. When it comes to energy bars and drinks, remember that “energy” is

often another word for “calories from sugar.” Any extra energy (calories) that you don’t use turns into fat, period. Also, many of the bars and drinks contain lots of sugar, which provides a short-term boost but can leave you feeling tired later.

Here are my top 10 snacks:

- Sliced Peppers with Hummus
- Berries
- Turkey Roll Up (turkey rolled up in lettuce)
- Smoothies with fresh fruit, plain low-fat Greek yogurt, and 100 percent juice. Greek yogurt is higher in protein than most yogurts.
- Banana or Apples with Almond or Peanut Butter (make sure the only ingredients are nuts and salt)
- Mixed Veggies: Snap Peas, Celery, Carrots are great to put in a baggie to take with you
- Cheese Quesadilla with Salsa (find some great tasting whole wheat tortillas)
- Scrambled Egg with Black Beans
- Handful of nuts
- Tortilla Chips and Salsa (look at the ingredient list on the packages and make sure there are only a few ingredients listed and you know what they are)

STOP HERE! Go answer this week’s questions.

Week 10



FAITH

Serving Others

The fact that Jesus came back to life after He was crucified is really what the Christian faith is all about. Many people agree that there was a man named Jesus and that he was a good guy, but what really separates the group into believers and non-believers is the resurrection. The resurrection is when Jesus came back to life after He was died on the cross.

If you have a hard time believing that Jesus rose from the dead, think about this: Thousands, probably even millions of people have tried to prove that Jesus did not come back to life after His crucifixion. They want so badly to prove that this is a lie. After more than 2,000 years, no one has been able to find proof that goes against the Bible. In fact, many people, in their attempts to prove that Jesus is not the Son of God, have become strong believers who speak about the truth.

Paul told the church in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 15: 3-7 that the resurrection is of utmost importance. He told them that if they didn't believe that Jesus came back to life they could go and ask Peter, who saw Him, or James, or anyone of the 500 people who saw him. If that is not convincing, Paul said they could come talk to him about his story about meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus. He was talking to a group of people who could walk out of the church and ask these people face to face, "Did you see Jesus?"

Over 2,000 years later and probably millions of attempts to prove it false – the truth of Jesus is still **"the truth and the good news."** When you really believe this, it should change how you live so much for the better! When you really believe this, you should dig into your Bible and want to figure out how God wants you to live.

When you do get into God's word, you will find that one of the things He wants you to do is to love and serve others. Listen to this conversation between Jesus and Peter (one of his disciples). This conversation took place after Jesus had died on the cross.

After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," Peter replied, "you know I love you." "Then feed my lambs," Jesus told him.

Jesus repeated the question: “Simon son of John, do you love me?” “Yes, Lord,” Peter said, “you know I love you.” “Then take care of my sheep,” Jesus said.

A third time he asked him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Then feed my sheep.” (John 21: 15-17)

Jesus was making it very clear that if we love Him then we are to take care of His sheep. When Jesus refers to “His sheep” He means “His people.” Jesus is often referred to as the Great Shepherd and we are called His sheep. So how can you take care of His sheep?

Before you take a look at some verses that will help you answer this question, read what Jesus said in Mark 10:45: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” When you fully allow God to give direction to your life you **will** feel Him guiding you to love and serve others in some way.

Through service, you give others the things they lack, and you find meaning and fulfillment in your own life. Both the Old and New Testament writings give many examples of the importance of service and charity:

- “Feed the hungry! Help those in trouble! Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you shall be as bright as day. And the Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy you with all good things, and keep you healthy too; and you will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring.” (Isaiah 58:10-11)
- “What should we do then?” the crowd asked. John (John the Baptist) answered, “Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.” (Luke 3:10-11)
- “If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God’s love be in that person?” (1 John 3:17)
- “Those who desire to be great in God’s kingdom must be the servant of all.” (Matthew 20:26).

It would seem that the more you give to others, the poorer you would become because you are giving your time and belongings to others, but just the opposite is true! Service to others brings meaning, joy, excitement, and fulfillment to your life in ways that wealth, power, possessions, and self-centered pursuits can never match.

Jesus said, “For if you give, you will get! Your gift will return to you in full and overflowing measure, pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, and running over. Whatever measure you use to give – large or small – will be used to measure what is given back to you.” (Luke 6:38)

Proverbs 28:27 expresses it this way: “He who gives to the poor will never want, but he who shuts his eyes will have many curses.”

Serving others needs to be motivated by love and not by guilt. Your good deeds should also be motivated by a desire to help others, not for the sake of public recognition.

“If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it, but if I didn’t love others, I would have gained nothing” (I Corinthians 13:3)

"Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.” (Matthew 6:1-2)

I find that when God asks something of you, it is because He wants your life to have more meaning and purpose. In Acts 20:35, the author, Luke, says, “In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” God wants to bless your life, and by encouraging you to serve others He knows you will be blessed.

Our main goal for serving others should always be to show them God’s love and to give God glory!

Take a moment to listen to why this artist wrote the song I Refuse. Let the words of the song come into your heart!



FITNESS

Muscle Balance

What does “muscle balance” mean and why is it important?

I think the best way to explain muscle balance is by describing “muscle *imbalance*.” Put simply, muscle imbalance occurs when one muscle, or group of muscles, works harder than it should while other muscles don’t work hard enough. Muscle balance is an important component to injury prevention. When you exercise, you should think about how you can achieve muscle balance. Muscles often work in pairs and those muscle pairs need to be balanced in terms of strength and flexibility. For example, we bend our elbow by using the biceps (front side of the arm) muscle. Its pair is the tricep (backside of the

arm) muscle. The tricep muscle must be willing to stretch for the bicep muscle to contract and bend the elbow fully.

It is important that you work opposing muscles. If you work the bicep, you need to work the tricep. Your daily routine can cause muscle imbalance. As a result of these naturally occurring muscle imbalances, you need to be sure to work the other half of the muscle pair during your workouts to maintain muscle balance.

Injuries can occur when you focus too much on one muscle group. Your knee can be very sensitive to injury if there is muscle imbalance in the leg muscles. It is important to strengthen and stretch all muscles. When muscle imbalances result, you need to stretch the muscle that is too strong and too short and then strengthen the muscle that is too weak. You might be thinking, “How can I tell if I have muscle imbalance?” For most people, pain will be the first symptom. If you do experience pain, you might want to see a physician or a physical therapist.



BURST: [Video #7](#)



FUEL

How Does Your Diet Affect Your Skin?

Medical evidence indicates that diet does affect your skin. Eating a healthy diet can lead to healthier skin. A diet that lacks proper fluids and vitamins can have a negative effect on your skin. All the expensive skin care products won't achieve healthy skin without help from your diet. Here's how you can clean and nourish your skin from the inside out:

Ground flaxseeds are an excellent source of omega-three fatty acids, which promote good skin health. (Add some flaxseed into your next smoothie or sprinkle on top of your steamed veggies)

Vitamin A is essential for healthy skin and also helps prevent premature aging of your skin. (Carry some carrots with you – it's a great snack and it gives you instant energy. Mango is also high in Vitamin A; cut some up and put it in your next smoothie)

Vitamin E helps promote great skin, (Spread some almond butter over a banana. Maybe even sprinkle with flax seed or just eat a handful of almonds)

Mushrooms: This fungus is rich in riboflavin, a B vitamin that's vital to your skin. Riboflavin is involved in tissue maintenance and repair, and improves skin blemishes caused by rosacea. This vitamin is so important for skin repair that the body uses large amounts after sustaining a burn or wound, or after undergoing surgery.

Healthy Fats: Make sure your diet includes fats such as salmon, avocado, olive oil, canola oil, and the oils in wheat germ and flax seeds to prevent dry skin. Eat a big salad and put avocado and salmon on top and make some dressing using olive oil. Your skin, and the rest of your body, will love you for it!

Water: Every cell in your body needs water to function properly and that includes your skin cells. Not only does it hydrate your skin, it also helps remove toxins. Drinking plenty of water is so important for healthy skin and it's FREE!

Lotion: Did you know that your skin is the largest organ in your body. Pay attention to what you put on your skin. Your skin absorbs your lotion into your body. Read the ingredient lists of some of your skin products. It might shock you to find out what you are putting on your body. You might want to switch to pure olive, almond or coconut oil as a natural way to moisturize your skin.

Another way you can nourish your skin is with a facial mask. So many of the products you buy in the store are loaded with chemicals. Here is an all-natural avocado mask you can use to moisturize your skin:

1. Mash one whole avocado.
2. Add one teaspoon flaxseed oil and one 1 teaspoon honey.
3. Mix together until smooth and creamy.
4. Apply it to your face. Sit still and leave it on for 15-20 minutes.
5. Wash it off with warm water.

Your skin is also affected by toxins in the air and by the toxins you inhale. Smoking is so bad for your skin (and for every other part of your body). Smoking will cause you to get premature wrinkles and will make your skin have an ashen, gray color. Not pretty! I can't stress this enough – do not smoke. You might think I am just going to try one – that is what most addicts say. One will most likely lead to more and then to an addiction.

Lastly, although this doesn't have to do with your diet, it does affect your health - wear sunscreen! Ultraviolet light from the sun is the most common cause of skin cancer. Wearing sunscreen will help protect your skin from the sun. Use a sunscreen with sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15.

STOP HERE! Go answer this week's questions.

Week 11



FAITH

Who is Your Neighbor and How Are You to Treat Them?

When Jesus said in **Matthew 22:39** that you are to love your neighbor as yourself, what did He mean by your “neighbor?” Who is your neighbor and how are you to show them love. To get this answer, let’s look in **Luke 10**.

In this chapter an expert of the law asks Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?” Here is Jesus’ response:

"A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'"

‘Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?’ The expert in the law replied, ‘The one who had mercy on him.’ Jesus told him, ‘Go and do likewise.’”

The man who was robbed in this parable was a Jew. In that time, there was a deep hatred between Jews and Samaritans. Knowing this, you might be thinking that the Samaritan should have been the last person to stop and help the Jew.

You can learn three things about loving your neighbor from this story:

1. It is often easy to justify why you don’t need to show someone love.
2. Your neighbor is anyone of any race, creed, or social background who’s in need
3. Love means acting to meet the person’s need.

Your neighbor includes even those that you don't find particularly easy to be friends with, the person who you know talked behind your back, your brother who can really irritate you, the kid in your youth group who thinks he is so much better than anyone else, and even the little girl in Africa you have never met.

Jesus doesn't give you an out. Through all His teachings, especially His parables, He shows us that we need to love even those we don't really like. In John 13 Jesus shows us just how far we are to take His commandment to love and serve others.

Really try to picture this scenario in your mind: It is the Last Supper and Jesus is there with His disciples. Because in those days most people wore sandals and roads were dusty and dirty, it was customary for guests to have their feet washed. Often it would be a servant who would go around and wash everyone's feet. At the Last Supper, Jesus is the one who washed His disciples' feet!

Quite a bit of meaning goes into why Jesus washed their feet, but at this point what I want you to focus on is the fact that He washed *all* of the disciples feet, including Judas. For those of you who are not familiar with Judas, he is the disciple who turns Jesus over to those who will crucify Him. In other words, he's the bad guy! Jesus knew that Judas was going to do this the very next day because it says in these verses that "the devil had already prompted Judas." So Jesus knew that Judas would show the Roman soldiers who He was by kissing Him on the cheek. Yet, He still washed Judas' feet. Amazing, isn't it!

As much as you might like to say you don't have to love someone and serve them because they don't deserve it, you should learn from Jesus' example that that is not how He wants us to live.

Now that we have defined who our neighbors are, let's dig into how the Bible says we should treat them. Listed below are verses that should inspire and challenge you:

- "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." **Matthew 7:12**
- "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves." **Romans 12:10**
- "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you"
Ephesians 4:31-32
- "So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your

sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person.”

Matthew 5:23-24

- “Live in harmony with each other. Don’t be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don’t think you know it all!” **Romans 12:16**
- “Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: you must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires.” **James 1:19-10**
- “Spouting off before listening to the facts is both shameful and foolish.” **Proverbs 18:13**
- “A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.” **1 Corinthians 12:7**
- “Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn others, or it will all come back against you. Forgive others, and you will be forgiven.” **Luke 6:37**
- “Make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.” **Philippians 2:1-2**

Pay particular attention to these verses from **Luke 6:27-36**; they are considered to be some of the most challenging words in the Bible.

"But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

Wow! Now that’s some tough direction. Wouldn’t it be awesome if you could really live out what these verses express? If you believe that the Bible is the word of God, you have to seriously try to live all of it out, not just the parts that are easy and make you feel good.



BURST: Video #4



FITNESS

The Importance of Strengthening Your Core

Your core muscles are the muscles in your back and abdominal area that are responsible for providing support to the back, hips, pelvis, and shoulders. If you have weak core muscles, you are at risk of injuring your back area. Your core muscles help you to bend over and come back up, they help you have good posture, they allow your trunk to rotate, and they allow you to stop the flow of urination. Your core muscles consist of not one muscle but a group of muscles.

To strengthen your core you need to do a variety of exercises to be sure that all the muscles in this group are strong. Core exercises are an important part of a well-rounded fitness program. Aside from occasional sit-ups, core exercises are often neglected. It is important that your core muscles — the muscles around your trunk and pelvis — are in better shape.

To be a strong athlete, you need core strength. They play an important role in swinging a golf club, tennis racquet, or baseball bat. They are needed to keep your back free of injury if you like to run or bike. Kicking a soccer ball also requires strong core muscles. The list goes on. Check out these seven specific reasons to include core exercises in your fitness routine:

1. Core exercises improve your balance and stability.
2. Core exercises don't require specialized equipment, so you can do them anywhere.
3. Core exercises give you the strength to carry yourself with good posture.
4. Strong core muscles make it easier to do most physical activities.
5. You don't need lots of time. If done properly, you can work your core in less than 10 minutes
6. Core exercises can help you reach your fitness goals.
7. Core exercise aid in preventing back injuries.



FUEL

The Fat Dilemma

It's true that many people are eating more fat than they need. People are also eating too much of the wrong type of fat. On the other hand your body needs some fat to function properly. In fact, on average, 30 percent of the calories you take in should come from fat. (Remember, eat according to what your personalized plan indicated on the Choose My Plate website from Week 3: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov>)

What does fat do for your body?

1. Fat provides energy.
2. Fat is needed to prevent essential fatty acid deficiency.
3. Fat is needed so your body can absorb the fat soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K that are needed to keep your body functioning optimally
4. Fat helps food stay in your stomach longer, giving you a greater sense of satisfaction and preventing you from being hungry soon after meals. Diets too low in fat (less than 20–25 percent) may trigger cravings.
5. Fat is back-up energy if blood sugar supplies run out (after 4-6 hours without food).
6. Fat provides insulation under the skin from the cold and the heat; it protects organs and bones from shock and provides support for organs.
7. Fat surrounds and insulates nerve fibers that help transmit nerve impulses.
8. Fat is part of every cell membrane, which helps transport nutrients across membranes.
9. Fat is a building block needed for everything from hormones to immune function.

So what fats are okay to eat?

Believe it or not, there are “healthy fats!”

When choosing fats, your best options are *unsaturated* fats: monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. These fats can lower your risk of heart disease by reducing your bad cholesterol levels in your blood.

One type of polyunsaturated fat, omega-3 fatty acids, may be especially beneficial to your heart. Omega-3s appear to decrease the risk of coronary artery disease. They may also protect against irregular heartbeats and help lower blood pressure levels.

So where can you find these healthy fats?

Monosaturated fats: olive oil, peanut oil, avocados, nuts, and seeds

Polyunsaturated fats: vegetable oils (sunflower, corn, safflower, soy, and cottonseed), nuts, and seeds

Omega-3 fatty acids: fatty, cold-water fish (salmon, mackerel, herring) flaxseeds, flax oil, and walnuts

Harmful Fats

Saturated fats are less healthy. They can increase your risk of heart disease by increasing your total cholesterol (including your bad cholesterol).

Saturated fat is found in animal products (meat, poultry, dairy, eggs, lard, and butter), and coconut, palm and other tropical oils. You should limit your intake of saturated fat. There is some controversy among researches as to the health benefits of eggs and coconut oil.

New research is showing that eggs and coconut oil, in moderation, can have positive effects on your health.

Trans fats should be **completely** avoided. It's important to know that even if a label reads 0 grams trans fat, the product could still contain trans fat. If an item has less than .5 gram of trans fat, the manufacturer can list 0 trans fat. Now, it might not seem like .5 gram is that big of a deal. However, because of their negative effect on the body, you should try to completely avoid them. To know if a product contains any trans fats, take the time to read the food label. If you see partially hydrogenated vegetable oils, shortening, and margarine listed in the ingredients of any food, think twice before eating it.

To summarize:

- Your body needs fat to function properly.
- Thirty percent of your calorie intake should come from fat.
- The healthiest fats are monosaturated, polyunsaturated, and Omega-3 fatty acids.
- Avoid trans fats.
- Eat a minimal amount of saturated fat.

STOP HERE! Go answer this week's questions.

Week 12



FAITH

Handling Peer Pressure and Confronting Others

Knowing how to handle peer pressure is one of the biggest challenges you might have to deal with. Most of us want to “fit in” and be “included in the group.” The problem is that too many that are “in the group” are doing things that go against the way God wants us to live. If you want to “fit in” and be “included in the group” you might be asked to do things that go against God’s plan for your life.

First, you must take to heart the words in 1 Thessalonians 2:4, “Our purpose is to please God, not people. He alone examines the motives of our hearts.” (Please try and memorize this verse – it can be life changing) One of the biggest challenges is to not let people’s opinions of us matter more than God’s. At the end of the day, when you put your head on your pillow, you should ask God, “Did I live the way you wanted me to today.” **If you feel you did God’s will than what other people think of you shouldn’t matter.**

This is a tough one. We want to be liked and accepted. You should never compromise how you live to gain people’s approval. Paul says in Galatians 1:10, “Obviously, I’m not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ’s servant.” You cannot completely submit to God’s will if you are worried about what your friends will think!!

You must also choose your friends wisely. In 1 Corinthians 15:33 Paul tells us that “bad company corrupts good character.” I love the way Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, says it in Proverbs 13:20, “Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble.” It’s pretty clear what these verses are about – you have to be careful who you choose for friends.

We are called to spread God’s love with non-believers, but you want to protect yourself when you are spending time with them. You do not want to be drawn into the bad things that might be doing. You want to shine God’s light in their darkness. One way we are called to protect ourselves is to pray. Ask God to draw you so close to Him that you do not follow the ways of those who are not following God.

When you go into a situation that makes you feel you could be tempted to do wrong, you are told to put on God’s armor. (Read Ephesians 6:13-17). You need to allow God to protect you from temptations. The devil can use others to try and draw you away from

God's path for your life. Paul promises us in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that when we are tempted, God will show us a way out.

Another way you can prepare for dealing with peer pressure is to practice what you are going to say when someone asks you to do something that you shouldn't do. For some of you, it's no problem just strongly saying, "No, I'm not interested." For others, it's harder to say, "No." Often, when you say, "No," they might respond with, "How do you know you won't like smoking cigarettes unless you try it?" Or, they might say, "Come on, everyone wants to see this movie. Don't be difficult. Just come and watch it." Always be prepared with answers so that you are not tempted to change your ways.

The other side of peer pressure is how to confront someone who is acting in a way that goes against God's plan. For now we are going to talk specifically about confronting a person who is a believer in Jesus. (The Bible teaches us that we are to confront believers in a special way.)

Often, when we are trying to decide if we should confront another believer about a sin in their life, we think of Matthew 7:1: "Do not judge, or you too will be judged." We might then decide not to talk to the person. The verse reminds us to first look closely at what we are doing and what sins we need to repent of. We need to first walk away from our own sins *before* examining others behaviors. (Read more about this in Matthew 7:2-5.)

This passage does not mean we are to overlook wrong behavior. If you see another **believer** sinning, you should pray and ask God if you should confront the person with his sin in a way that shows that person respect and love. You are not to judge the person; you are only to point out the truth with the ultimate goal of helping that person get back on God's path which will bring them more joy in life.

We are to "point out" their sin and love the person. Loving someone who is living a sinful lifestyle does not mean you accept their behavior.

Ultimately, you see, it's about what's in your heart. Is your heart guiding you to confront someone's sin because of genuine concern for their welfare and how their sinful behavior will lead to strife, pain, and discomfort? Or, is your heart taking a tiny bit of pleasure in making someone feel small, guilty, and less holy than yourself when you catch them in sin? If your motives come from pure love and you have prayed about it, then talk to the person.

When you address someone or if someone asks you your opinion, you need to be sure to give the whole truth in love. Proverbs 24:24-26: "Whoever says to the guilty, 'You are innocent' — peoples will curse him and nations denounce him. But it will go well with those who convict the guilty, and rich blessing will come upon them. An honest answer is

like a kiss on the lips.” I know sometimes it is easier to answer the way you know they want you to, but you must always deal with complete truth in love.

This is tough stuff. It is not easy to deal with peer pressure and it’s hard to go to someone you know is sinning and try and help them stop. The only way to make it through all these challenges is to pray and allow God to lead you every step of the way!



FITNESS

Spot Reduction

People often ask me questions like, “How can I lose my belly fat?” “What exercises will make my thighs thinner?” The truth is, there is no way to lose fat in one certain spot of your body. Body fat has a mind of its own. It appears and disappears from where it wants to. To better understand why this is, you need to learn a bit about fat distribution.

Remember, you need fat on your body. You need fat in your diet for your body to function properly. Everyone has adipose (fat) tissue all over their body. This tissue is made of adipocytes (fat cells) whose sole job is to store energy in the form of fat. Body fat distribution differs from person to person. There are generally two types of fat storage: *visceral* (surrounding organs, found in the mid-section of the body), or *subcutaneous* (beneath the skin - about 80 percent of all body fat).

Many people compare subcutaneous fat to the layers of an onion. Rather than disappearing from a particular place, it comes off layer by layer from the whole body. For others, fat is lost from the most recent place it was gained.

During weight loss, obese men tend to lose more visceral (internal from the belly) fat while obese women lose more subcutaneous (under the skin, all over the body) fat. Typically, exercise seems to result in more subcutaneous fat loss. Diet alone results in more visceral fat loss.

The reality is this: There is very little you can do to influence from what areas you would like your fat to disappear. You can’t exercise or diet away fat from one certain part of your body. Does this mean it’s worthless to exercise – absolutely not! You need to first remember that exercise is about getting your body healthier. You need to take the focus off exercising only because you want to look better. Secondly, exercise burns calories, increases your metabolism, and so much more.

Exercising vigorously on a specific body part ***will not take fat away from just that area.*** You can tone the muscles in that area, but it won’t have any effect on the fat.

This is important to know because too often people will focus their exercise efforts on one area, which can produce muscle imbalance. For instance if you feel your inner thighs are heavy and you focus all your exercise efforts on inner thigh exercises you will cause an imbalance in your thigh muscles. Exercise your entire body with a mixture of cardio and strength training, and eat healthy. Then you will be doing the best you can to get your body to a healthy place!



FUEL

Never Say “Diet” Again

The thought of going on a “diet” stirs up a feeling of deprivation and sadness. If you are hoping to change the way you fuel your body, instead of saying you are going on a diet say, “I am going to start eating healthier. I am going to start eating more of the foods that God created.” The thought of going on a “diet” will probably bum you out, but the thought of starting to “eat healthier” should excite you!

I think one of the biggest mistakes people make is when they cut their calorie intake way back to lose weight. Here’s what happens when you deprive your body of enough food: Starving your body can trigger a self-defense mechanism that has your body store fat to keep your body functioning while it is not getting enough food. Also, when you drop your calorie intake way down it can slow down your metabolism (the amount of calories your body burns just to maintain itself).

To get to a healthy weight, you need to take in fewer calories than you put out. To maintain a healthy weight you need to have balance between calories coming in and calories going out. When you entered your height, weight, and activity level into the [personalized plan](#) on the Choose My Plate website, did it mention that your weight was lower or higher than the healthy range? If so, follow their nutrition plan to help you get to a healthy weight.

Healthy weight loss will always take time. Do not go on a diet. Instead, be thankful that you can start eating healthier!

STOP HERE! Take your fitness test, answer this week’s questions, and take Test Three.

Week 13



FAITH

What Does it Mean to Be a Disciple?

Jesus told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18–20)

These are some of the last words Jesus spoke to his disciples. Jesus knew He would be leaving them. He wanted them (and you) to remember this message and make it a top priority. This passage is referred to as the Great Commission.

When you read His command to go and make disciples do you think, “Wow! That is overwhelming. How am I going to make disciples, baptize them, and teach them about the Bible when there are still things about the Bible that I don’t even understand?” I know I felt that way when I first read these verses.

Reread the last sentence from the above verse. Do you find comfort in Jesus’ last words: “I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” You are not trying to carry out His commands on your own, Jesus promises that He is with you always. You have to remember that once you believe that Jesus is the son of God, you have the Holy Spirit’s help at all times.

I think that before we dive into what it means for us to make disciples we should first examine our own relationship with Christ. Are you a disciple?

The word disciple means “pupil” or “learner.” It means someone who has studied, learned, and followed the teachings of Christ. Let’s look at some verses that will help you better understand what a disciple of Jesus looks like.

We’re going to take a look at four qualities that Jesus talks about when He describes a disciple. Are you someone who abides in His Word, bears fruit, loves others, and is willing to follow Jesus even at a great cost?

John 8:31: "Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.'" Another version of this verse is: “You are truly my disciples if you keep obeying my teachings.”

This verse might make you wonder if you are a disciple of Jesus because although you try to follow His teachings, you sometimes mess up. If we go back to the original meaning of disciple, we are reminded that it means “pupil” and “learner.” Jesus does not expect us to be perfect, but He does want us to have the desire to follow His words. To abide in His Word is more than just reading the Bible when you are at church. It means trying to really understand the teachings in the Bible and to incorporate it into all you do. Perfection is not necessary, but the desire to follow Him is.

I love what Paul says in Romans 7:15: “I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate.” Have you ever started your day saying, “Today, I am not going to do ...” and then you find yourself doing it before you have finished your breakfast! I certainly have days where that happens. Even Paul had a hard time doing the right thing and God used Him in huge ways to make disciples. The more you can fill yourself with God the closer you will get to following His teachings. You'll never be perfect and that's okay!

Another quality of someone who is a disciple is someone whose life bears fruit. Often in the Bible, Jesus references trees to make a point. When he says we are to “bear fruit” it means there should be a change in our behavior so that we are becoming more like Christ. When we become more like Christ our life should look different than it did before. A tree that is healthy will bear more fruit. John 15:7–8 reads, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”

What is being stated in both John 8:31 and John 15:7? Being a disciple begins with drawing close to Jesus and reading your Bible. If you want to bear fruit and be His disciple, it starts with putting your focus on connecting with God. Another verse about being a disciple is John 13:35: “Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.” The original Greek word used in this verse for “love” is “agape,” which means unconditional love. This is different than just a friendly love or a romantic love; it means “I love you no matter what the circumstances”.

Here is what the Life Application Study Bible reveals about this verse: “Love is more than simply a warm feeling; it is an attitude that reveals itself in action. How can we love others as Jesus loves us? By helping when it's not convenient, by giving when it hurts, by devoting energy to others' welfare rather than our own, by absorbing hurts from others without complaining or fighting back. This kind of loving is hard to do. That is why people notice when you do it and know you are empowered by a super natural source.”

Imagine if all Christians loved this way! People would be so drawn to the Christian faith because of how we loved.

This is tough, serious stuff. Abide in the Word, obey His teachings, produce fruit, and unconditionally love others. This is quite a list. But here's a passage that will really challenge you:

Luke 14:26-27 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters — yes, even his own life — he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple." Okay, honestly, I wanted to leave this passage out. I thought this sounded so harsh and I didn't want to raise the bar too high and scare you away. I ask that you stay with me here and listen.

Sometimes when you come to a verse that confuses you, it's best to look at other verses to gain clarity. God does not contradict himself; therefore, scriptures cannot contradict.

Leviticus 19:17 shows that we are not to hate our brothers. 1 John 4:20 reads, "If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen." Then the second part of the greatest commandment is "love your neighbor as yourself." These verses all clearly state that God does not want us to hate others. So how is it that He says in Luke 14:26-27 we have to hate our families in order to love Him?

Here's how: Sometimes the word "hate" in the Bible means hate in the literal sense. However, in many Bible occurrences, it means "strong preference or choice." Matthew 10:37 is similar to Luke 14:26. Here Jesus says, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves a son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." To be a disciple, you have to be willing to put your relationship with God above all else.

God is not asking you to hate everyone; He is asking you to love Him more than anyone.

Jesus also states in Luke that you must put Him above yourself. You must be willing to "carry your cross." This does not mean you are willing to be moderately inconvenienced. It means you would be willing to do whatever He asks of you.

This is tough stuff. You might be thinking, "Do I even want to be a disciple if it means all this?" You have to go back and think about who God is and how He treasures you. He loves you so much, He knows that if you stay really connected to Him (abide in Him), your life will be blessed. He wants you to live life abundantly with joy!

When you become a believer, you are saved and will have eternal life. John 3:16 reads "For God so loved the world that He sent His only Son so that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life." Realize, though, that just saying you believe and

really believing in your heart and acting it out can be different. When you really believe in Jesus your life should look different. You should be motivated to grow closer to God.



BURST: Video #4



FITNESS

Maintaining a Healthy Weight

There are too many diet plans out there that make getting and staying at a healthy weight so confusing. Here is what you need to know about weight control (I know I have said this to you already but please really take this in). If you eat more than you burn off, you will gain weight. If you eat less than you burn off, you will lose weight.

It really is that simple. It does not have to be mysterious, outlandish, or a new fad.

You have read this now several times because it is so important. A calorie is a unit of energy found in food. Even if you were to lay flat on your back and not move, your body would still need energy to survive. The amount of calories your body uses when it is at rest is determined by your metabolism. (Remember, the more muscle you have, the better your metabolism or the more calories you burn even when your body is at rest.) Your body needs calories that come from food in order to keep functioning. Everything you do beyond just lying there requires even more calories.

When you take in calories, your body will convert them into energy for your body to use. When you take in more calories than your body uses, the energy will be stored as fat. This storage will stay in your body until you use them up. When you use more calories than you take in, your body will go to the reserves and use up the stored calories or fat.

One pound is equal to 3,500 calories. So, when you take in 3,500 calories above what your body needs, you will gain a pound. The reverse is also true. If you want to lose a pound, you need to use up 3,500 more calories than you take in. Although your body weight isn't necessarily a gauge of your overall health, we do know that it is important to maintain a healthy weight. If you know you are overweight, you should try to cut 500 calories from your daily intake or burn off 500 calories above what you've been doing. At this pace, you will lose one pound a week. Five hundred calories times 7 days = 3,500 calories. It really is a simple equation.

If you already feel you are eating a well-balanced diet, one of the easiest ways to cut out calories is through portion control. Something as simple as using a smaller plate might help you with this. Dinner plates seem to be getting larger and we feel the need to fill them. It's funny that when you use a smaller plate and fill it, you feel like you are eating more than when you use a large plate and only fill it half way.

Another easy way to cut calories comes from making changes to your beverages. Replace your high calorie drinks with water. (Squeeze some fresh lemon in it for more flavor.) Try to go without butter on your bread. It's the little changes that you make that will give you big results!



FUEL

Healthy Cooking Tips

I promise that you don't need to go to cooking school to learn how to cook healthy, nutritious meals. There are so many little things you can do to make food healthy and still taste great. The first thing you need to do is to use healthy ingredients. Most of you are probably not the head chef at your house now, but knowing how to cook will come in handy. Maybe you could cook a meal for your parents for a special occasion.

Take the time to plan your menus, make a grocery list, and shop.

Here are some simple pointers to get you on your way to healthier cooking:

- **Trim the Fat** Before you cook your meat, cut off any visible fat from meat and poultry. This includes the skin on poultry.
- **Use Marinades** Lean cuts of beef can be tough. The best way to prepare them is to marinate them before cooking. Marinades tenderize meat and keep it moist while cooking. They also can enhance flavor that may be lost when you trim fat. Its fun to experiment with different types of marinades.
- **Cooking Methods** Low-fat cooking methods include grilling, broiling, roasting, sautéing, and baking. Cooking melts away much of the fat in meat and poultry. So when you cook meat or poultry in your oven, be sure to put it on a rack on a baking pan so that the fat drips away.

- **Pay Attention to Your Serving Sizes** This is one of the biggest mistakes we make. A serving size of meat should be about three ounces or the size of a deck of cards.
- **Fresh and Raw** The optimal way to eat vegetables is in their most natural state. You will get maximum vitamins and nutrients from most vegetables when you eat them raw. It's also easy to prepare them. Just wash and eat!
- **Soups** Home-made soups can be really easy to make and are healthy. You can add a variety of vegetables to your soup to get your vegetable servings in for the day. Most of the pre-made soups in the store are very high in sodium, so the best way to eat soup is to make it fresh.
- **Fat Substitutes** When baking, if a recipe calls for one-half cup of butter or oil, you can actually use one-fourth cup butter and replace the other one-half with applesauce.
- **Reduce the Sugar** You might think "I can't just reduce the sugar," but the truth is, you can. Next time you bake, use only 75 percent of the recommended sugar. If you also substituted applesauce for some of the oil, you can actually reduce the sugar by up to 50 percent. The applesauce adds extra sweetness.
- **Mix your Flours** Substitute whole wheat flour for white flour or use a mixture of the two.

Here are a few healthy recipes that are easy to make. Be sure to check to see if you have all the ingredients before you start making the recipe. (Check with your parents to be sure it's okay to cook on your own, or ask them to help.)

Baked Potatoes. They're actually healthier than most think. They do have a high glycemic index, but they also offer lots of health benefits. (The skin is healthy, so wash them well and then you can eat all of the potato.) What makes the potato not so healthy is what we put on it. Here are some ways to make healthy baked potatoes.

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

Wash the skin of the potato and place it in the 400 degree oven.

Cook for approximately 45 minutes, depending on the size of your potato. Large potatoes might take a bit longer. Cook until a knife inserted into the potato goes through to the middle easily.

Remove from oven Careful! The potato will be really hot. Slice open the top of the potato.

Ingredients to put in potato

Lowfat cottage cheese - Cooked broccoli - Shredded cheese - Chili - Black beans and salsa - Diced tomatoes and red peppers with plain low-fat yogurt

Smoothie: Too often we are in a rush in the morning and don't make the time for breakfast. Here is a quick, easy recipe so that you can make breakfast part of your morning routine.

Put into a blender one half cup of low-fat yogurt (Greek yogurts have more protein), one half of a frozen banana, five frozen strawberries, one cup of 100 percent juice.

Blend until smooth – Now you have a serving of dairy, a serving of protein (if you use a yogurt high in protein), and two servings of fruits – and it's only breakfast!

Vegetable Soup:

1. Cut two cups of your favorite vegetables into bite-sized pieces
2. Open one can of diced tomatoes (12-ounce can)
3. Measure one cup of low-fat, low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth
4. Put all ingredients into a saucepan and cover with a lid
5. Cook over **low** heat for 30 minutes or until vegetables are soft
6. Pour into a bowl and sprinkle parmesan cheese and salt and pepper to taste

This is so easy and good for you! This adds approximately three servings of vegetables to your day and only about 130 calories (varies according to the type of vegetables and broth used).

There are so many other healthy cooking pointers, but those are a few to start incorporating this week!

STOP HERE! Go answer this week's questions.

Week 14



FAITH

Making Disciples in Your Family

This week you will continue to look at Matthew 28:18–20, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Some of you might look at the primary verbs in this scripture (*go, make, baptize, and teach*) and think, “Jesus couldn’t be saying this to me. I can’t do that.” Actually, Jesus did mean you and everyone else who believes in Him. How you go about this will look different from person to person, but in some way all believers are called to make disciples. When you ask God to be Lord (ruler) of your life, He commands you to make disciples. If you’ve made the decision that you believe Jesus is the Truth, then you are commanded to “Go.” Simple as that.

Everyone is not called to be a formal evangelist who preaches on street corners, but God has gifted you in a way that allows you to bring Him glory and show His love to others.

This command of “making disciples” can seem so overwhelming. You might be thinking, “Where do I even start?” For some of you, the first place to start is in your own home. You might live in a home where everyone is already living their life for God, or it might be that you are not sure what the rest of your family believes. Maybe your family, those who live in your home, are all believers, but you have an aunt, grandma, cousin, etc. who have no knowledge of God’s love.

You have to remember that you cannot make someone believe in Jesus – only God can do that. You are called to “go” and share His love. Do not let it get you down if you share your story with someone and they don’t believe. You need to continue doing what God asks you to do and not get caught up in the results. When you are faithful to God, you will be drawn closer to Him.

Often the best and most natural way to tell those close to you about God is through “your story.” Share with them how you have felt God working in your life. Your story might include how you prayed about something and God answered your prayer. Or, you might convey how you felt peace during a crazy event because you knew God was in control.

Your story is unique to you. God instructs us in 1 Peter 3:15 to always be prepared to give a reason for the hope that we have. What's great about "your story" is that people can't argue with you because it's **your** story.

Another step in making disciples within your family (living with you or elsewhere) is to pray and ask God to direct you to those who are ready to hear the truth. Jesus says in John 5:17,19-20 that God is always at work and that even He, Jesus, can do nothing without His Father's help. These verses are so important to understand. When you are hoping to make disciples you need to see where God is already at work and then you have to rely on Him to guide you. You can't do it on your own.

If you pray and feel God asking you to share with someone, you might start with "your story." If they act interested in hearing more, talk to them about Jesus; ask them questions. It is always important to do this because of your love for them and because of your love for Jesus. Your love for God should inspire you to be obedient, and you should be motivated to share your faith because of your love for the person you are talking with.

You might think, "Isn't this really the church's job? Aren't they more equipped than I am to do this?" The church definitely brings people closer to God, but the church can't do it alone. When trying to make disciples, one thing you can do, if they live close to you, is to invite them to church. Don't think your job is finished with that gesture, however. You will want to stay involved in their journey so they can discover God's truth.

If you want someone to be excited about getting to know Jesus, you need to show them the joy that comes from being a disciple. They will be drawn into a deeper relationship with Jesus if they see the "benefits." I know the word "benefits" seems like an odd choice, but people often want to know "what's in it for me." Why would they want a relationship with Jesus if they don't see the joy that comes from it? (Remember, joy is not the same as happiness. God doesn't promise an easy, happy life, but he does promise joy.)

Let your joy be so evident that others can't wait to know and follow Jesus like you do!



BURST: Video #5



FITNESS

Overcoming the Obstacles to Exercise

After many years in the fitness industry, I've heard all the reasons for not exercising. I completely believe that God wants you to care for your body (His creation), so let's address some of the typical reasons people don't exercise consistently:

No Time

This is probably the number one reason I hear. It's true that you probably have a lot going on in your life, so fitting exercise into your schedule might be hard. The first thing I recommend to help you with this is to schedule it. Write it in your day's plans. Most of you have a schedule that you have to keep so that all your courses are covered. Write exercise into that plan.

Don't feel like you have to reserve a full hour or more. On some days, you might only be able to get in 20 minutes. Still write it in.

If you do make the time to exercise, even though it takes away minutes from your day, you will probably get more done because you have more energy. NASA says that if you exercise for 30 minutes in the morning you will get much more done in your day. So even if you give 30 minutes to exercise (less time to do other things) you will get more done!

Studies show that you will also be sick less and you will sleep better if you exercise. I love this quote, "Those who think they have not time for bodily exercise will sooner or later have to find time for illness." Edward Stanley

I believe those who say they have "no time" really don't understand all the benefits of exercise. They don't put enough value on exercise or they would find the time to do it. If you are struggling to make the time to exercise go back and review all the benefits of exercise.

It's Boring. It's Not Fun. I Don't Like It

Okay, I just have to say this: Life isn't about just doing what you "like." The truth is that we all have to do things we don't want to do. That said, hopefully, you can find a form of exercise that you enjoy and may even consider fun. There are many different ways to get your body moving.

If you are into music, do a workout that allows you to listen to motivating music. Put on your headphones and go for a run, crank up the tunes and start dancing, or put in an exercise DVD that has good music. Pay attention, though, to the type of music you are listening to; be sure the lyrics are encouraging! It can be really invigorating to push your body physically while listening to awesome Christian music.

Many people have more fun exercising with a friend. Gather up a friend or two and invite them over to workout with you or go for a hike or play tennis. Exercising together is a great way to catch up with friends while doing something good for your body. If you are home-schooled, organize other kids to do “PE” with you.

Already at a Healthy Weight

Some people think the only reason to exercise is to lose weight. Therefore, if they are already at a healthy weight, they feel that there’s no incentive to workout. Review some of the benefits of exercise and you will understand that getting to a healthy weight is only one benefit. There are so many more:

Exercise boosts your energy level.

Exercise improves attitude.

Exercise helps your body fight disease.

Exercise helps you sleep better.

Exercise can add fun to your day.

I’m Injured

My neighbor broke his leg and was in a cast from toe to upper thigh. He thought this was going to be a solid reason for not being able to exercise. I told him it did not buy him a pass to skip workouts, and I encouraged him to do what he could do. He rode the exercise bike for cardio by strapping in one foot and setting the other foot on a chair. He did lots of upper body and core exercises. When I had shoulder surgery from a skiing accident, I couldn’t do my normal exercise routine. I decided I would focus on what I could do!

There are obviously some injuries and illnesses that might require you to take a break so that you can fully recuperate. Too often, though, we take breaks when there’s actually a lot we can be doing. I don’t believe in pushing past the pain or ignoring the pain, but I do believe you need to search out what you can do given your situation.

I’m Too Tired

I'm sure you will have days where you look at your schedule, realize you need to exercise, but just feel too tired. First, make sure you are getting enough sleep. If not, get to bed earlier. If you are getting enough sleep but are still feeling too exhausted to exercise, look at what you are eating. Are you eating foods that are giving your body what it needs? Are you eating too much sugar, which causes your energy levels to spike for a short bit and then cause you to crash and feel lethargic?

If you are getting enough sleep and eating healthy foods and you still feel tired, remember that exercise will give you energy. The biggest challenge is getting started. If you're not in the mood, try playing your favorite "psyche up" song and get your workout clothes on. Then, tell yourself you just have to go for 10 minutes. If you are still dreading it after 10 minutes, you can stop. Most of the time, once you get moving you will gain more energy and finish out your full workout.

One last suggestion is to schedule your workouts for a time of day when you typically feel less tired. If you're a morning person, try to arrange your exercise in the morning. If you wake up feeling like you have lead in your veins, schedule your workout for a little later in the day.

I'm Too Heavy and Out of Shape

It makes me sad when I hear people say this is the reason for not exercising because if they continue with this thought process they will never get active. Don't get down on yourself. Ask God to give you the motivation to make the healthy changes you need. The only way to get in shape is to start. If you are a bit self-conscious, the great thing about exercise DVDs is that you can do them in your home.

Pace yourself when you first begin. You don't want to overdo and push it so hard that you feel light headed or get nauseous. Also, set realistic goals. You will be encouraged when you see yourself hitting the goals you set.

I promise that if you stay faithful to your workouts, you will see results. You will notice yourself being able to work out longer and harder. You will get stronger!

So, what's stopping you from making exercise part of your daily routine? Sticking to a regular exercise schedule isn't easy. Whatever your obstacles are, focus on God's desire that you care for your body. Allow His words to be your encouragement.



FUEL

12 Mistakes When It Comes To Healthy Eating

I was doing some research and came across this article at www.webmd.com. The article was titled “12 Diet Mistakes and How to Avoid Them.” I agreed with their thoughts and wanted to pass them along to you. If you are making some of these mistakes, try avoiding one bad habit a week until you’ve gotten yourself on a healthy eating routine.

Relying on Crash Diets

Determined to lose 10 pounds fast, you turn to a crash diet. Perhaps your plan calls for nothing but grapefruit or cabbage soup each day. You slash your daily calories to fewer than 1,000 – and sure enough, the pounds melt away. But when you eat so few calories, you train your metabolism to slow down. Once the diet is over, you have a body that burns calories more slowly – and gains weight more quickly – than ever before.

Skipping Breakfast

Skipping breakfast seems like a simple way to cut calories, but the result can be insatiable hunger the rest of the day. This may lead to unplanned snacking and eating a super-size portion at lunch, making calorie counts soar. But breakfasts that are high in protein and fiber can reduce hunger throughout the day. In fact, studies show that people who eat breakfast every morning are more likely to maintain a healthy weight.

Losing Track of Your Snacks

Maybe you count calories meticulously at every meal, but what about all those nibbles in between? There’s the bag of pretzels at your desk, the little slice of cake at a party, or the soda you chugged down. All of this mindless munching adds up and could sabotage an otherwise well-planned diet. If you’re serious about counting calories, you may want to use a notebook to keep track of each bite.

Not Snacking at All

While mindless snacking can pad your waistline, *thoughtful* snacking may do just the opposite. People who eat several small meals and snacks a day are more likely to control hunger and lose weight. Snacking helps keep your metabolism in high gear, especially if the snacks are protein-rich. Nuts are a good, high-protein choice, and research suggests people who snack on nuts tend to be slimmer than those who don't.

Loading Up on Low-Fat

Low-fat products can play an important role in your diet. Just remember that low-fat isn't the same as low-calorie and it's not a license to take second and third helpings. If you pile your plate with low-fat cake, you may end up eating more calories than if you had a smaller slice of regular cake. The best way to know how much fat, sugar, and calories you're getting is to check the nutritional label.

Sipping Too Many Calories

When counting calories, many of us tend to overlook what's in our drinks. This is a big mistake when you consider that some beverages have more than 500 calories. Even the calories in fruit juice and soda can add up quickly. What's worse is that liquid calories don't curb hunger. You're not going to eat any less after a high-calorie drink.

Drinking Too Little Water

This is one of the simplest diet blunders to fix. Water is essential for burning calories. If you let yourself get dehydrated, your metabolism drags – and that means slower weight loss. Research suggests adults who drink eight or more glasses of water per day burn more calories than those who drink less. So try adding a glass of water to every meal and snack.

Ditching Dairy

Milk, cheese, and ice cream are taboo for many dieters, but ditching dairy foods may be counterproductive. Some research suggests that the body burns more fat when it gets enough calcium and produces more fat when it's calcium-deprived. Calcium supplements do not appear to yield the same benefits, so dairy may have other compounds at work as well. Most dietitians recommend sticking to nonfat or low-fat milk, cheese, and yogurt.

Taking the Drive-Through Bait

The drive-through is convenient after a hectic day, and you can always order the salad or other healthier option. But once you're there, can you resist that milkshake or other treat? And if you allow yourself the ease of fast food once, it could become a habit. According to one long-term study, people who ate fast food more than twice a week gained 10 more pounds than those who had it less than once a week.

Weighing Yourself Every Day

Weighing yourself daily is a recipe for frustration and doesn't yield useful information. It's more important to look for a long-term trend with weekly weigh-ins. If your goal is to lose one or two pounds a week, you'll be satisfied to see those full-pound drops when

you step on the scale. The result is more motivating than the confusing swings that may accompany daily weigh-ins.

Setting Unrealistic Goals

Telling yourself you'll lose 20 pounds your first week is probably setting yourself up for failure. If you know you won't be able to do it, you may never start your diet in the first place. If you do diet and lose five pounds in a week, instead of celebrating you may feel discouraged that you didn't reach your goal. A realistic goal is vital to successful dieting. If you're not sure what your goal should be, talk to a dietitian.

Avoiding Exercise

When you don't exercise, you place the entire burden of weight loss on your diet. If you become more active, you can eat more of the things you like – and still lose weight. The key is finding an exercise you enjoy. If the treadmill seems tedious, try swimming, biking, or a Faithful Workouts DVD. (Okay, I added that one. The webmd site didn't include it – but they should!) Spend time at different activities until you find one you *want* to do on most days.

STOP HERE! Go answer this week's questions.

Week 15



FAITH

Making Disciples in Your Community

Two weeks ago, you learned about what it means to be a disciple. Last week you studied how you can encourage others in your family to become a disciple. This week you will be asked to read about making disciples in your community.

All of us are wired differently. For some, sharing your faith with those in your community sounds exciting and for others it sounds frightening and challenging. Here are some of the common challenges people face:

1. I can't make disciples in my community because they know I am not perfect, so why would they listen to me?
2. I have to face these people everywhere I go. I don't want them to start to avoid me because I am a "Jesus Freak."
3. Isn't it really their own business what they believe?
4. I haven't heard God asking me to do this.
5. I don't know enough about the Bible to make disciples of others.

Here are some thoughts on each of these issues:

1. You're right, you aren't perfect. Nor is anyone else. The original disciples weren't perfect. Imagine if they had used the logic that they needed to be perfect first. Think about it: Virtually everyone in the Bible who points people toward the glory of God is broken, a sinner, a social outcast, and somewhat messed up. Moses, David, Nehemiah, and Joseph are just a few. Paul, who wrote a large portion on the New Testament, used to hate Christians and wanted them killed.. He was certainly not perfect, yet he was used by God in huge ways!
2. Too many people (adults and kids) are overly concerned with what others think of them. One of the most freeing decisions comes when you stop living your life to please everyone around you and allow yourself to focus on how God wants you to live. Wow! That can really change how you live. Also, when you share your faith with others don't come at it with trying to win them over. You need to come at it with love and believe that their life will be so much better if they learn about Jesus. One of my favorite songs is called, "Not Ashamed," by Ken Reynolds. Who cares if people call you a "Jesus Freak." Take it as a compliment!
3. If someone in your community was dying and you had a cure, would you feel "it's not my business?" Hopefully not. When you really believe their life on earth will

be better and you want them to spend eternity in heaven and not hell, you have something so much more valuable than a cure to their illness. You have something that will improve their here and now as well as their forever!

4. God makes the command to “go and make disciples” so clear in the Bible. If you believe the Bible is the Word of God, and one of the ways He speaks to us is through His Word, then you have in fact already heard God’s voice telling you to “go.”
5. You don’t need a seminary degree to share the good news. It’s okay to say, “I’m not sure about that point in the Bible, but what I am certain about is how God is alive and a part of my life. Here’s the joy I’ve gotten out of believing in God ...”

Everyone is gifted differently, but God has put in you the ability to share His love with others. Don’t feel compelled to tell people about God and His Son the exact same way your friend does. Do it in the way you feel God is moving you.

I would never have thought that God would use my love of exercise as a way to “go and make disciples.” If you have a heart for the elderly and you feel comfortable hanging with them, then “go” and love on them and share with them what God has done in your life. If you are a soccer nut, “go” and make friends with those on your team and let them know about God’s love.

I love the story about the woman at the well. There are so many good lessons from this passage, but let’s focus on the last part of the story. After her interaction with Jesus, she went back to her town and told everyone what she experienced.

John 4:39-42 explains what happened after she went and told them what happened.

”Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Him (Jesus) because of the woman's testimony (story), ‘He told me everything I ever did.’ So when the Samaritans came to Him, they urged Him to stay with them, and He stayed two days. And because of His words many more became believers. They said to the woman, ‘We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.’”

She listened to Jesus’ words. His words changed her. She went back into her community and told them her testimony. Because of her story, others believed and still more came to know Jesus when they too heard His words. Those in her town became believers because she shared her story. Once you share your story with others encourage them to read the Bible so they can hear more from God about His love for them.

If you are concerned that you aren’t a good speaker or a good story teller, learn how God helped Moses. In Exodus 3:10-12, for example, God says to Moses, “Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt.” But Moses

protested to God, “Who am I to appear before Pharaoh? Who am I to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?” God answered, “I will be with you.”

Moses doubts his abilities again when he says to God in Exodus 4:10-12, “But Moses pleaded with the LORD, ‘O Lord, I’m not very good with words. I never have been, and I’m not now, even though you have spoken to me. I get tongue-tied, and my words get tangled.’ Then the LORD asked Moses, ‘Who makes a person’s mouth? Who decides whether people speak or do not speak, hear or do not hear, see or do not see? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go! I will be with you as you speak, and I will instruct you in what to say.’”

This is such a great story. It should bring you peace when you are trying to tell your story about God’s work in your life. Moses is asking God to pick someone else to go and speak, but God reminds Moses that He is the one who made his mouth and He will help him speak well. God will also help you speak His words. Pray before you go into any situation and ask God to help you. I do this before filming the TV programs and DVDs, and before I am about to tell someone my story. God is faithful and helps me and He will help you, too.

Let’s end this week with a quote from Darrow Miller, “It is not enough to be a Christian when we are inside the church walls, in our comfortable religious compartment. We are to be Christians in the workplace, in the marketplace, and in the halls and classrooms of our universities.”

Now is the time to pray that God will help you to follow His teachings. Now is the time to allow God to direct you in all areas of your life. When you do what God asks He opens up the doors to discipleship.



FITNESS

Kid’s Health

The health state of the kids in our country breaks my heart. It is so sad to learn that one out of three children in our country is overweight. Type 2 diabetes continues to plague more kids. Children are being diagnosed with high cholesterol. For the first time, the life expectancy of your generation is shorter than that of your parents. What is causing this and what can be done to change this trend?

Screen Media

According to the Kaiser Family foundation, kids are watching an average of three hours of TV a day and five and a half hours are spent on all-screen media (TV, videos, computer, video games, texting) every day. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that children under the age of two years watch no TV at all. Children ages two years and older should watch no more than one to two hours of *quality programming*. Some of you might be spending more time on your computer because of on-line courses, but make sure you do not add another hour of TV, an hour on facebook and an hour texting. Too much screen time is not good for you.

Lack of Exercise

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) offers these guidelines:

Age	Minimum Daily Activity	Comments
Infant	No specific requirements	Physical activity should encourage motor development
Toddler	1½ hours	30 minutes planned physical activity AND 60 minutes unstructured physical activity (free play)
Preschooler	2 hours	60 minutes planned physical activity AND 60 minutes unstructured physical activity (free play)
School age	1 hour or more	Can be broken into segments if necessary

Infants and young children should not be inactive for prolonged periods of time — no more than one hour unless they're sleeping. And school-age children should not be inactive for periods longer than two hours.

As I mentioned earlier, if you are spending hours doing school work on your computer, be sure to take breaks and move. Play Frisbee with your sibling or parent, go for a walk, or pedal around the block on your bike. If you only have a few minutes, do some jumping jacks, jump rope, or push-ups. The “Burst” videos are a great way to get yourself up and moving.

Poor Nutrition

More packaged foods are available today to tempt you to eat easy-access, yet unhealthy foods. Fast food restaurants are on most city corners; they lure you to eat their high fat, sugar and sodium filled meals. Let your parents know your favorite fruits and vegetables so they are on hand when you need a snack. Remember, eating isn't only about making your taste buds happy, it's about fueling your body. Don't commit to not liking something because you had it once when you were younger. Research shows it takes trying a food 10 times before you can form a lasting opinion about it.

Try making small changes to your diet each week. If you drink two sodas a day, try cutting back to one. The following week, go to one every other day. Next, substitute sparkling water mixed with 100 percent juice. Make a commitment to trying a new vegetable this week. Snack on fruits and vegetables rather than chips.

Lack of Discipline

There is that word that many of us don't like to hear: "discipline." If you want to be healthy it takes discipline. It requires discipline to limit the amount of time you spend watching TV. It takes discipline to get up and exercise when you really don't feel like it. It takes discipline to pick up an apple instead of a candy bar.

If you want to be disciplined to make these changes, you have to be motivated. What will motivate you to move towards healthier habits? Which of the benefits of exercise and proper nutrition most excites you? Post the benefits of a healthy lifestyle around your house to help you stay disciplined.

Hebrews 12:11 is a great verse to memorize: "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." In all areas of your life you need to be disciplined.

Following Christ requires discipline. There will be times when you want to do what feels good in the moment instead of staying obedient to God. You know in the back of your mind it's not right, and without discipline you might fall into temptation.



FUEL

Antioxidants

Maybe you have heard the word “antioxidants” but know nothing about them, other than they are beneficial. Understanding antioxidants and then including them into your diet can have a positive effect on your long-term health.

Antioxidants play a role in overall health. Many chronic diseases are associated with oxidation, which is a chemical reaction that occurs naturally throughout your body and in the oxygen-filled outside world (it’s what turns metal rusty and a slice of apple brown). Through oxidation, an oxidizing agent removes electrons from another substance, which can produce molecules called free radicals. In the body, free radicals are created when we’re exposed to hazards like too much sunlight, cigarette smoke, excessive stress, and a multitude of others. Free radicals can damage cells through a process called oxidative stress. In a healthy body, free radicals are kept in check by molecules called antioxidants. If there aren’t enough antioxidants around, the cells can suffer.

Many plants are powerful antioxidants, meaning they can hold back the damaging and disease-producing effects of oxidative stress. In fact, research has shown that people who consume lots of antioxidant-rich plants have lower rates of cancer and heart disease. Antioxidants interfere with the free radicals’ ability to attach themselves to cells, working as sort of an internal, cellular suit of armor.

Here is what the Mayo Clinic (one of the top hospitals in the country) has to say about the best source for antioxidants: *“Research indicates that simply taking antioxidant supplements is not the best way to go about getting what your body needs. In fact, it’s possible that some of these supplements could be harmful. Fortunately, research is also increasingly showing that you can reap the potential health benefits of antioxidant intake by eating a diet rich in antioxidant-containing foods.”*

Here are some of the top antioxidants:

- **Berries** — Blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, strawberries, and cranberries are among the top sources of antioxidants.
- **Beans** — Small red beans as well as kidney, pinto, and black beans are all choices rich in antioxidants.
- **Fruits** — Many apple varieties (with peel) are high in antioxidants, as are avocados, cherries, green and red pears, fresh or dried plums, pineapple, kiwi, and others.

- **Vegetables** — Those with the highest antioxidant content include artichokes, spinach, red cabbage, red and white potatoes (with peel), sweet potatoes, and broccoli.
- **Beverages** — Green tea may come to mind as a good source of antioxidants, but other beverages have high levels, too, including coffee, and many fruit juices such as pomegranate.
- **Nuts** — Walnuts, pistachios, pecans, hazelnuts, and almonds are some of the top nuts for antioxidant content.
- **Herbs** — These may be unexpected suppliers of antioxidants, but ground cloves, cinnamon and ginger, dried oregano leaf, cumin, and turmeric powder are all good sources.
- **Grains** — In general, oat-based products are higher in antioxidants than are those derived from other grain sources.
- **And for dessert** — Don't forget that a piece of dark chocolate ranks as high or higher than most fruits and vegetables in terms of antioxidant content.

STOP HERE! Take your fitness test, answer this week's questions, and take Test Four.

Week 16



FAITH

Making Disciples

If you believe that “all scripture is God-breathed...” (**2 Timothy 3:16**), you can’t pick and choose which verses to follow and which you will ignore. You especially should not ignore a direct command from God. We’ve been studying the **Great Commission** from Matthew 28. We cannot choose to ignore this passage just because it might take us out of our comfort zone.

During this week’s reading we are going to focus specifically on the words, “disciples of all the nations.” What is the best way that you can follow Jesus’ command? How can you reach out to all the nations?

As always, the first thing you need to do is focus on drawing closer to God. You need to focus on your relationship with Him. You need to read His Word. You need to pray. You need to not just invite God along for the ride; you need to give Him the keys and say, “God, what’s your plan for my day?” When you are doing these things and you are experiencing joy because of your faith, you are ready to “go and make disciples of all the nations.”

For some of you, making disciples in your family and in your community is more frightening than reaching out to other nations. For some, this part of His command can be most confusing and challenging. Should you go on a mission trip, sponsor a child, donate your time to a ministry, or support national or international missions? Then there is the whole issue of money – most you probably don’t have much so you think you can’t make a difference in the world.

The thought of making disciples in all nations might sound so overwhelming that you choose to do nothing. You might think, “I’m just one kid. How am I supposed to go and make disciples in other nations? It’s not like I can just get on a plane and start changing the world!” Let these words spoken by Mother Teresa encourage you: “We, ourselves, feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop.” She also said, “We cannot do great things on this Earth, only small things with great love.” You might not be able to change the whole world, but you can make a difference. Take a moment to listen to the song, **“One Less,” by Matthew West.**

The Starfish Story is a great example of how you can make a difference.

The Starfish Story

Original Story by: Loren Easley

*One day a man was walking along the beach when he noticed
a boy picking something up and gently throwing it into the ocean.*

Approaching the boy, he asked, What are you doing?

The youth replied, Throwing starfish back into the ocean.

The surf is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them back, they'll die.

*Son, the man said, don't you realize there are miles and miles of beach and hundreds of
starfish?*

You can't make a difference!

*After listening politely, the boy bent down, picked up another starfish,
and threw it back into the surf. Then, smiling at the man, he said*

I made a difference for that one.

You might start by trying to figure out how you can help in other nations by educating yourself about the hardships around the world. Ask God to break your heart for what breaks His heart. When you are learning about the challenges in the world, what really concerns you? Is it the problem with drinking water, orphans, lack of food, or poor education?

When you find what you are passionate about, it is great to team up with a ministry that is already helping in that area so that they can suggest how you can get involved. There is a great book called, "When Helping Hurts," which reveals that sometimes when we think we're helping, we're actually hurting those we are trying to serve.

The book includes a story about a church who wanted to help the people of Rwanda after the genocide. They decided to donate eggs to the people who lived there. At the time, there was a local gentleman named Jean who had been selling eggs for a long time. Because people were getting free eggs from the church, the locals no longer bought from him. He was forced out of business and sold his chickens. Then one day the church moved on to another well-intentioned mission and stopped supplying eggs to the Rwandan village. The people could no longer buy eggs from Jean and they now had to travel to a neighboring town where the prices were quite a bit higher. Jean and his villagers were hurt economically because a church naively donated eggs.

Some of you might be called to gather friends together and sponsor a child in a foreign country. You might feel God calling you to be a missionary someday. You might feel called to donate to a ministry. Pray and ask God how He can best use you to go and make disciples of all the nations.

Even though you are still “just a kid” you can change the world in some way. The greatest way to change the world is through loving God, loving others and by fearlessly going out and making disciples. How you go about changing the world differs from one person to the next. Don’t listen to anyone who says you are too young to make a difference. In 1 Timothy 4:12 you are told, “Don’t let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.”

This quote by Saint Teresa of Avila is so encouraging:

“Christ has no body on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion for the world is to look out; yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good; and yours are the hands with which He is to bless us now.”



BURST: [Video #7](#)



FITNESS

Exercise = Less Stress, Depression & Anxiety

I’m sure you are all on board with the fact that exercise is good for you. You have learned that if you exercise regularly it will help you prevent diseases, strengthen your heart and muscles, enables you to learn, help you maintain a healthy weight, and much more. However, do you really believe that exercising will decrease your stress levels?

You might be thinking that it can’t decrease my stress because I have _____ (fill in the blank) going on in my life. Life can be challenging but please listen carefully – you can turn over all parts of your life, even the really difficult ones to God. He cares about you and wants to help you. The first think you should do with the things that are stressing you out is to ask God to help you. He is the best source of peace and comfort.

He also created our bodies in such a way that when you exercise you decrease the production of stress hormones and counteract your body's natural stress response. The same exercise that does so many wonderful things for your physical body also helps lessen your stress.

Still need motivation to exercise? Here is what stress can do to your body:

- The physical changes that happen in your body when you are under excessive stress contribute to the leading causes of death (heart disease, cancer, suicide).
- It's estimated that up to two-thirds of doctors' visits are for stress-related problems. It might not seem like your visit to the doctor has anything to do with stress but because stress lowers your ability to fight an illness your visit and stress might be related
- Stress can cause chronic fatigue, digestive problems, headaches, and back and neck pain.
- Stress can trigger you to smoke, drink, abuse drugs, and overeat.
- Stress can make an asthma attack worse.
- Constant stress increases your blood pressure.
- Stress negatively affects blood cells that help fight infection.
- Stress causes sleeping problems, lack of energy, and a lack of focus.

Now that you've heard the negative effects of stress, let's take a look at how exercise helps. Exercising bumps up the production of endorphins. Endorphins are neurotransmitters found in the brain that have pain relieving properties similar to morphine (a strong pain killer). Endorphins are considered a wonder drug. The *Journal of Immunology* states that the release of endorphins can boost the immune system. Scientists have even discovered that endorphins activate what are known as NK Cells (Natural Killer Cells), which can potentially kill cancer cells. They also relieve pain and stress as well as postpone the aging process.

Another way exercise reduces stress is that it takes your mind off your problems. This might sound too basic, but when you take your mind off your problems, they seem less intense when you go back to them. Exercise makes you feel better, and when you feel better you can look at things more optimistically.

Regular exercise also makes people feel better about themselves. Too often people live with guilt because they know they need to take better care of their bodies, but they don't.

Once you start doing what you know you should do, you'll decrease your stress levels and lower the symptoms associated with mild depression.

These are some of the "typical" ways that exercise decreases your stress. When you add Christian music and a Biblical message, your stress should lessen even more. Music therapy is practiced in many hospitals because it's been proven to help with pain management, and it wards off depression, promotes movement, calms patients, and eases muscle tension. Music affects our brain waves and our breathing and heart rate, counteracting the negative effects of stress. Music has also been shown to lower blood pressure and boost immunity.

I pray you allow the messages in the Faithful Workouts' DVDs to encourage you in your relationship with God.

Feeling a little bit of stress is natural and can actually spark brain growth. It is when stress levels are too high and stay there a long time that you can damage your body.

The next time you feel your stress levels going too high, remember what you read here and carve out some time to get your endorphins going. Exercise!



FUEL

Cholesterol

You've probably heard the word "cholesterol," but you're unsure about what it is. Wikipedia's definition states that, "Cholesterol is a waxy steroid metabolite found in the cell membranes and transported in the blood plasma of all animals." Another definition explains it this way: "A waxy substance produced by the liver and found in certain foods. It is needed to make vitamin D and some hormones, build cell walls, and create bile salts that help you digest fat."

That might sound a bit too scientific to really grasp, but it is important to understand why you need to be conscious of cholesterol and what you can do to keep your cholesterol at a healthy level. Only a few years ago, high cholesterol in children was almost unheard of. Now, because of our eating habits and lack of exercise, cases of high cholesterol in children are being reported.

It is important that you develop healthy habits now so that you can prevent health issues as you grow older. So let's simplify what cholesterol is all about.

Your body needs cholesterol to help you digest fats. It is an essential part of your cell structure. Your liver produces about 1,000 milligrams of cholesterol a day. You also get cholesterol from the foods you eat. Cholesterol is found in foods that come from animals. This means that eggs, meats, and dairy products have cholesterol.

If your cholesterol levels are high, (especially if your LDL levels are high - I'll explain this later), cholesterol is deposited on the walls of arteries and forms a hard substance called plaque. Over time, plaque causes the arteries to become narrower, decreasing blood flow and causing a condition called atherosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries. When blood flow is limited to the heart, you are at risk for having a heart attack. When blood flow is limited to the brain, you are at risk for having a stroke.

So how do you know if you have high cholesterol? Well, the tough thing is that you can have high cholesterol and not have any signs until you have a major health problem or you die. A simple blood test is used to determine your cholesterol levels. Ask your doctor if they recommend a cholesterol test. As you age, it is important to know your levels.

There are two types of cholesterol: high-density lipoproteins (or HDL) and low-density lipoproteins (or LDL). HDL is considered "good cholesterol," while LDL is called "bad cholesterol." Each has a very different effect on the body. LDL cholesterol is the kind that's most likely to clog the blood vessels. HDL cholesterol removes cholesterol from the blood vessels and carries it back to the liver where it can be processed and sent out of the body.

Too much cholesterol can spell disaster for your health. But small changes can bring big results. The big question is: How can you keep your cholesterol at a safe level or lower it if your levels are high?

• Get Moving. Increasing your physical activity can improve your lipid profile and help you lose weight, which also reduces LDL, or "bad cholesterol." Increasing the intensity and the length of time of your workouts can increase the cholesterol-busting power of your routine.

• **Ditch the Diet.** Some diets, like high protein - low carbohydrate diets can actually make your cholesterol worse. Don't try fad diets. Eat a well-rounded diet that starts with lots of fruits and vegetables!

• **Relax.** Chronically elevated stress hormones can lead to increased cholesterol (and blood pressure) as well as elevated blood glucose and weight gain — all bad news for your heart.

• **Go Nuts.** Research shows that adding nuts to your diet can help decrease your cholesterol. They (especially walnuts and almonds) contain cholesterol-lowering Omega-3 essential fatty acids.

• **Don't Eat More, Eat More Often.** Studies show that eating smaller meals more frequently throughout the day (instead of two or three big meals) lowers cholesterol and contributes to healthy weight loss.

• **Grab Some Garlic.** Eating lots of garlicky foods can lead to less heart disease, and reduce cholesterol levels. (It also seems to keep arteries flexible and lowers blood pressure.)

• **Up Your Fiber.** Adding high-fiber foods to your diet can significantly reduce your serum cholesterol.

• **Go Fish.** Try to eat fish two to three times a week. It has cholesterol-lowering omega-3 fatty acids.

• **Stay away from the smoke.** Smoking lowers levels of HDL "good" cholesterol and is a major risk factor for heart disease.

• **Pass on the Baked Goods.** Commercially prepared baked goods are often made with hydrogenated oils, which are a trans fat. Remember our talk on fats? Trans fats are bad for you. Look at the ingredients used in your baked goods and crackers to be sure hydrogenated oils are not listed.

My suggestion: Share this information with your parents and encourage them to join you in following this advice. If you are not eating healthy, add one more healthy habit into your routine each week.

STOP HERE! Go answer this week's questions.

Week 17



FAITH

It's All God's

One of the greatest feelings comes when you are able to really help someone else. In Acts 20:35 you read, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." When you were younger, those words probably didn't make sense to you, but as you go through life you will find this to be very true. Some people miss out on this blessing of being able to give because they cling too tightly to what they own.

What might help you to give more freely is the truth that what you own really belongs to God. What you have comes from Him. Listen to what God says in these verses:

"The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." (Psalm 24:1)

"What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if everything you have is from God, why boast as though it were not a gift?" (1 Corinthians 4:7)

"After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can't take anything with us when we leave it." (1 Timothy 6:7)

I believe God gave you the above verses to help you stay humble and focused on the fact that He is God and He has control over the whole earth, **including** your personal belongings. Deuteronomy 8:17 says, "He did all this so you would never say to yourself, 'I have achieved this wealth with my own strength and energy.'" How amazing is it that God knew what your challenges would be in life? He knew you would most likely struggle with deciding to worship Him or your belongings. He makes it so clear you are to worship and cling only to Him because the rest of it isn't really yours.

He's loaned you what you think you own. It's when you finally understand this concept of ownership that your ideas about giving will change.

Tithing in a very broad sense means "one-tenth of your increase." When you tithe, or give away, you are only handing back to God what is already His. There is only one place in the Bible where God says, "Test me," and it's in Malachi 3:10. "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it."

In this verse God challenges us to test Him. He tells us to not hold back, to bring our whole tithe to Him to store in His house. If we do this He promises to pour blessings on us.

If you have heard the word “tithe” in the past, you probably thought about money (your treasures). Yes, money is one way we should give back to God. But, you can also give back to God with your time and your talents.

Your Treasures

Did you know that the Bible has about 500 verses on prayer and fewer than 500 verses on faith? Yet, there are over 2,300 Biblical verses that deal with money and possessions.

Why do you think God has so much to say about money? God knew that keeping money in the right perspective would be one of our biggest challenges. He knew it would be challenging to manage our money. He knew it would be a struggle for us to not worship money – to not let money be our God.

1 Timothy 6:10 reads, “For the love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.” You see, money itself isn’t morally bad. It can be used for good or evil. The problem arises when you love and cling to money. For some, a love of money keeps them from following God’s plan for their life.

God doesn’t need your money. He asks that you tithe to help you remember that what you have belongs to Him in the first place. He asks us to give sacrificially. He also asks you to give of your money because, again, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” He wants to bless your life.

Your Time

You are given the gift of 24 hours in a day. How you choose to use the hours is up to you. (Well, at least some of the hours are up to you!) If you follow God’s plan for your life, He has given you enough time to accomplish His purpose for your life. Only He knows how long you have on earth.

Giving of your time doesn’t necessarily mean you have to add more to your day. For most of you, it might just mean doing the same activities with a different motive. Think of the kids on your sports team. Who can you share your faith with? When your mom is cooking a meal for your family, ask her to get extra ingredients so you can make a meal for a family in need. Think of a friend who could use some encouragement and send them

a text. When you are at church, ask how you can help. You don't have to squeeze more into your day. Just be more intentional and pray for God to open your eyes to the needs of those around you.

One thing I admire about Jesus is that while He was very focused on his overall purpose in life, he still made Himself available to help those people who showed up unannounced. He used His time purposefully, but not frantically.

Your Talents

God created you with different talents than your friends or your siblings. He created you to be you. In 1 Corinthians 12 you are reminded about your uniqueness. You are told that if you were created to be a foot, don't try to be a hand. What that means is that God made you a certain way so you could help more people know about His love. He gave you your personality and abilities that allow you to play your part in His plan. Don't try and be like your friend; be you. If God has given you the gift of leadership, lead a Bible study. If He created you to be a gifted athlete use the athletic field to share God's message. If He gave you the gift of being a good reader, go into an elderly person's home and read the Bible.

The song, "**Take My Life**," really sums up this section. God doesn't ask you to give of your time, talents, and treasure (money) so that He can accomplish His goals. He asks you to give generously so that you can really live life to the fullest. Hear this again, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

*Take my life and let it be
consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
Take my moments and my days,
let them flow in ceaseless praise.
Take my hands and let them move
at the impulse of Thy love.
Take my feet and let them be
swift and beautiful for Thee.*

*Take my voice and let me sing
always, only for my King.
Take my lips and let them be*

*filled with messages from Thee.
Take my silver and my gold
not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect and use
every power as You choose.*

*Here am I, all of me.
Take my life, it's all for Thee.*

*Take my will and make it Thine
it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart it is Thine own
it shall be Thy royal throne.
Take my love, my Lord I pour
at Your feet its treasure store
Take myself and I will be
ever, only, all for Thee.
Take myself and I will be
ever, only, all for Thee.*

This quote reiterates what God says throughout the Bible. “Each of us has something to give. Some have wealth, some have talents, some have time. Whatever gifts we have been given – large or small – we should share generously. When we do, we make the world better for someone else and find true meaning and satisfaction in our own lives.” Initially, when you give to others you think about how it will help them. What you discover when you give out of love and not guilt is that you are also blessed. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “It is one of the most beautiful compensations of life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.”

Tithing brings us more purpose, which brings us more joy, which leads us towards the abundant life that Jesus promises. Give God all of you and your life will never be the same!



BURST: Video #7



FITNESS

Exercise Gear

Having the right equipment can make a big difference in the effectiveness and safety of your workout. I am someone who tries to always save money, but I've learned that it's important to make an investment in the right equipment in order to achieve better health.

Shoes

I believe the most important piece of equipment for working out is your shoes. Picking the right shoes can be quite challenging. Feet come in all different sizes and shapes and you need to find the right shoe for you. When you go to buy a pair, be sure to bring your workout socks so you can get a good fit. Some shoes are made for specific purposes, such as running or basketball. Find the shoe that is best for your activity. For the type of exercises done in the Faithful Workouts DVD, you need a shoe that has good support. Try the shoes on in the store and then run, jump, and twist to see how it feels. Remember, who cares if you look goofy running around the store because you don't have to worry about what people think of you!!

Clothing

I think just about any type of comfortable clothing works. I am most comfortable in shorts and sleeveless shirts. I don't like the feel of my clothing rubbing on my skin when I workout. I know others who only wear long pants when they exercise. As long as you are comfortable and you can easily move, go with it. If you are exercising outside or in a hot room, you will want your clothing to breathe so that you don't overheat.

Hair

If you have long hair, I definitely recommend pulling it completely back. During the workouts, we are in all different positions and it's important that your hair doesn't blind you by falling in your face. I am big on getting every bit of hair out of the way with a pony tail and a headband. If you are doing the DVDs, you'll also want to be able to see the TV.

Exercise Bands

I love exercise bands because there are so many exercises you can do with an exercise band. You can use them to strengthen all the muscles in your body. They offer a strength training type of workout without needing heavy weights. They are also great to take with you when you travel. As you know, I use them in quite a few of my DVD routines.

When choosing an exercise band, you want to pick a difficulty level that will challenge you. Most bands come with a weight comparison and are color coded. Look at the chart or packaging for each manufacturer to choose the right resistance level. (I do sell these on my website www.faithfulworkouts.com/store if you need one)

Weights

If possible, have several sizes of weights close by during your workout. You want to be able to have the appropriate weight for the move being performed. If you have too much weight, you can injure yourself. If you don't have enough weight, you aren't getting the most from the exercise. I do NOT recommend heavy weights for anyone who has not gone through puberty. If you are lifting weights keep it light and be sure to use proper form.

You can purchase weights fairly reasonably at most sporting goods stores.

Exercise Balls

Exercise balls open the doors to so many different types of exercises. They also make a great chair. (Try using one as a chair when you are on your computer – it will help you with core strength.) You can also use an exercise ball in place of an exercise bench or chair when doing some of your exercises. If you lie on a bench and use weights in your arms to do a chest press you will only use the muscles in your upper body. If you lie with only a portion of your back on an exercise ball and do a chest press you will not only use the muscles in your upper body but you will also engage the muscles in your core and lower body.

There is not a big difference in the quality of exercise balls, but they do come in different sizes. If you are tall, get a slightly larger ball, and if you are short, use a smaller ball.

There are so many different exercise “toys” to choose from. I find that if you make an investment in a good pair of shoes, comfortable clothes and a quality exercise band you have all you need to get moving toward better health!



FUEL

Eating Disorders

Teenage years can be stressful. You are trying to figure out who you are and who you want to become. You are more independent, you are establishing friendships, and your body is changing. Then, on top of all that, you have the whole puberty thing going on! You might make it through with very few issues or you might have real struggles.

When some teenagers' bodies begin to change, weight gain is common. Some start to panic because of the weight gain and the physical changes going on in their body. They don't realize that when all the changes slow down, their weight usually stabilizes.

Unfortunately, some develop eating disorders during this stressful time that can affect them for years. Often, eating disorders come from lies that Satan wants you to believe.

LIE: "If I lose weight I will be happier."

LIE: "I just want people to like me. If I am thinner, they'll like me"

LIE: "My parents are super weight conscious, so if I get really skinny they will love me more."

LIE: "I don't get to control anything in my life. My parents always tell me what to do. So, I am going to not eat so that I have control over at least this part of my life."

LIE: "My life stinks right now, but a can of soda and a candy bar will make me feel better"

LIE: "Nobody likes me because I am fat, but if I lose weight and they still don't like me I will have nothing to blame it on."

Have you ever felt this way? If you have, you aren't alone. If you feel you have an unhealthy relationship with food, if you have lost or gained a substantial amount of weight in a short period of time, or if you have any ongoing feelings about food or how you look, please ask someone for help. Eating disorders can have serious and even life-threatening consequences if they go untreated.

Like I said earlier, being a teenager can be stressful. One way to deal with these emotions is to draw closer to God. Talk to Him about what you are going through. Allow His unconditional love to come into you. Allow His words to come into your mind when you are feeling down. God is so in love with you. Your waistline doesn't matter to Him.

TRUTH: "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well." (Psalm 139:14)

TRUTH: “The joy of the LORD is your strength.”(Nehemiah 8:10)

TRUTH: “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.” (Philippians 4:13)

TRUTH: “For we are God’s masterpiece”(Ephesians 2:10)

TRUTH: “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10)

STOP HERE! Go answer this week’s questions.

Week 18



FAITH

Who Are You?

One of the challenges of being a pre-teen or teenager is trying to figure out who you really are. Think about it: If someone said, “Tell me about yourself,” what would you say? Would you begin by telling them what you look like? Would you start by saying what you like to do? Maybe you would start with your age and where you live.

What do you believe about yourself? Do you believe what your parents’ say about you? Do you put more value in what your friends say? Do you compare yourself to others to determine what you are really like? Do people have expectations for you? Does anyone try to make you feel like you are not good enough? What is special about you?

You are God’s Child

My hope is that the first thing you think about yourself is that you are a child of God (John 1:12). When you believe in Jesus, you are His child. God chose you and adopted you. This brought Him great pleasure (Ephesians 1:4-5).

Take a moment to let this sink in. God loves you so much that He paid a huge price so you could belong to Him (1 Corinthians 6:20). The price He paid was the death of His Son on the cross. God so badly wanted you to know that you are His child that He allowed Jesus to die a painful death. Jesus died so that you would be forgiven for all your sins (even the ones you haven’t committed yet).

You are God’s Masterpiece

Have you ever thought of yourself as “God’s masterpiece?” That is what you are. God says in Ephesians 2:10 that **you** are His masterpiece. Words used to define “masterpiece” include jewel, treasure, and other similar descriptions. Think of that; you are God’s jewel, His treasure, His masterpiece! I don’t know about you, but there are days when I don’t feel like a masterpiece. Even on your worst day, you are still a masterpiece – and not just anyone’s masterpiece; you are God’s masterpiece!

At times, it can be hard to feel like a masterpiece when you look at the covers on the magazines and you see people who seem like they are perfectly put together. They have an amazing body, they dress just right, live in a huge home, and drive the coolest cars. When you feel that way, go back to God’s Word and remember you are a masterpiece without having the perfect body, the best clothes, most awesome house, and the fastest car. God doesn’t look at outward appearances. He looks at your heart (1 Samuel 16:7).

I love the song, “Fingerprints of God,” The lyrics are so powerful. These are excerpts from the song by Steven Curtis Chapman:

*I can see the tears filling your eyes
And I know where they're coming from
They're coming from a heart that's broken in two
By what you don't see
The person in the mirror
Doesn't look like a magazine
Oh but when I look at you
It's clear to me*

*That I can see the fingerprints of God
When I look at you
I can see the fingerprints of God
And I know it's true
You're a masterpiece that all creation
Quietly applauds
And you're covered with
The fingerprints of God*

*Never has there been and never again
Will there be another you
Fashioned by God's hand and perfectly planned
To be just who you are
And what He's been creating
Since the first beat of your heart
Is a living, breathing
Priceless work of art*

The next time you are having one of those days where you are down on yourself , come back to these words and remember how special you are! The enemy wants you to believe that you aren't special, and that you don't measure up to the “worlds” standards. Don't believe these lies.

Not only are you God's masterpiece, but He also says that you are wonderfully made. (Psalm 139:14). God knew what He was doing when He created you and God does not make mistakes.

You aren't perfect – God knew you wouldn't be. That is why He allowed His Son to die so that your imperfections would be wiped away. When God looks at you, He doesn't see anything except His masterpiece!

You are Powerful

You are powerful because of your belief in Jesus. God promises that when you believe in Jesus and you repent of your sins, He will send the Holy Spirit into you. God's spirit is living in you. It is because of God that you are powerful.

In John 5:30, Jesus says that He can do nothing on His own. If Jesus felt He could do nothing on His own, you too must realize your power does not come from your own might. You have power because of **who** you believe in. Philippians 4:13 is such an encouraging verse, "I can do all things through Christ, who gives me strength".

On your own you can do nothing, but with Christ you can do everything. Matthew 19:26 reiterates this: "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

The next time you are taking on a challenging situation and you are afraid, think of these verses. It is so important to have God's Word in your mind. Memorize these verses to give you the courage to take on the challenge.

During your weekly readings, have you ever thought: I am never going to get physically fit; or, it's too hard for me to quit drinking sodas; or, I'm never going to be able to memorize any of these verses; or, I can't share my faith with my family and friends because they will think I'm weird? If so, remember what God's Word says. When I doubt my ability to do something, I just love it when God brings His Word to my mind.

Feel confident because of God's words in (2 Timothy 1:7): "God does not give you the spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline." God gives you power! God gives you the ability to love! He gives you self-discipline! You can do anything! Nothing is impossible!



FITNESS

How Exercise Affects Learning

Did you know that if you want to do well in school one of the most important things you can do is to exercise? Did you know that it is a fact that cardiovascular (aerobic) exercise sparks new brain-cell growth? Did you know that aerobic exercise physically transforms your brain for peak performance? John Ratey, MD wrote an amazing book called, “Spark.” Dr. Ratey is a clinical associate professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and his book has changed how doctors and researchers are viewing the learning process.

In his book, Dr. Ratey shares case studies and the latest medical findings on how exercise affects your ability to learn. I’ve read studies on how exercise has been shown to help with ADHD, depression, and energy, but research now proves exercise affects the brain in ways we never understood.

Phil Lawler, a PE teacher in the Naperville, Ill., school district decided he was going to change things up. He started teaching fitness instead of sports. He taught children how to monitor and maintain their own health and fitness. They began wearing heart monitors during PE and are graded, in part, on whether or not they keep their heart rate in their target heart rate zone instead of how they do in a game of kickball.

One statistic that really motivated Lawler to initiate these changes is that only three percent of adults over the age of 24 stay in shape through playing team sports. He decided to teach children fitness skills, which they could use the rest of their life. Statistics also show that children who exercise regularly are more likely to exercise as adults.

It is not that surprising, although it’s very impressive, that after the program was in place for 10 years 97 percent of freshman in 2001 and 2002 were at a healthy weight compared to the national average of 66 percent. The fact that they were more physically fit from the new PE program was expected, yet other results surprised educators from around the country.

The students in Naperville District 203 began to stand out in their academic performances. The most notable accomplishment came on a worldwide test called the “Trends in Mathematics and Science Study.” This exam is used to do a comparative test of students from different countries. In 1999, the United States ranked 18th in science and 19th in math; however, the eighth graders who took the test from Naperville 203 finished first in the world in science and sixth in math.

As a result of the success of the Naperville 203 students, PE instructors have educated thousands of other PE teachers from 350 different schools. Their new program is called PE4Life. One school, from a financially struggling community in Pennsylvania, incorporated the new PE style of fitness-focused instruction and saw their test scores go from below the state average to 17 percent above average in reading and 18 percent above average in math.

Study after study is showing the correlation between learning and exercise. German researchers found that participants learned vocabulary words 20 percent faster after exercise than before.

These case studies, along with multiple lab results, show that exercise affects our ability to learn. The book, “Spark,” goes deeper with their findings, but here is a summary:

“Now you know how exercise improves learning on three levels: first, it optimizes your mind-set to improve alertness, attention, and motivation; second, it prepares and encourages nerve cells to bind to one another, which is the cellular basis for logging in new information; and third, it spurs the development of new nerve cells from the stem cells in the hippocampus (part of the brain that is responsible for encoding long-term memory).”

“When we exercise, particularly if the exercise requires complex motor movement, we’re also exercising the areas of the brain involved in a full suite of cognitive function.”

This is just another reason why you have to incorporate a consistent exercise program into your daily life. For optimal benefits, include cardio and complex motor skills similar to the exercise moves in your Faithful Workouts’ DVD. Like the Nike tagline says, “Just do it!”



FUEL

Fiber

Fiber is one of those things that you have probably heard is important — but you're kind of hazy on the specifics. What is it, exactly? Where do you find it, and how much are you supposed to eat? Not getting enough fiber can lead to problems, but getting too much can cause trouble.

Basically, fiber is anything that you eat but can't digest. It's actually considered one of the five macronutrients, along with protein, fat, carbohydrates, and water. Fiber is present in all plants that are eaten for food, including fruits, grains, vegetables, and legumes.

Soluble fiber partially dissolves in water. It has a positive effect on body chemistry. It lowers blood cholesterol and blood sugar levels. Insoluble fiber cannot be dissolved in water. It helps your food move through your system.

Current recommendations say that you should consume your age plus five grams of fiber daily from food. The average American adult eats only 15 grams when they need closer to 28 grams. (The amount of fiber needed for adults depends on their daily calorie intake.) High-fiber diets provide bulk, are more satiating, and have been linked to lower body weight.

Fiber only comes from plants. Sources of soluble fiber include oats (oatmeal and oat bran), nuts and seeds, legumes (beans, peas, lentils), and fruits (pears, apples, berries). Insoluble fiber is found in seeds, grains (rice, whole and bulgur wheat, wheat bran, barley), and vegetables (carrots, cucumbers, celery, and tomatoes).

Here are some tips for increasing your fiber intake:

- Eat seven to nine servings of whole fruits and vegetables. (A whole apple, with the skin, packs 3.7 grams of fiber, while a pear has 4 grams; a peeled orange has 3.1 grams of fiber.)
- Replace white rice, bread, and pasta with brown rice and whole grain products. (A slice of whole wheat bread delivers three times the fiber of a slice of white.)
- Choose whole grain cereals for breakfast. (A cup of raisin bran packs 7.5 grams of fiber; bran cereals are high in fiber, too.)
- Snack on nuts instead of chips or crackers. (An ounce has 2.6 grams of fiber.)

- Substitute legumes for meat two to three times per week. (Peas are especially fiber-rich, delivering up to 8.1 grams of fiber per one-half cup serving.)

There has been a large decrease in the amount of fiber we consume. Americans consume quite a bit less fiber today than they did 100 years ago. The main reason for this is because of introduction of white flour. Try to eat foods that contain 100 percent whole wheat to boost your fiber intake.

If you do not get enough fiber, you increase your chance of constipation, colon cancer, heart disease, and high cholesterol. If you want to try and avoid these health problems, keep an eye on how much fiber you are eating.

STOP HERE! Take your fitness test, answer this week's questions, and take Test Five.

Appendix A: Exercise Fact Sheet

1. Consult with your physician before beginning an exercise program.
2. If you feel dizzy or light headed when exercising hold on to a stationary object and do a slow march in place. Do not drop your head lower than your heart.
3. To avoid dehydration drink water before and during your workout.
4. Begin each workout with dynamic stretching which is stretching with movement.
5. After your workout take time to stretch all your muscles. It is safe to go deeper into your stretches at this time. Do not bounce when you are stretching. Hold a position.
6. Using proper form is critical when exercising. The cues given on the Faithful Workouts' exercise DVD will help you with proper body alignment.
7. When exercising it is important to breathe. Do not hold your breath.
8. Have fun and be thankful that you are healthy enough to exercise!

Appendix B: Answer Key

Test One:

- 1) True
- 2) False
- 3) B
- 4) B
- 5) B
- 6) C
- 7) B
- 8) C
- 9) D

Test Two:

- 1) D
- 2) D
- 3) D
- 4) C
- 5) False
- 6) False
- 7) C
- 8) D
- 9) C

Test Three:

- 1) A
- 2) C
- 3) C
- 4) B
- 5) B
- 6) D
- 7) A
- 8) C
- 9) C

Test Four

- 1) C
- 2) C
- 3) B
- 4) C
- 5) C
- 6) B
- 7) B
- 8) D
- 9) False

Test Five

- 1) A
- 2) B
- 3) B
- 4) B
- 5) C
- 6) C
- 7) D
- 8) A
- 9) B